

WILDERNESS TO CITY TO WILDERNESS:  
REPRESENTATIONS OF THE CITY, THE WILDERNESS,  
AND GLOBAL WARMING IN *SIGNOS* AND *PLANET PHILIPPINES*

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## DEDICATION

To all the people who gave and all the people who *think* they gave their

1. Time and
2. Patience.

Thank you for giving me the things you know you can never take back.

## ABSTRACT

Intal, C. S. (2011). *Wilderness to City to Wilderness: Representations of the City, the Wilderness, and Global Warming in Signos and Planet Philippines*. Unpublished Undergraduate Thesis, University of the Philippines College of Mass Communication.

The study uses textual analysis to read the representations of the city and the wilderness in GMA-7's environmental documentaries *Signos* (2008) and *Planet Philippines* (2009), and how these representations relate to global warming.

*Signos*' (2008) and *Planet Philippines*' (2009) discussions on global warming are heavily idiosyncratic because their viewpoints come from binary, and interestingly different, concepts: the city and the wilderness. The study incorporates historical, representational, and urban political ecological perspectives to produce an understanding of the city and the wilderness' constructed separateness/connection.

By studying and applying the different concepts and principles in the representation of the 'city' and the 'wilderness', the study wishes to discuss the following: *Signos*' and *Planet Philippines*' discourse on the issue of global warming based on their version of the 'city' and the 'wilderness', possible actions demanded by these documentaries, and the directions that could be taken by the audience based on the textual analysis of the documentaries.

Keywords: city, wilderness, representation, global warming

## ABSTRAKT

Intal, C. S. (2011). *Wilderness to City to Wilderness: Representations of the City, the Wilderness, and Global Warming in Signos and Planet Philippines*. Unpublished Undergraduate Thesis, University of the Philippines College of Mass Communication.

Ang pag-aaral na ito ay gumagamit ng panunuring tekstwal upang basahin ang mga representasyon ng siyudad at ng iláng sa mga dokumentaryong pangkalikasan ng GMA-7 na *Signos* (2008) at *Planet Philippines* (2009) at kung paano ito kaugnay sa pagbabago ng klima ng mundo.

Ang pagtalakay ng *Signos* (2008) at *Planet Philippines* (2009) sa pagbabago ng klima ng mundo ay ganap na magkaiba dahil ang tinatahak na kuro nito ay mula sa dalawang magkaibang konsepto, bagamat interesanteng distinksyon: ang konsepto ng siyudad at ng iláng. Isinasali sa pag-aaral ang perspektibong historikal, representasyonal, at *urban political ecology* upang makalikha ng pang-unawa ukol sa pagkakaiba o pagkakaugnay ng siyudad at iláng.

Sa pamamagitan ng pag-aaral at paggamit ng iba't ibang konsepto at prinsipyo sa representasyon ng 'siyudad' at ng 'iláng', ninanais ng pag-aaral na ito na pag-usapan ang mga sumusunod: pagtalakay ng *Signos* at ng *Planet Philippines* sa isyu ng pagbabago ng pag-init ng mundo sa bersyon nito ng 'siyudad' at 'iláng', mga kaukulang aksyon na hinihingi ng mga dokumentaryo, at ang direksyon na maaaring tahakin ng manonood batay sa pagsusuri ng mga dokumentaryo.

Keywords: siyudad, iláng, representasyon, pag-init ng mundo

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Title Page	i
Approval Sheet	ii
Biographical Data	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Dedication	v
Abstract	vi
Table of Contents	viii
<b>I. REPRESENTATION OF ENVIRONMENTS: Setting the Question, Objectives, Review of Related Literature and Framework</b>	01
<b>II. CITY AND (VS.) THE WILD Theoretical Premises of the Study</b>	06
A. City: Antithesis of Nature	06
B. Wilderness: Underdog of the City	09
C. Shades of Environmentalism	12
<b>III. ABOUT THE DOCUMENTARIES Differently Similar</b>	14
A. Plot/Structure	14
B. Treatment	15
C. Scoring	15
D. Storytelling	16
E. Special Topics	17
F. Differently Similar	17



<b>IV. THEMES</b>	24
<b>Beyond the Lights and Sounds</b>	
A. Fast City, Slow Wilderness	24
B. Sounds of Mysticism	26
C. Storytelling	26
D. Tourism As a Condition	29
E. God-Creator, God-Destroyer	29
F. Narrating the City and The Wild	30
G. The City and The Wilderness, So Far	31
<b>V. “TAYO ANG MAY KASALANAN” (?)</b>	34
<b>A Critique: Blaming the Classless Human</b>	
<b>VI. SUMMARY</b>	36
<b>Saying Little</b>	
<b>VII. BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	38

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Description	Page
1	Close up of the host	25
2	Long shot of host upon entering Alcoy forest in Cebu	25
3	Parts of Albay, Bicol, buried due to landslides caused by flash floods	27
4	General Nakar in Quezon experiencing rapid temperature increase due to lack of trees and forests	27
5	Sequence 1 of <i>Planet Philippines</i> shows host sleeping in his bed	29
6	Sequence 30 with a close up of an alarm clock ringing with voice-over “gumising na”.	29

## LIST OF TABLES

Table	Description	Page
1	<i>Signos</i> Sequence Breakdown	19
2	<i>Planet Philippines</i> Sequence Breakdown	19
3	<i>Signos</i> Narrative Breakdown	23
4	<i>Planet Philippines</i> Narrative Breakdown	23

## CHAPTER I

### **REPRESENTATION OF ENVIRONMENTS: Setting the Question, Objectives, Review of Related Literature and Framework**

I have particular interest in the ways technological advancements for filmmaking shape the message a material tries to project to its viewers. Technological advancements, I believe, are pushed only as far as how we want them, and we can treat information the same way. Information comes only as frequent, as fast, or as easy as we want it to be. And in the advent of the green trend, products of technological progression—such as high-definition cameras and added tools or applications for editing—have been highly utilized to increase the amount of information and also shape the information in ways we might not notice in passive viewing. I acknowledge the fact that developments in the filming technology have inevitable influence in the formation of meaning in broadcast materials, whether they are overt or latent. This development is one of the major factors that fuel the primary objective of the research and more questions, even, that are not expected during its early pitching. The study is entitled *Wilderness to City to Wilderness* to call attention to a simple implication—among many other propositions—found in the documentaries, that to progress to civilization costs us more than we can handle and so going back to a certain form of wilderness is necessary. The idea undeniably makes sense, but the study finds it important to challenge its very premise. What kind of city and wilderness do *Signos* and *Planet Philippines* talk about in the first place? Why do they blame the city? Why adore the wilderness?

The study investigates the representations of the city and the wilderness in two local environmental documentaries and also offers a discussion on the representations' relationship in the discourse of global warming. This chapter will discuss the nature of the materials that are examined, research objectives, themes that are found and used in analyzing the data, and the scope and limitations of the research.

The research wants to find out how ideologies found in GMA-7's environmental documentaries reproduce the concepts of the city and the wilderness and how they are intertwined in the discourse of global warming. The materials chosen for the research are GMA-7's environmental documentary specials *Signos* and *Planet Philippines*.

Interestingly, both documentaries engage in the discussion of global warming but in strongly idiosyncratic ways. *Signos* aired on television in 2008 and *Planet Philippines* premiered the following year. The network claimed that these TV specials are the first local environmental documentaries to use high-definition cameras. The claim paid off as both received recognition from local and international award-giving bodies. *Signos* won the 22<sup>nd</sup> Philippine Movie Press Club Star Awards for best documentary special, while *Planet Philippines* bagged the bronze medal for the environmental-documentary category in the 53rd New York Festivals—and each had DVD versions for the public released at the same year of their television premiers.

The primary objective of the study is to describe the concepts of the city in *Signos* and the wilderness in *Planet Philippines*, and use these concepts as basis for the documentaries' discourse on global warming. The documentaries point out industrialization as a propeller of climate change and that the definitive resolution to this is to restore the city back to wilderness, which the study interrogates.

But before concepts, concrete definitions of the city and the wild have been proven sometimes complex and conflicting. There is, then, a huge inclination for the city and the wilderness to “become a state of mind, to accept as wilderness those places people call wilderness” (Nash, 1982, p.5). The study considers Nash's suggestion of conceptualizing a scale of situations or setting to differentiate the city and the wild (1982). Simply put, an immense unmodified area would be very close to wilderness and a single road moves us to the civilized category.

Chapter II serves as the study's constant reference in proving or disproving the conceptions of the city and the wild. The main authors cited include David Pepper, Roderick Nash, Lewis Halloway, and Phil Hubbard, among many others. Chapter III lays out a detailed presentation of the form of the documentaries, starting from the plot or structure, and then treatment, scoring, special topics, and narrative. Treatment refers to video transition and the effects applied to specific footage. Storytelling includes the script and its flow, and remarkable or noticeable words by the host which reflect the documentaries vision of the city and the wilderness. Scoring applies to the background music each documentary uses to supplement the tone and the mindset it wishes to create upon the consumption of the materials. The special topics discuss how each documentary

highlights religion as the people's response to global warming and tourism as a condition for environmental conservation. The following chapter, Chapter IV, digests the abovementioned elements further and introduces five themes which are brought up during the processing of the documentaries. Chapter V offers a short critique on the narrative form of *Signos* and *Planet Philippines* which questions its environmentalism and lastly, Chapter VI synthesizes all the elements found to form a conclusion as to how each documentary values global warming, one from the side of the city, one from the wilderness and the implications of the findings of the study.

From 2000-2010, there have only been seven environment-related studies made by undergraduate students from the College of Mass Communication. Jovylyn Chi's *The Environment in the Eyes of the People and the Press* (2000), Melissa Lavares's *Green TV* (2002), Boots Liquigan's *Nature in the News* (2009), and Marlone Paner and Fanshen Pateros's *Tracing the Green Trend* (2009) investigate newscast content and reportage of global warming stories in the Philippines. Naomi Cammayo and Cassandra Cuevas's *Zooming into the Wild* (2006) tackles the people's perception of wildlife preservation and environmental awareness. Katrina Perez and Joanna Villaflor's *Taghoy: kusoy nintingog* and Melanie Fajardo and Jehanna Rossel's *Environmental Broadcasting* (2008) discuss the roles played by the media in disaster management and environmental awareness. My study, on the other hand,—a first of its kind to focus on the politics of representation—concentrates on two specific television documentaries, *Signos* and *Planet Philippines*, and discusses their underlying representations of the city and the wilderness and how these representations help in packaging the issue of global warming in both documentaries.

The study anchors its manner of analysis on formalism described by Bennett (1979) as a branch of literary criticism which argues that “literature was not and cannot be a reflection of *reality* but only a semiotically organized *signification* of it.” (p.20, emphasis by author). Bennett (1979) adds that the literary texts tend to displace our customary view of the real world to make it an object of transformed consciousness. The formalist then seeks to expose “the devices through which the literature tends to defamiliarize or challenge certain conceptions” (p.20). Bennett (1979) expounds this by saying that “literature creates a vision of the object instead of serving as a means for

knowing it” (p.24). Given the theoretical premise, the research aims to use the documentaries *Signos* and *Planet Philippines*, as creators of a vision of the city and the wilderness, and not a reflection of it. The devices, or themes, that were established will serve as the gateway to explain how the documentaries estrange us from our conventional understandings of the city and the wilderness.

Formalist research soon swung emphasis from phonetics to semantics or in the direction of the correlation between sound and meaning. Elrich (1955) describes that if meaning cannot be separated from sound, “it seemed equally futile to separate the cumulative meaning of the literary work, its ‘content’, from the artistic embodiment commonly known as ‘form’” (p. 186). The Russian Formalists became impatient with the established binary of ‘form versus content’ which, “cuts a work of art into two halves: a crude content and a superimposed, purely external form” (p. 186).

This study is a qualitative research anchored on a textual analysis of documentaries in study. Textual analysis, as defined by Alan Mckee (1993), is “a methodology for gathering information about sense-making practices” (p.64) and analyzing texts by means of “forensic analysis” wherein we treat texts as signs or hints of “how people have made sense of the world” (p.64).

I find it a spot for an intriguing and interesting research because the discussion of global warming by *Signos* and *Planet Philippines* are in contrasting points of view—the city and the wilderness. The tool of analysis, as mentioned earlier, is anchored on textual analysis, guided by a formalist framework. This involves cautious filtering of the images in the documentaries to read the different representations of the city and the wilderness that they suggested. *Signos* and *Planet Philippines* released DVD copies in the same year of their television premiere but the materials originally used for this study were downloaded from YouTube, where each documentary was uploaded into seven parts.

*Signos* and *Planet Philippines* are analyzed through the following elements: treatment of video material (transitions and effects), music, special topics such as tourism and religion, and storytelling. Each element is expected to contribute to the stereotype *Signos* and *Planet Philippines* create for the city and the wilderness, supporting the scholars’ views, or creating questions of their own. With the way footage are altered or edited, the treatment gives us a glimpse of the documentaries’ initial take or feel of the

subject matter (city/wild). Storytelling illustrates the way *Signos* and *Planet Philippines* elaborate global warming to its audience through cause and effect and constant inference with past conditions. A highlight on tourism asserts how the documentaries may imply this as a condition for environmental conservation that is still directed towards profit maximization. A discussion on religion shows the residents' two- faced God as an explanation for national calamities and death.

GMA-7's *Signos* (2008) and *Planet Philippines* (2009) will be the only texts where the researched concepts of the city and the wilderness shall be applied and analyzed. The study does not probe on the station's programming, or the lack thereof, for environmental-related materials. The study does not take a political economic perspective to determine any possible influence from its producers. The study discusses the dynamics of representation present in the documentaries and excludes environmental planning and development.



## CHAPTER II

### CITY AND (VS.) THE WILD Theoretical Premises of the Study

The study of the city and the wild has been proven to be an ambitious attempt by scholars because of the plurality of representations present in texts. In this light, the study has identified the literature that trimmed down the understanding of the city as the direct opposite of nature, occupied with human activity and industrial advancement, and the wilderness as a place of fear, something to be subjugated through civilization, but also a shelter for people who believe that there has been over-civilization.

The concepts of the city and the wilderness mentioned, as well as the question of the natural and unnatural, when applied, will hopefully offer a peek at the documentaries' understanding of what constitutes a city or a wild area and how these concepts are related or unrelated by efforts to address global warming.

#### A. City: Antithesis of Nature

The connection between cities and nature has long been a point of debate for both “environmentally minded social theorists and socially minded environmental theorists” (Heynen, *et al.*, 2006, p. 4). Urbanization in the city has long been thrashed out as a course in which a ‘natural’ environment is taken over by an unsophisticated ‘built’ environment. Bookchin (1979, p. 26 as cited in Heynen, *et al.*, 2006) makes this point by proposing that

[t]he modern city represents a regressive encroachment of the synthetic to the natural, of the inorganic (concrete, metals, and glass) on the organic, or crude, elemental stimuli on variegated wide-ranging ones (Bookchin, 1979, p. 4).

The city is here hypothesized as the ‘antithesis of nature’, where the organic is ruted against the artificial (Heynen, *et al.*, p. 4). This apparent opposition greatly manifests in terms of physical, social, and economic stipulations in which the city presents a wider range of alternatives and occasions that enables residents to engage in

more interesting activities (Clark, 1996). Short (1991) supports this by stating that “the creation of liveable places and useable spaces is a mark of civilization” (p. 6), wherein words such as creation, liveable, and useable amplify the notion of the city as a place for profuse human activity. Short (1991) further states that the city has always been the place for an effortless individual expression, the constant inspection of old values versus contemporary trends, and the verification of norms versus new ways (p. 86, 110). Heynen, *et al.* (2006) have coined the term ‘cyborg world’ to describe the urban world [city]—“part natural/part social, part technical/part cultural, but with no clear boundaries, centres, or margins” (p. 12). Escobar mentions Haraway (1991:1 in 1996 as cited in Peet & Watts, 1996, p.59) as he elaborates on cyborgs by identifying them as “hybrid creatures, composed of organism and machine... Cyborgs are not organic wholes but strategic assemblages of organic, textual, and technical component.” The common image of the city has become that of a future world en route for “progress, modernisation, [and] development” (Williams, 1973). Dice (1955) emphasizes the complexity of the city:

in the city there is much greater specialization of labor than in towns. The offices of government, large mercantile houses, major manufacturing plants, and centers of transportation are usually located in cities. To its surrounding area, a city furnishes machinery and other manufactured goods, public administration, police protection, advanced educational facilities, and many other kinds of special services, all of which are essential for the maintenance of a complex culture (Dice, 1955, p.263).

In a big city, “the interrelations among the various parts of a human society reach their highest degree of complexity” (Dice, 1955, p.263). Nonetheless, a city is never self sufficient. The food of its population, the raw supplies of its industrial units, and trade items must be drawn from the adjacent area or from far-flung regions.

On the other hand, anti-city sentiments from the ‘greens’, according to Pepper (1996), emphasize that “the ‘industrial’ society is founded on the too-narrow objective of profit maximization, encouraging overconsumption” (p. 14). He adds that industrialization, caused by global influence, stems from western culture, and that it promotes isolation from nature.

Westerners see nature as an instrument to be used for endless material gain. We take this perspective partly because we imagine we are separate from nature; a view inherent in our science and technology as it developed from the seventeenth century (Pepper, 1996, p. 13).

### *Origins of the City*

An idea of the beginnings of the city facilitates a better understanding of its representations in urban studies. Carter (1983, pp. 3-8) enumerates four general theories of the origins of the city: hydraulic, economic, military, and religion.

Carter's hydraulic theory presents the concept of a surplus, "the simple one of a product over and above that is necessary to sustain life" (1983, p.4). He explains that this surplus now becomes the basis for changes that gave birth to urbanization (lifestyle), which is incorporated into the concept of the city. The economic theory presents the city as marketplace or "the city as the centre created by a region to focus its internal processes of exchange" (Carter, 1983; p.5). Military theory explains the city as a strong point wherein the need for protection contributes to the idea of "settlement for purposes of defence" (Wheatley, 1971; as cited in Carter, 1983; p.7). Lastly, Carter (1983) utilizes Riaz Hassan's (1972) rationale on religion as the origin of the city.

The Urban Culture could not exist without respect for authority, attachment to a certain locality and deference to the rights of others. The transition from the "Nomadic culture" to the "civilized urban culture" required that the limitations to the "Nomadic culture" be overcome (Carter, 1983, p.108).

Nash (1982) describes that there is a "belief in civilization as a beneficent tide that our hardworking ancestors extended over the earth" (p.239). But as tides go, civilization could also recede which pushes man to incessantly toil at "controlling the opposing force: wilderness" (p.239).

The readings mentioned identify the city as, primarily, a born adversary of nature. It is a place where complexities like the human, technology, and civilization are associated and maintained. The city remains the reason for urbanization and, consequently, according to the greens, it is an industrial society born out of the objective of profit maximization which becomes the root cause of environmental exhaustion.

The city, as a stand-alone entity, makes more sense if conceptions of the wilderness will also be brought in. I discuss in the next section the concept of wilderness, and how scholars think of it as a separate unit from, yet interconnected to, the city.

### **B. Wilderness: Underdog of the City**

On an anti-wilderness perspective, Holloway and Hubbard (2001) articulate that wilderness is associated as an “other”, a fearful place where wild animals and wild (uncivilized) people reside (p. 131). Nash (1982) explains that the idea of wilderness intuitively became something strange to man—“an insecure and uncomfortable environment against which civilization has waged an unceasing struggle” (p.9). Nash (1982) adds that

safety, happiness, and progress all seemed dependent on rising out of a wilderness situation. It became essential to gain over nature. Fire was one step; the domestication of some wild animals another. Gradually man learned how to control the land and raise crops (Nash, 1982, p. 9).

Nash (1982) asserts that the wilderness became something strange to man,

an insecure and uncomfortable environment against which civilization had waged an unceasing battle. The Europeans knew the uninhabited forest as an important part of their folklore and mythology. Its dark, mysterious qualities made it a setting in which the prescientific imagination could place a swarm of demons and spirits (Nash, 1982, p.8).

Burch (1972) explains that in some cases, “particular places may become sacred through the emergence of myth to describe the movement of groups and individuals away from it” (p.66), which is similar to Nash’s (1982) story of the Wild Man in the wilderness.

Wilderness, for Holloway and Hubbard (2001), is frequently viewed as the “opposite of civilization” (p. 130) and insists that if ‘city’ is a challenging idea, the conception of ‘wilderness’ has the same complexity. They prove this by saying:

For many, nature is something which is “real”, it is “out there” in the forms of plants, animals, rocks, weather, water, etc. and the relationship between these elements (Holloway and Hubbard, 2001, p. 130).

In arguing the causes of our environmental disasters, Jackson (1971) believes that “many authors seem to consider man’s relationship to his environment as somehow **unnatural** (p. 3; emphasis mine)” and that this stance is due, in part, to a belief that the uncivilized man “lived in harmony with nature, a harmony that has been lost by modern society” (p. 3). This relationship of nature to forest settlers is emphasized by Short (1991), elaborating its importance to primitive societies:

In the primitive view, land is not something that can be cut into pieces and sold in parcels. Land is not a place or space within a larger spatial system. On the contrary it is seen in terms of social relations. The people, as part of nature, are intimately linked to the land... The land itself is the possession of the group as a whole. It is not privately partitioned and owned (Short, 1991, p. 22).

But as Jacobs (1992, as cited in Heynen, *et al.*, 2006, p.4) mentioned long ago, urban environments “are as natural as colonies of prairie dogs or the beds of oysters.” David Harvey (1996, as cited in Heynen, *et al.*, 2006) confirms this claim that there is “nothing intrinsically unnatural about New York City by suggesting that human activity cannot be viewed as external to ecosystem functions” (p. 186). Heynen, *et al.* (2006) conclude that understanding how natural produced environments such as cities, confined rivers, or irrigated fields stem from the understanding that these environments are all “historical results of socio-environmental processes”(p.5).

Arturo Escobar (1996: 2) recognizes that though many people seem to be conscious about nature being “socially constructed”, the increase of unproblematic renditions of nature continues. He mentions Haraway (1989):

Central to this rendition is the assumption that “nature” exists beyond our constructions. Nature, however, is neither unconstructed nor unconnected. Nature’s constructions are affected by history, economics, technology, science, and myths of all kinds as part of the “traffic between nature and culture” (Haraway, 1989a; p. 64 in Peet & Watts, 1996).

But before we knew wilderness through these conceptions, Short (1991) explains why the term “wilderness” has been continually used this way:

The term “wilderness” emerges then because it is only with settled agriculture that a distinction is made between cultivated and uncultivated land, savage and settled, domesticated and wild animals (Short, 1991, p. 5).

Holloway and Hubbard (2001) cite Short (1991) as he explains that the idea of “wilderness” started from the first agricultural revolution—10,000 years ago—when nomadic-hunter-gatherers became sedentary farmers. He claimed it important to understand that there was no such thing as wilderness in the hunter-gatherer society, and it was only in the advent of farming that a peculiarity between farmland and wilderness (settled and wild) has been made. It is now in this great contrast that we can understand the concepts of the city and the wild. Wilderness becomes something that is outside civilization, but also an integral part of civilization because its transformation to farmland to urban-industrialized societies is a clear mark of progress—giving the representation of wilderness as something to be conquered or even feared (p. 131). Similarly, Short (1991) asserts that nation building has always been closely associated with conquering the wilderness (p. 20). When nature is conquered or destroyed as such, Lefebvre (1976) as cited in Heynen, *et al.*, (2006) suggests that “it has already had to be reconstructed at another level” (p. 5). Lefebvre elaborates this level and calls it “second nature”:

...the level of “second nature” i.e. the town and the urban. The town, anti-nature and non-nature and yet second nature, heralds the future world, the world of the generalized urban. Nature, as the sum of peculiarities which are external to each other and dispersed in space, dies (Lefebvre, 1976, p. 5).

The consequences of human exploitation of non-human resources transcend land, water masses, air, and other species. This very exploitation also has consequences for the culture of its human participants and the “preservation of shared meaning of places” (Burch, *et al.*, p.66).

In the literatures mentioned, the place of wilderness evokes a convinced feeling of estrangement; a fearful place with mystical creatures such as the Wild Man. It has always been a target for civilization—as it has always been the purpose: to conquer wilderness—but no matter how adversarial the relationship of the city and the wild are, it is maintained that the wilderness is and always will be an important component of civilization which can be traced back from our paleolithic ancestors.

### C. Shades of Environmentalism

The research uses O’Riordan’s (1989 in Pepper, 1993, p.34) “European perspectives on environmental politics and resource management” in unearthing the meanings behind the differently similar narratives of *Signos* and *Planet Philippines*. The perspectives consist of ecocentrism, which “views humankind as a part of a global ecosystem, and subject to ecological laws” (p. 33), and technocentrism, which “recognises environmental problems but believes... that our current form of society will always solve them and achieve unlimited growth” (p. 33). Each perspective includes sub-topics which are Gaianism and communalism (ecocentrism), and accommodation and intervention (technocentrism), respectively.

The research applies Gaianism, under the ecocentric perspective, to elaborate not only how *Signos* and *Planet Philippines* view nature but also how it characterizes the human as nature’s ‘steward’. Gaianism’s main thrust is the belief that nature has its own rights and that there is a necessity for the “co-evolution of human and natural ethics” (Pepper, 1993), or the laws of nature.

*Planet Philippines* implores yet another view in its reproduction of the wilderness. Romanticism, a concept that feeds modern ecocentrism, is a “particular mental disposition, which today implies a liberated imagination, emotions, passions, irrationalism, and subjectivism” (Williams, 1983 in Pepper, 1996, p.188), which, almost automatically, results in mythologizing whatever it considers. Pepper (1996) states that romanticism “was clearly a reaction *against* material changes in society, which accompanied emerging and expanding industrial capitalism in the eighteenth century” (p. 189). It believes that mass production naturally violates the environment, “degrading and despoiling” (Pepper, 1996, p.189) it. This violation incessantly creates a contradiction to

capitalism, also known as the “ecological paradox of capitalism” (Pepper, 1993, p.92), wherein the industries ‘degrade and despoil’ the hand that feeds it. Gaianism and romanticism are two main concepts used by the research in synthesizing the representations found in *Signos* and *Planet Philippines*—both identified as ‘environmental’ programs hosted by a ‘green’ advocate—fused by a Marxist ecological perspective. Pepper (1993) explains

“Marxism reminds us that for most people, nineteenth-century environmental problems were *clearly* socially inflicted, through economic exploitation associated increasingly with urbanisation and capitalist industrialisation (p.63, emphasis by author).”

Now that the idea of the city and the wilderness has been introduced, I now go on to the detailed presentation of the form of *Signos* and *Planet Philippines*.



**CHAPTER III**  
**ABOUT THE DOCUMENTARIES:**  
**Differently Similar**

**A. Plot/Structure**

*Signos* gathers experts from all over the country to form a panel and shed light on the signs and the danger of giving inadequate response to global warming and climate change. The documentary consists of several mini-documentaries from areas affected by catastrophes (water, soil, agriculture, and epidemic) wherein probable causes are discussed by the panel back at the studio. The documentary also allows a computer-generated image of the major cities in the country as projection if and when global warming is not addressed properly. For a more detailed discussion of the documentary's sequence breakdown, please refer to Tables 1 and 2 at the end of this chapter.

*Planet Philippines* discusses the huge biodiversity found on Philippine territory. It highlights some of the country's critically endangered species (land, sea, and air) and also features indigenous tribes near or at wilderness areas. The host, who acts as a tourist guide, brings the audience with him as he explores the few left virgin forests and unexplored caves and marine territory of the country.

The sequence breakdown of the following documentaries points to similar narrative patterns. *Signos* and *Planet Philippines* both started off with the presentation of the human as central to the city and wilderness and how the human is affected by global warming. Following the introduction, the topic or problem is then established: global warming and the city for *Signos* and global warming and the wilderness for *Planet Philippines*. After presenting the problem, the host/s and the panel are introduced. The host and the panel are a point of constant reference—a person, or a group of professionals who will help the viewers synthesize the information—whose comments are alternately seen and heard within the whole documentary. Following a formal introduction of the host and the panel, the documentaries begin justifying, by giving concrete examples and scenarios of effects, the problem that was presented earlier. *Signos* and *Planet Philippines* both end with the human-corruptor-saviour premise, wherein the classless, nameless 'human' bears the biggest responsibility in contributing and also in correcting the damages done to the environment.

The narrative breakdown of *Signos* reflects the Marxist perspective of capitalism as being “inherently evil” (Pepper, 1993, p. 91) and the ecological contradiction of capitalism as explained by Quani (1982, in Pepper, 1993), while *Planet Philippines* becomes a vessel for romanticizing nature—which will be further discussed in Chapter VI.

### **B. Treatment**

To illustrate the alarming effects of global warming, *Signos* alternately shows the different cases of flash floods, insect infestation, erosion, and sea water level rise in General Nakar, Bicol, and La Union with an analysis from a member of the panel whose expertise best suits the presented situation. The panel consists of GMA-7 journalists Maki Pulido, Raffy Tima, Howie Severino, and professionals from all over the country headed by Dr. Josefino Comiso, Senior Research Scientist for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration or NASA. The mini-documentaries featuring the affected areas and the panel are underlined by footage of the city in increased speed as well as animated projections of the major cities in the country if and when global warming is not addressed properly. Before every commercial break, the host, Richard Gutierrez, demonstrates quick energy conservation tips for viewers.

*Planet Philippines*, on the other hand, starts with a re-enactment of city life by the host Richard Gutierrez. The re-enactment shows the rigid and routine-based life of a city boy (wakes up, eats, works, rests, eats, sleeps, and so on), incorporated by fast cuts and zoom-ins. The host rides a propeller plane to give the spectator a scene from above, a clearly divided mass of land where house roofs stand on one side and forest canopy on the other, then invites the viewers to an expedition to the wilderness. The flight cuts to a wide shot of the host at Alcoy Forest in Cebu walking past bushes and trees and admiring the canopy all in slow motion. This treatment was used liberally before the host delivers his script.

### **C. Scoring**

Musical score as a mood creator and also as a character is more utilized in *Planet Philippines* than in *Signos*. Several sequences in *Planet Philippines* are embedded with

enchanting music characterized by slow, mostly high-pitched chords in reverberation heard while the host navigates through the forest, still in slow motion. The same kind of music background is applied in various scenes shot in the forests, accompanying images of rare species and types of forests unknown to some of us. Towards the end of the documentary, as it emphasizes the city's role in the creation of global warming, the background music shifts to a more upbeat type changing from slow to fast tempo all the way up to the last scene of the host waking up in his bed.

#### **D. Storytelling**

*Signos*, with the help of the panel, follows a cause-and-effect form of storytelling to present a simple explanation of global warming and its effects on several provinces in the country. The documentary is noticeable for making the remark “we are guilty [for global warming]” and “we must rectify this [global warming]” before the unimaginable happens. It tackles all the earth's elements, and presents national and international catastrophic events wherein each element becomes an enemy or a hazard to the lives of the people. Towards the end of the documentary, *Signos* points out our relentless exploitation of fossil fuel as a main cause of pollution and principal contributor to global warming. It also thrashes out the possibility of global warming as a fallacy and the things that should be done to lessen its effects.

*Planet Philippines* illustrates the Philippine wilderness by contrasting it to a typical day at the city where businessmen and employees rush out to start the day early and work. The host acts out the daily life of a city resident for almost only a minute and then invites the viewer to go out on a totally different adventure, which is wilderness exploration. Upon entering, the host introduces the viewer to the Philippine wilderness not only by mere description of the various flora and fauna found in it but also with constant inference from the past condition of forests and organisms or species. After providing current statistics of a certain species of plant or animal or a percentage of forest cover, the host is more likely to give the previous information of the same species or forest supplemented by information from a member of the panel and data from government agencies. *Planet Philippines* then ends with the host as the previous city guy waking up from sleep.

### **E. Special Topics**

*Signos* was able to raise a discussion on religion in the brief interviews from some of the residents of Davao del Sur. Matters such as their take on the causes of calamities and their coping process are enquired, which heavily distinguish the panel and the commoner's viewpoint on climate change and global warming.

*Planet Philippines* highlights tourism, which is greatly affected by the change in sea water temperature rise in El Nido in Palawan. Journalist Howie Severino is accompanied by local divers as they search for the famous whale shark, which often visits the waters of Palawan because of the abundance of planktons.

### **F. Differently Similar**

One of the major aspects of the documentaries which brought a great deal of interest to the study is the perceptible similarity of its narrative form despite huge differences in the documentaries' viewpoints and treatment of the subject. *Signos* talks about global warming through the lens of the city, while *Planet Philippines* talks about global warming in light of the wilderness. Upon the careful segregation and grouping together of sequences, the analysis produced this sequence for both documentaries (as seen on Table 3 and 4 at the end of this chapter):

1. Human (corruptor or destroyer)
2. Issue/Problem
3. Justification
4. Human (savior)

The 'human' as corruptor of the environment serves as introduction for both *Signos* and *Planet Philippines* wherein the viewer is shortly briefed on how everyday humans contribute to pollution as a result of their engrossment with the city. Up next, the issue or subject matter of the documentary (global warming, the city, the wilderness) is introduced alongside the panel and the hosts who help in the delivery of information from the experts to the viewers. The main bulk of the documentaries, the justification part of its storytelling, gives the audience examples, scenarios, and statistics in support of the program's main cry regarding the agendum global warming. As a closing, the documentaries go back to the 'human', this time as savior of the abused nature as the

documentaries tell the audience of steps they can and must do to avoid the total ruin of our environment.

Both documentaries bear the same formula in discussing the different realms of the city and the wild with specific highlight in the role of the nameless, classless, human as, first and foremost, corruptor of the environment through its production, movement, and relentless use of resources, and then the nameless, classless, human as the only savior who is capable of righting all the wrongs done to nature. Chapter IV elaborates the sense behind the narrative of the documentaries and the implications of their differently similar character.

**TABLE 1 | SIGNOS SEQUENCE BREAKDOWN**

SEQUENCE	DURATION	TOPIC
1 Effects of Neglect	(00:01-01:49)	--Clip 1/7-- - If climate change is not addressed properly, the Philippines might suffer from food shortage, epidemics, disasters and permanent flood.
2 Are we seeing the signs?	(01:49-03:43)	- Effects of global warming in La Union (sea-level rise), General Nakar (dengue and malaria), Bicol (increased amounts of rainfall) - Artex, Malabon as a possible condition for the whole of Metro Manila
3 Climate Change	(03:43-04:11)	- Climate change is the direct result of global warming. - A one-degree Celcius increase in the earth's temperature is due to human action.
4 Effects of global warming	(04:11-05:14)	- Melting of glaciers and polar caps, bush fires in Australia, Amazon River in Brazil drying up, climate change in the Philippines
5 Panel	(05:14-07:08)	- Interviewers consist of Howie Severino, Maki Pulido and Raffy Tima - Head of the panel: Dr. Josefino Camiso of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration or NASA o Importance of discussing the issue of climate change and global warming o Most evident sign of global warming (coral bleaching) - Other signs of global warming (amount of rain per event, epidemic, landslides) o Decrease in rice and fish harvest
6 Are we ready?	(07:08-8:00)	- Can we do something to stop global warming?

**TABLE 2 | PLANET PHILIPPINES SEQUENCE BREAKDOWN**

SEQUENCE	DURATION	TOPIC
1 The Human	(00:01-00:30)	--Clip 1/7-- - Eats, sleeps, wakes up, rests, eats, sleeps, wakes up, rests... - Routine-based life shown in fast cuts and footage
2 Human-Environment Interaction	(00:30-00:50)	- Establishing that there is an interaction and a connection with the environment
3 The Wilderness	(00:50-01:35)	- "We already know too much about the city." - "This documentary shows the hidden treasures of our country that we should admire and protect."
4 Forest Ecosystem	(01:35-03:28)	- Biodiversity is huge in the wilderness. - There are 15,000 species of plants and animals in the Philippines, half of which are endemic.
5 The Narrator/Host	(03:28-04:15)	- Each region has its own biodiversity. - Introduces Alcoy Forest, gazes through the wilderness in slow motion
6 Birds	(04:15-06:20)	- Scientists and bird enthusiasts look for a black shama, a rare bird species in Cebu, which is seen on close-up for the first time on camera.
7 The Narrator Host	(06:20-06:30)	- Enters the wild in amusement and in slow motion
8 Retrospect	(06:30-7:35)	- "Dati..." "Noon..." - Only 3-8% of the original forests are left
9 Trees	(07:35-08:27)	- White and red lawan are critically endangered
10 Forest Floor	(08:27-09:54)	- Philippine biodiversity is so high that there are more species of animals in Luzon alone than in North America.

**TABLE 1 | SIGNOS SEQUENCE BREAKDOWN**

SEQUENCE	DURATION	TOPIC
7 Typhoons	(00:01-04:27)	--Clip 2/7-- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Bagyong Reming: one of the world's deadliest disasters in 2006</li> <li>- Effects of climate change will be more frequent</li> </ul>
8 Rain + Other Elements	(04:27-07:25)	- The landscape of the whole barangay of Ginubatan in Albay changed after typhoons Reming and Milenyo.
9 Preparedness	(07:25-08:12)	- The local government in Bicol initiates efforts in disaster preparedness.
10 Religion	(08:12-09:45)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Bishop Lucilo Quiambao, Bicol, includes global warming in his sermons. Says this is due to the carelessness of humans</li> <li>- Interview of residents: "di masasabing kagagawan ng Diyos, di masasabing kagagawan ng tao", "kagustuhan na rin ng Panginoon... kasi marami nang hindi nakakaalala sa panginoon", "dasal na lang ang natitirang sandata".</li> </ul>
11 Badjao Tribes	(00:01-02:30)	--Clip 3/7-- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Badjao are forced to leave their homes in the sea because of the alarming rise of sea level.</li> </ul>
		- They are reluctant in leaving because they are not familiar at living in the mountains.
12 Health Problems	(02:30-05:06)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cases of malaria in General Nakar, Quezon have been increasing since 2005, from 50 cases up to 300 cases per year</li> <li>- A group of Dumagat decided to join a born- again Christian group to temporarily resolve the epidemic in their land.</li> <li>- Snail fever in Gonzaga, Cagayan Valley because of humid temperature,</li> </ul>

**TABLE 2 | PLANET PHILIPPINES SEQUENCE BREAKDOWN**

SEQUENCE	DURATION	TOPIC
11 Forests	(00:01-02:17)	--Clip 2/7-- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Pygmy forests in Hamigitan, Davao Oriental</li> <li>- Mystical-sounding background music</li> </ul>
12 Mindanao	(02:17-03:24)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mystical-sounding background music</li> <li>- Mindanao should not be underestimated because it contains endemic species of birds, amphibians and reptiles</li> <li>- Every year a new species is discovered</li> </ul>
13 American scientist	(03:24-05:16)	- Host interacts with an American scientist who discovered a new species of bat
14 Protection from forests	(05:16-06:03)	- Forests offer a ventilated environment compared to the city
15 Agtas	(06:03-06:46)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Agta, first settlers of Sierra Madre, experience a shortage of food supply in the forests</li> <li>- The Agta remain dependent in the forest.</li> </ul>
16 Fish	(00:01-04:11)	--Clip 3/7-- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Philippines is the center of the center of the world's biodiversity.</li> <li>- "With the help of underwater film making, people are more informed and are more aware on how to conserve marine life"</li> </ul>
17 Corals	(04:11-05:28)	- Considered the rainforest of the sea, nesting ground of 25% of fishes
18 Bigger Fish	(00:01-02:07)	--Clip 4/7-- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There is a significant decrease in marine life forms.</li> <li>- The death of a small fish can cause the death of the biggest fish in the sea.</li> </ul>

**TABLE 1 | SIGNOS SEQUENCE BREAKDOWN**

SEQUENCE	DURATION	TOPIC
		disease-causing organisms thrive in the rivers
13 Fossil Fuel	(00:01-02:05)	--Clip 4/7-- - Fossil fuel as main energy source - Process of global warming (fossil fuel consumption>Carbon Dioxide>too much CO2>green house gases) - Philippine seas - Coral bleaching in El Nido - Coral reefs take 4-8 years to recover
14 Tourism	(04:28-8:53)	- Source of income for the people of Sorsogon is affected
15 When water becomes an enemy	(00:01-06:47)	--Clip 5/7-- - A one-meter rise in water level will inundate Manila, Bulacan, and Pampanga.
16 When sand becomes an enemy	(06:47-08:33)	- Noveleta, Cavite is slowly being buried in sand because of strong winds combined with rising water levels
17 Coastal erosion	(00:01-03:11)	--Clip 6/7-- - Brgy. Pilar of La Union has shrunk from 30 hectares to 3 hectares because of coastal erosion
18 Agriculture	(03:11-07:14)	- Frequent El Niño and La Niña incidents cause delayed growth or over growth of crops which might put our food supply in danger - A one-degree Celcius increase in the earth's temperature will result in a 10% decrease in rice production
19 Harsh effects are now felt	(00:01-02:10)	--Clip 7/7-- - If global warming and climate change continue, there might be struggle in the possession of water, food and medicine, and groups who control these will control the world

**TABLE 2 | PLANET PHILIPPINES SEQUENCE BREAKDOWN**

SEQUENCE	DURATION	TOPIC
19 Human-Sea Interaction	(02:07-02:42)	- Children hunting for fish in the corals
20 Coral Bleaching	(02:42-03:10)	- Species of fish find it hard to multiply because of coral bleaching due to global warming
21 Untouched Seas	(03:10-04:03)	- Seas of Brgy. Lukatan, Mindanao, part of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front or MILF territory, is protected by the Mandaya tribe - It is the first time that marine life under this part of the Philippine seas is explored and televised. - The tribe's law is against too much fishing.
22 Marine Life under Lukatan Seas	(04:03-06:07)	- Mystical-sounding background music - A member of the tribe is put to prison for eating a pawikan
23 Water as Shapers	(00:01-00:45)	--Clip 5/7-- - Mystical-sounding background music - Water creates tunnels and caves which serve as habitat for other species.
24 Host/Narrator	(00:45-01:32)	- Host/narrator preparing to enter a cave
25 Unexplored cave passages	(01:32-07:10)	- Unexplored species - There is a rich ecosystem [found in caves] amidst being secluded
26 Humans	(07:10-08:40)	- Humans are enthusiastic in the discovery of new species. - Cave mapping - Even the slightest human action is felt by the smallest creature.



**TABLE 1 | SIGNOS SEQUENCE BREAKDOWN**

SEQUENCE	DURATION	TOPIC
20 What should be done?	(02:10-03:40)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A change in our energy consumption, development of renewable energy sources and energy conservation (via carbon footprint)</li> <li>- Developed countries have more responsibility but it is still a global effort.</li> </ul>
21 Is global warming true?	(03:40-5:35)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- True or not, global warming is an issue we cannot neglect.</li> <li>- Earth is the only planet that can sustain a good life.</li> <li>- “Tayo ang dahilan kung bakit ganito ang mundo kaya tayo rin ang dapat ang magwasto nito.”</li> </ul>

**TABLE 2 | PLANET PHILIPPINES SEQUENCE BREAKDOWN**

SEQUENCE	DURATION	TOPIC
27 Mega Biodiversity Country	(00:01-01:58)	<p>--Clip 6/7--</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There is a huge threat in the Philippines’ natural resources.</li> <li>- The Philippines as a biodiversity hotspot: a total of 641 critically endangered species of plants and animals</li> </ul>
28 Philippine Eagle	(01:58-04:10)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Represents the most endangered species of animal in the Philippines</li> </ul>
29 Earth	(04:10-07:48)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The earth is four billion years old and the human race has only been living for 200,000 years but the changes that were done are immense.</li> <li>- An increase in population is equal to an increase in needs.</li> <li>- All our needs come from the environment.</li> <li>- Forest areas as big as Cavite are lost each year.</li> </ul>
30 Human as saviour	(00:01-05:35)	<p>--Clip 7/7--</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Interconnectedness</li> <li>- The human race has the capability of improving the present condition of the world.</li> <li>- “Gumising na.”</li> </ul>

**TABLE 3 | SIGNOS NARRATIVE BREAKDOWN**

SEQUENCE	TOPIC
1. Effects Of Neglect	Human
2. Are We Seeing The Signs?	
3. Climate Change	Issue/Problem
4. Effects Of Global Warming	
5. Panel	Justification
6. Are We Ready?	
7. Typhoons	
8. Rain + Other Elements	
9. Preparedness	
10. Religion	
11. Badjao Tribes	
12. Health Problems	
13. Fossil Fuel	
14. Tourism	
15. When Water Becomes An Enemy	
16. When Sand Becomes An Enemy	
17. Coastal Erosion	
18. Agriculture	Human
19. Harsh Effects Are Now Felt	
20. What Should Be Done?	
21. Is Global Warming True?	

**TABLE 4 | PLANET PHILIPPINES NARRATIVE BREAKDOWN**

SEQUENCE	TOPIC
1. The Human	Human
2. Human-Environment Interaction	
3. The Wilderness	Issue/Problem
4. Forest Ecosystem	
5. Narrator/Host	Justification
6. Birds	
7. Narrator/Host	
8. Retrospect	
9. Trees	
10. Forest Floor	
11. Forests	
12. Mindanao	
13. American Scientist	
14. Protection From Forests	
15. Agtas	
16. Fish	
17. Corals	
18. Big Fish	
19. Human-Sea Interaction	
20. Coral Bleaching	
21. Untouched Seas	
22. Marine Life Under The Lukatan Seas	
23. Water As Shapers	
24. Narrator/Host	
25. Unexplored Cave Passages	
26. Humans	
27. Mega Biodiversity Country	
28. Philippine Eagle	
29. Earth	
30. Human As Saviour	

## CHAPTER IV

### THEMES

#### Beyond the Lights and Sounds

##### A. Fast City, Slow Wilderness

This section examines the visual treatment given in the documentaries *Signos* and *Planet Philippines* that heavily includes the editing applied in the material. This section bridges the previous conceptions of the city and the wilderness and applies them to the analysis of treatment to create an integrated presentation of how *Signos* and *Planet Philippines* reinforce established city and wilderness stereotypes.

With the use of editing, both documentaries are able to create parts and parcels of their respective versions of the city and the wilderness. The modification, or the process, is mainly swayed by the “subject matter, the director’s approach to it and the way the images were shot” (Kenny, 2005, p.129). Sequences 1 and 2 of *Planet Philippines* and sequences 20-22 of *Signos* illustrate the city as a fast-paced place as shown in its consistent use of cityscape, bright lights, and human activity footage all in increased speed and juxtaposed in fast transitions. This treatment reinforces the same character of the city as a place for prolific human activity, as mentioned by Short (1991), and a place where organisms and machine make up the “cyborg world” (Haraway, 1991:1, as cited in Escobar, 1996, in Peet & Watts, 1996).

Contrary to the documentary’s treatment on the first 50 seconds of its introduction, *Planet Philippines* brought in its subject, the wilderness, with footage of Alcoy forest in Cebu shot in slow motion. In Sequence 5, the host /narrator of the documentary enters the frame, still in slow motion. Close ups of a seemingly mesmerized look on his face is shown, while he scans the forest with his eyes. The host’s spellbound expression upon entering the forest is also one to look out for because we see a man who will deliver us to the understanding of the wilderness but looks at it like a first timer. His expressions tell us that if not fearful, the place is a mystical one—with creatures bound to eat you or turn you into something else. The host’s entrance, to me, is so dramatic that it keeps the idea of wilderness in its unreachable hiding state, emphasizing the documentary’s major remark of the wild: “iba ang istura ng kagubatan.”

Figures 1 and 2 (left to right): Close up of the host and long shot of host upon entering Alcoy forest in Cebu.



Source: *Planet Philippines*, GMA News and Public Affairs (2009).

The characteristics of the treatment applied to the sequences mentioned above already describe how the documentaries perceive the city and the wilderness: fast (city) and slow (wilderness). Both believe and showcase that the city is the place for people and when there are people, there is activity, work, profit, and also pollution. This relates us back to what has been discussed in Chapter II, that the city has long been described as a place for prolific human activity (Short, 1991) and that one of the functions for its very existence is to serve as a center formed by a region for processes of exchange (Carter, 1983) or in other words, work and profit. The wilderness, as described by *Planet Philippines*, becomes a direct opposite of the *fast* city. The pace is slow because there is only little, or no, human activity present and there still hasn't been a massive encroachment of resources which makes it the opposite of civilization/city (Holloway and Hubbard, 2001).

The treatment of the two documentaries reinforce the idea of the city and the wilderness as two dissimilar realms in which knowledge of the civilized area, the city, is expected and knowledge of the wilderness remains hidden or too dangerous to even excavate.

Following a discussion on treatment is an element which also stands as a character and is shaping the way information is perceived by the audience by creating tone and mood. I examine in Subhead 'B' how *Planet Philippines* used scoring to reinforce its message about the wilderness.

## B. Sounds of Mysticism

The slow-motion treatment, as well as the choice of background music, underpins the association of wilderness to a fearful or a mysterious place inhabited by wild animals and wild people (Halloway and Hubbard, 2001). The influence of this judgment might have also roots from the semi-human Wild Man, the most significant fantasy creature of the wilderness of medieval Europe, which was described in more detail by Nash (1982):

His naked figure, covered completely with thick hair, appeared widely in the art, literature, and drama of the period. Immensely strong, he was frequently portrayed in the tradition of classical sileni and centaurs, grasping an uprooted tree. According to folk tradition, the Wild Man lived in the heart of the forest as far as possible from civilization. He was regarded as a kind of ogre who devoured children and ravished maidens (p.12).

In the background of sequences 11, 12, 22, and 23, enchanting music characterized by slow, mostly high-pitched chords in reverberation is heard while the host navigates the forest. The same theme of instrumental music is used all throughout the documentary—except when the host speaks. *Planet Philippines*' use of music maintains the idea of the wilderness as the strange, the fearful and the other, as explained by Holloway and Hubbard (2001). Slow, playful, and almost mysterious beats accompany the visuals of an area we might have never gone into and species we might have never seen before. Music characterizes the wilderness in such a way that it is more segregated from the city which is, according to the documentary, a place which we already know too much.

Following the discussion on the aural aspect of the documentaries is the choice of words and the way each documentary picks out a specific topic to highlight and incorporate into the overall storytelling, which I detail below.

## C. Storytelling

### 1. *First Victimized*

*Signos* believes that the city's use of fossil fuel to run its industries is the principal cause of global warming, and points the city and its residents the criminals for it. Sequence 13 of the documentary mentions that since the advent of the Industrial

Revolution during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, there has not been a halt in the consumption of fossil fuel. Cayne (1991) mentions that 75% of industrial nations contribute to carbon dioxide emission coming from burning fossil fuels.

In the cities, there is more burning of fossil fuels, more people breathing out carbon dioxide and fewer green plants using up the carbon dioxide (Tesar, 1991; p.28).

“Tayo ang may kasalanan,” the host would often say, over footage of the city with hundreds of people running its busy streets.

Sequence 2 of *Signos* makes an important distinction when effects of the city’s pollution are made known to us: Barangay Maasin of Zamboanga being slowly eaten by the rising tides of the ocean, Albay communities’ destruction by landslides and flash floods from Mt. Mayon, and the Dumagat of General Nakar being pestered by malaria, infecting 300 people in the year 2007, to name a few.

Figures 3 and 4 (left to right): Parts of Albay, Bicol, buried due to landslides caused by flash floods and General Nakar in Quezon experiencing rapid temperature increase due to lack of trees and forests.



Source: *Signos*, GMA News and Public Affairs, 2008.

The effects mentioned in *Signos* only add up to the city’s capability to pollute and yet still be more invulnerable compared to other places in the country. The city may be the criminal, “tayo ang may kasalanan”, but the provinces mentioned are the first victimized.

## 2. *Retrospection*

*Planet Philippines* makes great emphasis on the connection of the people to a certain form of wilderness by repeatedly mentioning the past conditions of our wilderness and reiterating the protection we used to get from them. ‘before’ and ‘a long time ago’, as discussed in Sequence 8, are commonly used to discuss what is the ideal percentage of forest, condition of trees, or number of species. This makes us think that the past condition is more ideal, and restoring this past condition is highly recommended. The documentary suggests restoration to a form of wilderness and the abandonment of a made-up environment created by civilization. As in Genette’s (1982 in Marie-Laure & Alphen, 1992 as cited in Makaryk, 1992) work in Narratology, “order of presentation or the disruptions of chronology through analepses (flash backs) or prolepses (flash forward)” (Marie-Laure & Alphen, 1992 in Makaryk, 1992) bears a heavy weight in structuralist narratology.

## 3. *Wilderness=Reality*

Sequence 30 concludes *Planet Philippines* with a close-up of an alarm clock ringing with the host’s voice-over saying “Gumising na”. The screen cuts to black while the piercing sound of an alarm clock still rings in the background. This last bit of information suggests that the narrator is telling his audience to wake up from a dream state which is the city and start rediscovering the world through the wilderness.

The idea echoes the concept of the city as unnatural, or the concept of a constructed environment as unreal and the wilderness as reality with real elements (trees, plants, animals, etc.). *Planet Philippines* promotes the reconciliation of the man-nature harmony that was lost due to modernization which has separated the supposed interconnectedness between the city and the wilderness.

Figures 5 and 6 (left to right): Sequence 1 of *Planet Philippines* shows host sleeping in his bed and Sequence 30 with a close up of an alarm clock ringing with voice-over “gumising na”.



Source: *Planet Philippines*, GMA News and Public Affairs, 2009.

After discussing the specific details of the script, I now advance to the topics that play a key role in the documentaries’ discourse on global warming. Subhead ‘D’ discusses tourism and ‘E’ presents a concise discussion about religion.

#### **D. Tourism as a Condition**

If climate change upsets anything that is economically vital, Sequence 18 of *Signos* mentions the tourism industry as one that is greatly affected by these unwanted environmental changes. The documentary specifically mentions the increased occasions of coral bleaching in El Nido in Palawan and the rapidly decreasing number of whale sharks in Sorsogon. This tells us that industries or capitalism, like the tourism industry, play a major role in the conditions of environmental conservation. The importance of tourism, as shown in *Signos*, echoes Pepper’s assertion (1996) that the industrial society is focused on profit maximization and that the efforts, or majority of these, might be directed towards tourism and not for preservation.

#### **E. God-Creator, God-Destroyer**

This section applies religion as a peoples’ tool in explaining natural catastrophes and the religious value of wilderness preservation.

The people’s utilization of religion during natural calamities has links to the Israelite’s experience in their forty-year wandering, which gave birth to the idea of wilderness as a sanctuary from a sinful society—when a society becomes fraudulent



because of civilization, the people should rededicate their selves to God through the wilderness (Nash, 1982). The Israelites believed that the wilderness is the kind of environment which draws people closer to God, purifying their souls and carrying them to a paradisiacal land. And so without losing its cruel and unwelcoming character, the wilderness paradoxically becomes a sanctuary and a penalizing force (Nash, 1982).

Residents of the provinces and their religion also play an important function in the people's understanding of natural catastrophes occurring in the country, as discussed in Sequence 10 of *Signos*. For one, people in the provinces mentioned in the documentary believe that global warming and all its repercussions are, in a way, God's punishments for man's abusive decisions toward its environment. Other residents believe that faith in their 'punishing' God is the strongest tool for recovery and survival.

The destruction of the land by natural calamities is, for the residents, an exhibit of man's abusive behavior toward the environment and at the same time a call for Man-God reunion. The preservation of wilderness now gains more value because not only does it symbolize sanctuary and purification but also a preparation for paradise land (Nash, 1982) or the Man-God reunion. The Exodus experience of the Israelites established the custom of heading to the wilderness "for purification and faith" and it is from this tradition that religious leaders began looking to it as "a place for rededication and refuge" (Nash, 1982; p.16).

## **F. Narrating The City and The Wild**

*Signos'* main thrust is anti-industrial. It believes that industrialization is the source of environmental degradation. It has always been clear of its stance regarding the negative effects of industrialization and reflects that it has the inherent trait of polluting nature. However, *Signos* does not necessitate the abolition of such industries because after all, the industries, which have a negative representation, stand as clear marks of a positive process which is civilization and progress. *Signos'* narrative mirrors the concept of the *ecological paradox of capitalism* of the Marxist environmentalist perspective, wherein capitalism destroys the same thing that keeps it alive (Pepper, 1993, p.92). *Planet Philippines'* narrative, on the other hand, romantically describes nature in its entirety and its role in the lives of humans. Romanticism, as Nash (1982) explains,

“resists definition, but it implies an enthusiasm for the strange, remote, solitary and mysterious” (p.47), which are all part of *Planet Philippines* idealisation of nature. It believes in a premise that people residing in the cities are alienated from nature and thus acts as a vessel, a romantic storyteller, to bring nature closer to people.

Based on the narrative breakdown of the documentaries, *Signos* and *Planet Philippines*, although they discuss global warming in different viewpoints, possess a similar Human-Problem-Justification-Human (corruptor/saviour) pattern in its narration of the city and the wilderness. It has become a point of interest now that the analysis of this similarity reveals what the documentaries actually say about the city and the wilderness and why they say it that way. It was found out that *Signos* has accepted, through its narrative that capitalism is the intrinsic evil that propagates ecological problems, while *Planet Philippines*, all its elements combined, romanticize nature as it takes a trip and offers a journey into Philippine biodiversity.

### **G. The City and The Wilderness, So Far**

*Signos* represents the city (Metro Manila), a place built to satisfy the need for profit maximization and civilization, as the ‘workplace’ of global warming. This results from the city’s use of fossil fuel to run its businesses to generate revenue and equip itself with more capability to expand. But surprisingly, areas farther than the alleged propeller of global warming suffer its repercussions.

*Planet Philippines*, on the other hand, yields a representation of the wilderness as the strange, mysterious vast of land, and yet the rightful place or condition to be—restoring the original man-nature harmony that was lost due to modernization. This is seen in the documentary’s implication of the wild as a way to discover our world, suggesting that what we have and what we do in the city disconnect or isolate us more. The viewer is expected to experience a ‘visual orgasm’ that mystery and fear for the wild is replaced with adoration. Finally, *Planet Philippines* tells the viewer to wake up from a routine-based, made-up life and environment, and try to see the real world that is in the wilderness.

Global warming for *Signos* punishes those who are already burdened as it shows its effects on General Nakar, Bicol, and Davao Oriental to name a few. For *Planet*

*Philippines*, it indicates over-civilization which necessitates us to take a break, visit the wilderness and learn that the real world lies in it, undiscovered. Global warming, as these two documentaries imply, is a condition primarily propagated by people with power and resources (in the city) and yet areas far from the city, the ‘less civilized’, are the first victimized. The city’s offspring, global warming, now becomes a step to slowly defeat and eradicate wilderness and also a step to win in the century-long fight between the city and the wild. Clearly, the city has more, or maybe the best, capacity to protect itself from global warming which manifests in the way humans have erected structures in the city which are made to endure the effects of increasing global temperature. The wilderness or the ‘real environment’, however, though it can tolerate, cannot fully endure the effects of global warming because it is made of organisms (dead and alive) whereas the city or the ‘cyborg world’ is a mixture of machine and organism (dead and alive) (Haraway, 1991).

Retrospection, on the other hand, is wilderness’s attempt to fight back. Past statistics and data, which show a more favorable condition of wilderness, is compared to civilization in a contemporary society which, with its complexities, gives birth to countless changes and inventions in which global warming soon followed. A constant reference to the past condition, which is mostly a wilderness condition, establishes ‘The Good and The Bad’, in which the wilderness is the bearer of good and the city the bad. And because there is an assumption that we might be going under too much civilization, we naturally would want to revisit the good state, which is more of the wilderness.

The peoples’ utilization of religion in events of calamities brought by global warming is two-faced; God creator and God destroyer. The residents of calamity stricken areas have used religion to explain the why’s and how’s of the typhoons, flash floods, sea level rises, erosions, etc., and associated these as punishments for man’s abusive behavior towards the environment. At the same time, residents have also used religion as a tool for recovery wherein faith is the product of the punishment and the motivation for such a recovery.

The documentary also shows that in global warming, industries destroy other industries. It hampers tourism, specifically, which generates revenue for the provinces in its scope and the country. *The Signs*, or *Signos* tells the audience, who lives in the city, to start evaluating their actions and reconsidering overconsumption of resources. *Signos*

delivers environmental conservation to its viewers, but with emphasis on the need for it for the tourism industry upkeep. This implications leads us back to the city being founded on a “too-narrow objective of profit maximization” (Pepper, 1996, p.14).

Both documentaries offer us an experience of the city and the wilderness which tells us that to experience both realms results to a better understanding of each other. Nash (1982) accounts Northland explorer Sigmund Olson’s beneficial experience of both city and the wilderness.

It was his life in the civilization that ultimately explained his appreciation of wilderness. Olson realized that without the experience of living amidst cities and cars and whistling locomotives, he would have never understood the deepest significance of wilderness as stabilizer and sustainer (Nash, 1982, p. 245).

To find the value of wilderness through the city and vice versa emphasizes man’s need for both wilderness and civilization. The city is a reminder of man’s continuous facility to adapt though centuries and the wilderness as a reminder that we are part of a larger web, “to remind civilized people that out there is a different world, older and greater and deeper by far than ours, a world which surrounds and sustains the little world of men” (Abbey, 1968 in Nash, 1982, p.255).

The city and the wilderness are two realms which were heavily segregated by the documentaries. The visions they have created conform to the scholar’s view of the city as fast paced and civilized, and the wilderness as slow and stagnant, if not backward. The conceptions remain dichotomized, and there is a noticeable reference to the wilderness especially in times of calamities, while the city in times of progress. Their discourse on global warming, however, tends to be complimentary. For *Signos*, there has been too much of civilization and for *Planet Philippines*, too much civilization naturally leads us back to the wilderness where such development remains absent.

**CHAPTER V**  
**“TAYO ANG MAY KASALANAN” (?)**  
**A Critique: Blaming the Classless Human**

*Signos* and *Planet Philippines*' main view of nature is reflected in one of the ecocentric perspectives on environmental politics which is Gaianism. Lovelock (1989 in Pepper 1996), explains the Gaia Hypothesis by stating that

the earth can be regarded as if it were a single living organism—a “superorganism”, as geologist James Hutton termed it in 1785, composed of interrelated parts. All parts help to regulate and balance the planet via feedback and mechanisms, thus sustaining life as we know it (Lovelock, 1989, p.21).

This single living organism, according to the Gaianists, have rights which demand “for coevolution of human and natural ethics” (Pepper, 1996, p.37), and the documentaries point out that the human, as nature’s steward, should acknowledge and respect these rights. The living organism, the earth, is self sustaining, producing proper feedback as reaction to change where in “life and non-life are complementary and collaborating” (Pepper, 1996, p.22). Although it explains that the earth is able to maintain its veracity through feedback mechanisms, Michael Allaby, a Gaia theorist, makes it clear that “Lovelock’s concept does *not* regard Gaia as intelligent, nor as a God, even though the name is taken from the Greek earth goddess” (Allaby, 1989). The earth is self sustaining, yes, and the humans are an integral part of the equation because they are the roots of change, and it is the change brought about by humans which the earth reacts to.

Both documentaries repetitively make it clear that the human is answerable in the abuse of resources, climate change, and global warming. However, the documentaries fail in pointing out the specific person, people, or the group of people it was or were referring to. Does it belong, according to the Communist Manifesto, to the *bourgeoisie*, “who own and control the means of production, distribution and exchange” (Pepper, 1996, p.80)? The owner of the “forces and modes of production”, the capitalists, who depend on the surplus value created by laborers to preserve a social economic position? Or could it be the *proletariat*, “who have only his labour to sell” (Pepper, 1996, p.80)? The laborer,

whose power is sold in the market and is free to work for anyone? Or is it a classless human, which includes, as general as the documentaries have left it, all of us? If *Signos* and *Planet Philippines* have set up a classless human as the corruptor and saviour of nature, then under the Marxist environmentalist perspective, it falls short of its promise of a genuine environmentalist program.

The study now solicits the question on how future research will analyze not just the city and the wild, but humans who—on first glimpse seem to hide its importance from the documentaries' narratives—have an infinite and complex interconnectedness with the realms of the city and the wilderness. I challenge future studies to not only analyze the representations created by 'environmental' programs but also dig out which spectrum of environmentalism their advocacies lay. You might be surprised with the answers you will get with the question: How 'environmental' are 'environmental' programs?

## CHAPTER VI

### SUMMARY Saying Little

Lulled by rumble, babble, beep,  
let these little children sleep;  
let these city girls and boys  
dream a music in the noise,  
hear a tune the city plucks  
up from buses, up from trucks...

Nora Farber  
*Manhattan Lady in Sky Scrape/City Scape: Poems of City Life* (1996)

The research, without doubt, reveals to us the nitty-gritty in the reproduction of meaning that occurs in *Signos* and *Planet Philippines*. But the past two or three chapters have been representations themselves, representations of how the documentaries might possibly say so much and yet, at the end, say very little or nothing at all. It has been found out that the documentaries perpetuate, even at their slightest effort, the adversarial nature of the city and the wild or maybe, in a larger sense, ‘science versus religion’. With regards to global warming, *Signos* and *Planet Philippines* are clear on pacifying nature and controlling further damage, with, of course, classless humans as their main players (good and bad) which have been found problematic in the previous chapter. During the earlier part of writing this paper, I only had one concern and that is to uncover the representations of the city and the wilderness—and have done the shallowest analysis possible, frankly. But the attractive discovery that had come my way bridged the gaps and straightened out my understanding. Having unearthed the representations of the city and the wild, all gems of our time as they are products of constant negotiation and interaction involved in the creation of meaning, and trying to fight the causes of environmental ruin with it, is never enough. We have to know humanity’s part in the equation, the specific part we play, because not knowing it is similar to ‘punching air’. That humanity is differentiated in terms of class, ethnicity, genders, faith, etc., and further explorations of these linked hierarchical and scalar differences need to be carried out. We

know there has been wrongdoing but how can we ever correct things blindly? An implication of this treatment, by *Signos* and *Plante Philippines*, could be a continuing practice of identifying what is overtly thought of as environmentalism—but with a loop hole that prevents in reaching its genuine objectives.



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