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Queering the Growth Paradigm

A feminist critical discourse analysis

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Abstract

The European Green Deal is an example of a growth-oriented environmental policy approach. However, from the perspective of Degrowth, the narrative of unlimited growth is criticized. Therefore, this thesis analyses resistant texts in reaction to the set of environmental policy initiatives proposed by the European Green Deal. To address the underlying power relations that constitute a dependency on economic growth, this thesis follows the three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis, as conceptualized by N. Fairclough, with a queer-feminist perspective. The goal is to address how the social practices within a growth-dependent economy affect the discourse practices of criticising growth. A queer approach, motivated by the conceptualization of Power and Knowledge by Foucault, is needed to address the knowledge production and reproduction of hegemonic assumptions about gender within an environmental discourse.

Key words: Degrowth, Queer Theory, Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis, European Green Deal, Hegemony

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List of Abbreviations

EGD: European Green Deal

EU: European Union

FaDA: Feminisms and Degrowth Alliance

GNDE: Green New Deal for Europe

LGBTQI* : Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex

FYEG: Federation of Young European Greens

IPCC: Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

Introduction

The Research Problem

In December 2019, newly appointed European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen presented the "European Green Deal", a seemingly revolutionary set of environmental policy initiatives set out to significantly transform the EU economy. The central goal of these initiatives is for the European Union to become climate neutral by 2050. This includes the introduction of new legislation and economic strategies to cope with the increasingly demanding effects of the global climate crisis. Despite the ambitious outlook of this "man on the moon moment"[1], as phrased by von der Leyen, the EGD received mixed responses from experts as well as from civil society. On one side, the EGD was celebrated as a "ground-breaking" approach to climate protection (Schiermeier, 2019). On the other side, critical voices disapproved of the proposal's focus on economic growth and technological development instead of addressing the systemic exploitation of nature and humans as a core issue of the climate crisis.

The critique of the economic growth model of the European Union is reflected in the ideas of "Degrowth". The term originates from the French word "décroissance" and was coined by French philosopher André Gorz in the 1970s (D'Alisa et. al., 2015, p.1). The Degrowth movement developed over the past decade, following the first International Degrowth conference in Paris, in 2008. Since then, it has gained more attention in academia as well as in civil society. This movement unites in the criticism of unlimited economic growth coupled with extensive consumerism, which is a trait predominantly found in neoliberal

[1] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZVdAwsW8tV0&t=31s

capitalist countries of the Global North[2] (Klein, 2014, p.80). Their essential goal is to transform contemporary economies (D'Alisa et. al., 2015, pp.4-5), as the current European economic growth model is reliant on unsustainable practices of environmental exploitation and perpetuates social inequality. The gendered aspect of social inequality is particularly relevant in Degrowth analyses because hegemonic assumptions about gender and the gender hierarchy, and the resulting division of labour under neoliberal capitalism, is what sustains economic growth (trouble everyday collective, 2017, p.310). Degrowth is not explicitly feminist, but growth critique has been integral to feminist analysis before Degrowth came about. Feminist scholars have argued that despite a growing awareness of feminist issues within Degrowth activism, there is a need to re-evaluate and rethink the hegemonic structures of gender and race that are reproduced by Degrowth thinkers (Raphael, 2016; Gegroratti&Raphael, 2019; Dannemann&Holthaus, 2018, Dengler&Strunk, 2017). To highlight the need for more inclusion of feminist contributions to Degrowth Theory, the Feminisms and Degrowth Alliance (FaDA), a network of academics and activists, was founded at the 5th International Degrowth Conference of 2016[3]. Feminisms[4] deal with growth critique in many ways, but the Ecofeminist approach comes closest to capturing the ideas of Degrowth, with a focus on sustainability and environmental justice. More precisely, Ecofeminism draws a parallel between the exploitation of nature by humans to the exploitation of women by men. Whereas some ecofeminists

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[2] The terms "Global North" and "Global South" are used in this thesis as an alternative to the terms "developed" and "developing" countries. This shifts the focus from an economic point of view on development to "an emphasis on geopolitical relations of power" (Dados&Connell, 2012). Furthermore, it eliminates the false notion of countries of the Global North setting an economic standard that is to be pursued by countries of the Global South. Thus, the Global South is not distinguished from the Global North merely geographically (by the equator) but by fluctuating power dynamics of globalisation and capitalism.

[3] https://www.degrowth.info/en/feminisms-and-degrowth-alliance-fada/

[4] "Feminisms" is used in the plural form to highlight the multiple strands of feminism and the diverse approaches in feminist work.

adopt a binary and essentialized view on gender to demonstrate a close link between "women" and "nature" (and the simultaneous exploitation of both) (Mies&Shiva, 1993), third-wave feminists seek to transcend the gender binary. By integrating Queer Theory into Ecofeminism, the binaries of "male/female" is critically examined, alongside other binaries that are equally socially constructed, such as "human/nature" or "production/reproduction"(Gaard, 1997, p.116). These binaries can be reproduced or challenged through discursive practices when talking about nature or climate change. Breaking up these socially constructed binaries would mean to question the societal contexts that are sustained by them and vice versa.

To that end, it is interesting to use a queer-feminist lens for the analysis of growth-critical voices in the discourse around the EGD. Given the theoretical approach of combining the concepts of Degrowth and Queer Theory, this thesis employs a feminist critical discourse analysis of the European Green Deal, as an example of EU environmental politics. In so doing, it is seeking to explore how the discursive and social construction of gendered binaries and other dichotomies are connected to the discourse about growth. By "queering" the discourse, this thesis offers to "question the categories, definitions, divisions, distinctions, dualities that exist and go unchallenged within society" (C. Butler, 2017, p. 275). Consequently, the research questions guiding this analysis are:

How is economic growth framed in the discourse around the European Green Deal?

What dichotomous meanings are produced by the discourse around the European Green Deal?

How can a queer-feminist perspective on Degrowth capture the underlying power dynamics of the EU growth-dependency?

Outline of this thesis

To answer these research questions, this thesis is structured as follows: The first chapter is dedicated to contextualizing the research questions and evaluating the existing academic writings on Degrowth, environmental justice, and feminist critiques on economic growth within the European context. The second chapter deals with the conceptual and theoretical framework of this thesis, which encompasses the connection between Degrowth and Queer Theory. This chapter also includes the conceptualization of Knowledge and Power by Michel Foucault (1980). The third chapter of this thesis justifies the use of feminist critical discourse analysis as methodology. This section elaborates on using the model of CDA by Fairclough with a (queer-)feminist perspective and why a holistic view on the case of the EGD is necessary. Next, the fourth chapter presents the findings of this thesis and analyses the chosen material in relation to the given theoretical and methodological framework. In the fifth and last chapter, the results of that analysis are summed up in a conclusion, specifying where further research beyond this thesis is possible.

1 Literature Review

To illuminate the background for this thesis, this chapter provides a discussion of previous academic works, illustrating how research problems similar to this thesis, have been addressed before. By summarizing and evaluating earlier writings on the topic of Degrowth, Environmental Justice, and (Queer)Feminism in a European context, gaps and inconsistencies become apparent, thus justifying this thesis' approach and how it can challenge and expand the body of knowledge. The material chosen for this literature review overlaps with this thesis in theoretical frameworks or methods, establishing a trend in how research on Degrowth and related topics has been conducted.

1.1 Degrowth in Discourse

In a literature review of over 90 peer-reviewed articles, Martin Weiss and Claudio Cattaneo analyse the academic discourse of Degrowth and suggest methodological changes for Degrowth to "receive wider public support and contribute to a paradigmatic change in the social sciences" (Weiss & Cattaneo, 2017, p.220). "Degrowth–Taking Stock and Reviewing an Emerging Academic Paradigm" is attempting to give a broad overview of the central goals and claims of Degrowth, to characterize the discourse, and identify possible research gaps (p.220). They conclude that the Degrowth discourse in Europe is composed of an intersection between social and environmental sciences. Through their analysis the authors find that for Degrowth to be successful, it must adopt "a concrete and inclusive development perspective for the affluent and powerful elites and the marginalized poor." (Schwartzman, 2012, as cited in Weiss&Cattaneo, 2017, p.227). While they acknowledge the need for Degrowth strategies to face social inequalities, they fail to address the specific dimensions of power constituting those inequalities. The absence of a discussion of especially gendered or

racialized inequalities would have been useful in the review of 91 academic articles, marking a clear gap.

Further research on the discourse surrounding the Degrowth movement has been addressed in “Assessing the degrowth discourse: A review and analysis of academic degrowth proposals” (2017). Inês Cosme, Rui Santos, and Daniel W. O’Neill examine the larger discourse on Degrowth and the main objectives of its literature and proposals for action. They identify three main goals, which are: to “reduce the environmental impact of human activities”, “redistribute income and wealth both within and between countries, and to “promote the transition from a materialistic to a convivial and participatory society” (Cosme et. al., 2017, p.321). Their findings also indicate that Degrowth proposals for political action often come with a “top-down approach” on a national level, contrary to the “bottom-up” approach that seems to be fundamental to many Degrowth thinkers (p.326). Furthermore, they find that “social equity” and “environmental stability” are equally significant in the literature’s focus. This is particularly important for the focus of this thesis, justifying the combined focus on sustainability and social justice. They further point out the lack of “implications of degrowth for developing nations” (p.331), which is relevant for critically evaluating the position of Degrowth researchers in the Global North and how knowledge production shapes geopolitical power dimensions.

This is further discussed in “Environmental justice, degrowth and post-capitalist futures” (2019). Neera M. Singh discusses the alliances between the Environmental Justice movement and the Degrowth movement, challenging the idea that Degrowth is a product of activism and engagement of the Global North. While Singh acknowledges the Eurocentrism in Degrowth activism and literature, she points out how Degrowth ideas in the Global North have been influenced by ”post-development struggles” of the Global South (Singh, 2019, p.139). These influences on Degrowth debates are found in alternative (as well as Indigenous) understandings of a “good life” and well-being, such as “Buen Vivir”, “Sumak”, “Kawasay” and “Ubuntu”, which “emphasize thinking in terms of supporting ecosystems' capabilities to maximize life” (Singh, 2019, p.140). Not only does the

inclusion of Indigenous engagement and environmental activism inspire and enrich Degrowth debates in the Global North, it also brings attention to Indigenous struggles for (Environmental) Justice. For instance, the struggles against extractivism relate to the Degrowth approach of redistribution of resources, and also opens up ontological questions about the meaning of "justice" (p.140). Singh highlights with her research the importance of overcoming restrictions imposed by binary narratives, such as the "North-South" division. Degrowth and the Environmental Justice movement are therefore united in a desire for alternative futures that are detached from material growth. The focus on nature, well-being, and subsistence is a common trait of Environmental Justice and Degrowth, and is also found in the ideas of Ecofeminism (p.140). This thesis is informed by Singh's approach of challenging socially constructed binaries and addressing how power relations and knowledge production are intertwined.

1.2 Intersectional approaches

Considering the established importance of the Global South and Indigenous activism, it is necessary to examine the silences (re)produced by Eurocentric mechanisms and (gendered) colonial practices. This has been discusses by scholars, searching for possible alliances between Postcolonial Feminist theory and Degrowth ideas. Riya Raphael justifies this Postcolonial-Queer Feminist perspective in "Contesting Closures – Deconstructing the Political Economy within Degrowth" (2016) through a deconstructive reading of Degrowth literature. Raphael argues that if Degrowth aims to "decolonize" the assumed correlation between GDP growth and happiness it must go further than a simple critique on "development". While it is right to criticize the concept of "development" for its roots in colonization and exploitation, it is also necessary to re-evaluate the assumptions and rationalities behind development criticism or anti-utilitarianism (Raphael, 2016, p.43). This shows how "the process of studying and applying

economic analysis itself is colonized and gendered" (p.42) and how these critical discourses in academia can therefore reproduce social inequalities, such as gendered and colonial practices (p.57).

The importance of including Feminism into Degrowth debates has been further explored by Gregoratti and Raphael in "The historical roots of a feminist 'degrowth': Maria Mies and Marilyn Waring's critiques of growth" (2019). The authors critically examine Degrowth literature, pointing out the lack of attention to feminist contributions amongst Degrowth thinkers. Nevertheless, there are similarities between feminist and Degrowth theories and their goals on a political and economic level. Gregoratti and Rapahel stress the influence of ecofeminist scholars Maria Mies and Marilyn Waring and their critique on growth, which is rooted in a critique on "(…)patriarchy, capitalism and ecological degradation, from the global to local level" (p. 84). Mies and Waring both demonstrate that "growth is possible and can be accounted for only at the expense of 'others' – women working in households, the work of subsistence, illegal work, nature, colonized or 'developing' countries" (p.95). Major publications on Degrowth fail to acknowledge the influence of these authors and their work sufficiently. This demonstrates a dependency on "masculine ontologies and epistemologies" in economic and environmental debates (p.86), which concludes that Degrowth can learn from (eco-)feminist interventions dedicated to challenging the power structures that enable whiteness and masculinities to dominate the field. This is especially relevant for the analysis of this thesis, as it challenges the reproduction of hegemonic dichotomies.

This intersectional approach to climate change is also studied in "Climate Change through the lens of intersectionality" (2014), by Anna Kaijser & Annica Kronsell. The authors discuss the importance of a holistic view on climate change, integrating the struggles for gender justice with the struggles for climate justice. They conclude that "using intersectionality in the study of climate issues makes it possible to reach a more complete and accurate understanding of the social and political conditions for climate governance." Moreover, they stress how an intersectional framework not only identifies the "vulnerable" groups who are

experiencing disproportional effects of climate change, but also reveals socially constructed and "naturalised" norms within society which produce and reproduce social inequalities within climate change (Kaijser&Kronsell, 2014, p.428). For this reason, it is important to critically examine the norms that are attached to a white, elitist perspective of the Global North. As a result of their study, the authors argue that given the vast range of topics covered by research on gender and climate change, an intersectional analytical framework is crucial, but must be adapted to the given context or case that is being studied (p.429).

1.3 EU Environmental Policy

Considering the objective of this thesis, it is vital to examine the themes of Degrowth literature within an EU context. The challenges to environmental policy and struggles for social equality have been analysed from a European perspective, both on an academic and a political level. Charlotte Burns, Peter Eckersley & Paul Tobin examine in "EU environmental policy in times of crisis" (2019) how EU environmental policy has changed since the global financial crisis. The articles reviews proposals for environmental legislation and interviews with policy makers (Burns et. al., 2019, p.5). It concludes that the aftermath of the financial crisis posed a possibility for remodelling "the dominant neoliberal economic paradigm towards a low growth or no-growth model (Lipietz 2013; McCarthy 2012 as cited in Burns et. al., 2019, p.3). Policymakers suggest that policy ambition has weakened since the financial crisis, which caused tax payers and member states to focus on short-term goals such as creating jobs and stimulating economic growth (Burns et. al., 2019, p.10). As a reason for the weakened policy ambition, the authors name the "combined effects of enlargement and the economic crisis" (p.15). Since the withdrawal of the U.S. from the Kyoto Protocol, the European Union made an effort to "develop its role as a global environmental leader" (Wurzel, 2017, as cited in Burns et. al., 2019, p. 2).

However, this leadership has been challenged by political disintegration, as seen in the UK leaving the EU.

These results are similar to the research performed by Kristoffer Kjærsgaard in "Degrowth: An Emerging Idea in the EU?"(2019). The author analyses EU policy making and the dynamics that become visible in dealing with a climate and financial crisis (Kjærsgaard, 2019, p.11). Kjærsgaard explores the role of Degrowth in current EU politics through a discursive analysis of two growth-related events: the Post-Growth Conference in 2018, and the Eco-Social Event in 2019. This data is supplemented by interviews with EU experts in policymaking and Degrowth (p.30). While he highlights the emergence of Degrowth ideas in EU politics as visible in public discourses, he points out how Neoliberalism as a hegemonic ideology dominates the discourse on growth (p.31). Neoliberalism is still "classified as the catalyst for a prosperous, wellbeing and sustainable society in which social issues will be tackled and dealt with". Neoliberalism therefore does not reject economic growth, but represents a seemingly sustainable idea of growth, called "green growth" (Kallis et al., 2018, as cited in Kjærsgaard, 2019, p.14). This makes it difficult for Degrowth to gain a foothold in sustainability discourses (Kjærsgaard, 2019, p.67). This conclusion proves relevant for this thesis, as it evaluates the role of Degrowth in sustainability discourses.

These evaluations of EU (environmental) policy successfully analyse EU policymaking processes and how they can embrace growth-critique. However, they fail to examine how the discursive practices of these processes are constitutive of social identities (and vice versa). Kjærsgaard discusses a possible alternative to a growth-oriented society by studying the emergence of Degrowth ideas in the EU but does not refer to contributions of ecofeminist theorists. The lack of this kind of acknowledgement is examined by Christine Bauhardt in "Solutions to the crisis? The Green New Deal, Degrowth, and the Solidarity Economy: Alternatives to the capitalist growth economy from an ecofeminist economics perspective" (2014). Bauhardt studies the available alternatives to a growth-dependent economy, criticising the lack of acknowledgement of

ecofeminist contributions. She demonstrates how alternative approaches can benefit from an ecofeminist economic perspective (Bauhardt, 2014, p. 60). For the context of this thesis, this article is particularly interesting because it provides a theoretical discussion of the phenomenon of a "Green New Deal". At the time of publication, the European Green Deal did not exist as such, but policymakers and stakeholders had already been active in advocating for structural changes of the financial system and the investment in renewable energies (Green New Deal Group, 2008, as cited by Bauhardt, 2014, p.62). Bauhardt concludes that neither the conceptualization of a Green New Deal, nor the other two approaches, namely Degrowth and the Solidarity Economy, deal sufficiently with the implications of a gender hierarchy. This is accounted as a major blind spot, since gender inequality functions as "foundational for the capitalist production mode" (p.64). The three approaches also fail to sufficiently identify the struggles for gender equality, which would acknowledge "women's care labor and increased awareness of the social and economic significance of carework" (p.64). Bauhardt criticizes how the approaches of the Green New Deal are focused on reforming the energy sector, which is a male-dominated sector while, at the same time, little attention is paid to the more female-dominated care sector, even though a "care economy is vitally important for the postgrowth society…" (p.65). By reducing sustainability to the usage of natural resources, and leaving out the gendered implications, the model appears to ignore the "inherent link between human–nature relations and gender relations" (p.14). Additionally, the idea of the Green New Deal takes a pro-growth stance, contrary to the critique voiced by Degrowth thinkers. At the same time, Degrowth ideas also shows an absence of "gender awareness", by not adequately acknowledging social reproduction and unpaid (care)work performed by women (p. 66). In order for a sustainable economics model to succeed, Bauhardt proposes a reflexive view on male-biased conceptualizations of growth and the related gendered dimensions of power. (p.66). For this thesis, Bauhardt's research proves as useful since this thesis also aims at uncovering and challenging biases and binaries within the articulations of growth.

1.4 Filling the gap

This literature review has shown the following common themes in previous research: There is a significant amount of research on the discours on Degrowth itself already, critically reviewing Degrowth literature and identifying common goals. This is helpful for this thesis as it provides a stable basis of a vast amount of Degrowth literature. What has been pointed out several times is that there is a strong need for integrating an intersectional feminist perspective when conducting Degrowth research (Raphael, 2016; Gregoratto&Raphael, 2019). At the same time, intersectionality is valued in research on climate change (Kaijser&Kronsell, 2014). The alliance between Degrowth and Environmental Justice and has further been pointed out by Singh (2019). These authors all adressed how geopolitical power structures and gendered inequalities are interwoven with each other, calling for a holistic view to capture the complexity of climate change, growth-dependency, and gender inequality. In the research on EU environmental policy and the conceptualization of a Green New Deal, this review shows how there is a need to tackle the neoliberal capitalist power structures that perpetuate a growth-dependent economy. With a gendered lens, this points to a masculine and eurocentric ontology (Burns et. Al., 2019; Bauhardt, 2014). A methodological theme in the chosen literature is a qualitative approach, analyzing policy processes and academic literature with a deconstructive approach.

This thesis is following and strenghtening the existing research's path by opting for a qualitative discourse analysis. The research objective of critically examining the discourse around the EGD contributes to Degrowth research by using this relatively new case as a discursive example. The themes that are present within previous literature are also adressed in this thesis. Thus, it fits into the critical approach of challenging socially constructed binaries as well as the contemporary EU economic system, and

adressing the growth-dependency of neoliberal capitalism (Kjærsgaard, 2019). The theoretical approach of this thesis is further justified since there is no extensive research reviewing discourse on EU environmental policy with an explicitly Queer-Feminist perspective.

2 Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

As shown in the previous section, growth critique is found in several social theories. While they already have been touched upon, this chapter discusses them in detail, developing the theoretical base for the analysis of this thesis. Degrowth theorists support the idea of a sustainable economic and political system that challenges the power structures within society which perpetuate the capitalist exploitation of the planet and of marginalized communities. The same goal is inherent to feminist critique on growth. This chapter will justify the feminist approach to growth critique, and specify why a queer-feminist approach is inevitable for answering this thesis' research problem. For this reason, a subsection of this chapter deals extensively with Queer Theory and the conceptualization of power and knowledge, as well as hegemony.

2.1 Degrowth

Degrowth originated in the 1970s, when French philosopher André Gorz used the term "décroissance" for the first time (D'Alisa et. al., 2015, p.1). The movement has since developed into a diverse set of ideas, centred on the critique of unlimited GDP-related growth (Romano, 2015, p.23). In "Degrowth – a Vocabulary for a new Era" (D'Alisa, Demaria, Kallis, 2015), the authors elaborate on the diverse vocabulary used by Degrowth thinkers and demonstrate how Degrowth ideas stretch from critiques on capitalism and on GDP, to the call for a sustainable society that values social and environmental justice. One of the questions that Degrowth thinkers ask, is the meaning of "wellbeing" and a "good

life" (Sekulova, 2015, p.113). They contest the capitalist idea that growth, as measured by GDP, leads to happiness and wellbeing.

Capitalism depends, by its nature, on economic growth and the accumulation of profit through exploitation (Kallis, 2018, p.39). Exploitation means not only the extraction of natural resources from the earth, but also the exploitation of labour, performed by humans and animals. According to Degrowth thinkers, capitalism cannot sustain itself in the long run, because there is a limit to resources. This Malthusian idea of limits is made up of "planetary boundaries" that show in symptoms of climate change (Victor, 2015, p. 111). However, according to Kallis (2019), these limits are not imposed on humans by the seemingly shrinking availability of natural resources, but stem from the desire to use those resources extensively. Kallis criticizes how Malthus' idea of limits has been misused by economists and rejects the claim that overpopulation is a leading cause of global resource scarcity. Much rather, Kallis argues, it is the overconsumption of countries of the Global North, fuelled by capitalism.

The scarcity of resources is needed for capitalism, because it allows for resources to be commodified for profit (Kallis, 2019, p.66). To avoid further global warming, growth will have to be limited (p.60). Kallis also stresses how climate change does not affect everyone equally, rejecting the idea of a narrative that constructs a false "us" in the struggle for climate justice (p.63). Under capitalism, the distribution of global wealth is unequal, with a significant portion of the population selling their labour so its product can be put up for sale and contribute to accumulating profit (Andreucci&McDonough, 2015, p.59). This creates an unequal distribution of wealth amongst the people who hold the means of production and the people who are producing goods and services. This puts a majority of the earth's population in a disadvantaged position, with a significant difference between the Global North and the Global South. Economies of the Global North are "overdeveloped" and take advantage of the labour performed by people of the Global South (D'Alisa et. al., 2015, p.5). This can be seen in commodified care-work largely performed by women, but it is also seen in food-production of the agricultural sector. Moreover, the exploitation of the Global

South has its roots in slavery and extractivism (Kallis, 2018, p.2), which made the accumulation of wealth for countries in the Global North possible in the first place. Degrowth aims to reduce this inequality by reducing consumption in the Global North and adopting other Degrowth strategies, in order to stop the exploitation of the Global South. Hence, Degrowth is first and foremost meant for highly industrialized countries and does not intend for countries of the Global South to follow their example but rather for them to be able create their own space for defining what "wellbeing" means, without the restrictions imposed on them by the global North-South divide. The inequality between the Global North and the Global South is further seen in the difference of the average carbon footprint (Kallis, 2018, p.33). Longer production chains of products consumed in the Global North have a larger carbon footprint than in the Global South. This shows how Degrowth is committed to not only reducing issues of social inequality, but connecting them to the global climate crisis (Kallis, 2018, p.97). The over-extraction of planet resources is hurting the climate and polluting the environment as well as endangering the livelihood of people living on or nearby the affected land.

2.2 Feminist Criticism on Growth

Degrowth is overlapping with feminist criticism on growth in many ways and the need for a feminist perspective in Degrowth debates has been emphasized repeatedly by feminist scholars (Raphael, 2016; Gegroratti&Raphael, 2019; Dannemann&Holthaus, 2018, Dengler&Strunk, 2017). Theoretical approaches to ecological and economic justice from a feminist perspective challenge "the claims of neoliberal transformation and emancipation" and seek to overcome the struggles of "othering, inclusion and exclusion, internalization and externalization" (Wichterich, 2015 p.70). For this thesis, the Ecofeminist approach is particularly relevant. The core idea of feminist criticism of the

political economy originates in Marxist feminism and concerns itself with the politicization of care work and breaking up the power relations within the gendered division of labour (trouble everyday collective, 2016, p. 311). The question that gets asked here is, what a "good life for all" looks like and how society can be organized to make this possible (p.308). Essentially, it is the capitalist separation of production and reproduction that needs to be tackled by building collective, solidary structures. With an ecofeminist approach, the focus gets extended to include the struggle for environmental justice and ask how these solidary structures can guarantee not only social justice but also ecological sustainability (Mellor, 2017, p.86).

The idea of a sustainable economy as Degrowth thinkers and ecofeminists promote it if often confused with a so-called "green economy". In response to multiple global crises since 2007 – the financial crisis, the energy crisis, and the climate crisis – conceptualizations of a "green economy", that pursues sustainable technological solutions and still achieves economic growth, have emerged (Wichterich, 2015, p.70). This capitalist goal of "inclusive green growth" is developed through "ecologization of the economy and an economization of nature", meaning it emphasizes the corporate sector and "public-private partnership", and facilitates the commodification of labour and nature (p.72). Yet, these efforts contradict the very core idea of Ecofeminism, as growth-oriented capitalism under the disguise of sustainability appears to be blind to gendered inequalities (Mellor, 2017, p.87). So, "Green growth" depends on and reproduces deeply entrenched dichotomies within society. Ecofeminism is useful in articulating these dichotomies and explaining the socially constructed power relations of the "women–nature nexus" (Bauhardt, 2019, p.23). In other words, it explores the paralleled struggle for gender equality and environmental justice. The "nature-culture dichotomy", a product of the European Enlightenment, is related to the gender binary and its hierarchies. This dichotomy is seen in how women are ascribed attributions that are stronger associated with "nature", such as the reproductive power of bearing children. Their bodies are "naturalized", while men are associated with a "greater distance to nature, and thus a greater proximity to

culture" (Bauhardt, 2019, p.23). This closer relationship to "nature" and enables women to be more active and more successful in environmental activism (Mies & Shiva, 1993). For ecofeminism, this "strategic essentialism" (Wichterich, 2015, p.68) is necessary to justify the belief that women share a naturally "stronger bond" with nature than men (Hultman&Pulé, 2018, p.144). However, it is not merely reducing women to their bodies but takes into account how socialization processes facilitate this essentialization. Salleh points out how masculinities are socially constructed to be distant from nature and that women can (and should) fight this "hegemony from within" (Salleh 1997, p.3). The construction of gender roles that keep women close to "nature" and men close to "culture", thus produces an idea of male superiority, simultaneous with white superiority. This system of domination made the development of European capitalism and colonialism possible (Bauhardt, 2019, p.23).

To challenge hegemony from within, it is not enough to simply add women into the system of industrial modernity and GDP growth, for instance in leader positions or spokespersons. While there has been a rise in women leadership in the Global North, this success is at risk of repeating "hyper masculinist patterns" (Hultman&Pulé, 2018, p.151). Within an androcentric culture (Perkins Gillman, 1914), the struggle for justice and equality is not resolved with employing LGBTQI* people and women in leadership positions, since the system itself is based on the toxic image of the cis-normative and hetero-normative patriarchy. "A wholesale structural revolution is needed; one that is gender-equitable and systematically transformative" (Hultman&Pulé, 2018, p.151). Conclusively, when performing Ecofeminist analyses, it is necessary to pursue a concept of non-oppressive gender relations and to ensure that "these must be at the centre of our analysis and politics, not simply added on to the analysis of an overall exploitative, destructive global system" (Mies, 1997, p. 474)[5].

[5] The original quote by Maria Mies refers to non-oppressive relations between men and women. For the sake of queering ecofeminism, the quote has been slightly adapted.

2.3 A Queer Perspective

This section clarifies why Queer Theory is needed to transcend the binaries reproduced by the economic growth paradigm and how it can develop ecofeminism to be more inclusive and successful. Much like Degrowth, Queer Theory is not homogenous. It can be defined as a "collection of intellectual engagements with the relations between sex, gender and sexual desire" (Spargo, 2000, p.9). Thus, Queer Theory functions as a collective term for theoretical approaches that are critical of heteronormativity, meaning the "discursive construction of certain forms of heterosexuality as natural, normal or preferable" (Motschenbacher&Stegu, 2013, p.520). The meaning of the term "queer" has shifted from a discriminative slur to an empowering form of self-identification[6] (p.520). By reclaiming this term, both in an academic and an activist context, Queer Theory becomes a critique of what is considered "normal" and points out the violence of the process of "normalization" (Warner, 1993, p. xxvi). The naturalization of sexuality and gender has been criticized heavily by LGBTQI* activism (trouble everyday collective, 2016, p. 311), heteronormativity and heterosexism. Likewise, Queer Theory is motivated to deconstruct binary assumptions about sex, gender, and sexuality, but also criticizes other binaries reproduced by the capitalist notion of economic growth.

A Queer Ecofeminism demonstrates how the gender binary and heterosexism within environmental activism can reinforce oppressive gender relations (Gaard, 1997, p. 114). Greta Gaard emphasizes how a queer-feminist perspective and "the liberation of nature" must be central to the ecofeminist agenda. Her analysis explores the dualities found in "Western culture", the binaries creating "otherness and negation" (Plumwood in Gaard, 1997, p.116). These binaries are not only to be found in categories such as "male/female", but also in many others, such as

[6] Not all LGBTQI* people feel comfortable with identifying as "queer". Despite the term being reclaimed as something empowering, the discriminative connotation of the word still impacts the lives of many LGBTQ+ people

“public/private, or “civilized/primitive”. Gaard emphasizes how ecofeminism must especially focus on the binaries of “heterosexual/queer”, “white/non-white” and “financially empowered/impoverished” (Gaard, 1997, p. 116). In the struggle for gender justice and environmental justice, it is therefore vital to incorporate a queer perspective to tackle underlying power dynamics in discourses and politics (C.Butler, 2017, p. 271). Questioning socially constructed binaries, categories, and divisions are the key component of integrating Queer Theory into the Degrowth discourse. From a queer perspective, scholars ask how environmental policy would change if it had the rejection of such binary restrictions at its core (C. Butler, 2017, p. 280).

Michel Foucault, among the pioneers of Queer Theory, demonstrates how the way sexuality is talked about in societal discourse is shaped by patterns of socialization and the establishment of social norms (Foucault, 1978). Foucault analysis of the “repressive hypothesis” of the European 20th century shows how vital language is in how normative assumptions about gender and sexuality are created. Control over sexuality has not been exercised by repressing and silencing it, but rather by “making people speak about it” (Spargo, 2009, p.14). Foucault supports his claim by referring to the concept of “confession” which is an essential part of Christian culture, but also found in medical evaluations and “judicial, pedagogical and familial practices” (p.15), producing a narrative which then gets interpreted by an authority figure (p.61). The act of a confession (about sex and sexual practices) forces an individual to adhere to an idea of “truth” (Foucault, 1978, p.59), thus the assumptions about sexualities and gender identities are constituted by how they are talked about. The regulation and control of sex and sexuality by authorities, producing and reproducing identities, has been essential for exercising control over the population (Foucault, 1978, p.140). This sort of power has been named “biopower” by Foucault. According to him, the control of bodies, of sex and sexualities was an essential factor for the capitalist economic system. Capitalism “would not have been possible without the controlled insertion of bodies into the machinery of production to economic processes” (Foucault, 1978, p.141). This interpretation is supported by the understanding of sexuality, not as a “natural

feature or fact of human life but a constructed category of experience which has historical, social and cultural, rather than biological, origins" (Spargo, 2009, p. 12). Certain identities are gaining hegemony in this process, positioning themselves in a hierarchical relationship to other identities. This needs to be read with an intersectional perspective (Crenshaw, 1989) considering the history of colonial practices. The control of bodies is deeply entrenched in the racialization and marginalization of people. Colonial practices have regulated the reproductivity of bodies (and still do). These practices of racializing and marginalizing groups of people are not only a symptom of capitalist accumulation but a "fundamental 'indispensable' technology of rule—as biopower's operating mechanism" (Stoler, 2002, p.159 as cited in Erickson, 2010, p.316). The destabilization of societies and economies is a direct cause of colonizing practices, for instance through extractivism or land-grabbing. Therefore, "the refusal of race-racism is not separate from the refusal of heteropatriarchy, as both are productions of capitalism-nationalism" (Gosine, 2010, pp. 167-168).

2.4 Knowledge and Power in Environmental Discourse

The concept of "power" is integral to Foucault's analysis. While Foucault demonstrates how especially discourse on sex and sexuality is shaped by power dimensions, his conceptualization of power and knowledge can be applied to the Queer-Feminist analysis of environmental discourse. Foucault defines "power" as a "complex strategical situation in a particular society" (Foucault, 1978, p. 93). Power and knowledge are irrevocably intertwined. The exercise of power, as by authoritative institutions, constituted knowledge in accumulation information and deciding what is "true". In return, knowledge "induces effects of power" (Foucault, 1980, p.52). This shapes understandings of sexuality and gender and has repressive effects, such as the dominance of heterosexuality and cisgender

identities. However, power is not only repressive, but it is also productive (Foucault, 1980, p.119): it produces knowledge, subjects, and discourse. Hegemonic ideas of gender and sexuality are inevitably re-enacted in ongoing discursive practices. Hegemony is not always visible, it is the continuous reproduction and resulting dominance of hierarchical power relations and dichotomies that are often consensually accepted (Lazar, 2005, p. 7). Furthermore, it is the "discursive face of power", establishing a "common sense" that does not require justification (Gramsci, 1972, as cited in Fraser, 2013, p. 142). These hegemonic structures are maintained through a multitude of interactions and while their meaning is relatively fixed, they can adapt under the pressure of social change (Gramsci, 1971).

While some power is institutional, the relations of power are also present beyond hegemonic institutions such as the government or the state. Foucault claims that the state is "superstructural in relation to a whole series of power networks" (Foucault, 1980, p.122), such as the family, schools, the army, or medical institutions (Foucault, 1978, p.94). Thus, power is not imposed from above, but comes "from below" (Foucault, 1978, p.94). In times of globalization, governmentality has shifted from the nation-state to other supranational institutions, NGOs, professional associations, and individuals (Fraser, 2003, p. 168). The result is a decentralized (and harder to define) power apparatus called "la nebuleuse" (Robert F. Cox, as cited in Fraser, 2003, p. 168). Foucault stresses that power is not binary and does not function between "the ruler and the ruled" (Foucault, 1978, p.94). In environmental discourse, this conceptualization is important because it shows how the consumer culture, that is heavily criticized by Degrowth thinkers, is reproduced by a multitude of power relations (Wagler, 2009, p.333). This is especially interesting, considering how Foucault defines power as "intentional". Whereas the exercise of power is not always an individual conscious choice, the objective can be to uphold established hegemonic norms (Foucault, 1978, p.94). Through the exercise of power relationships, resistance is created. Power cannot exist with resistance and depends on it (p.95). In discourse this means to ask "How were these kinds of discourses made possible?" and

“How do they support power relations?”(p.97). In the context of environmental discourse and from a resistant, queer-feminist perspective, these questions require a high level of self-reflexivity and self-knowledge of what constitutes “the environment”. (Darier, 1999, p. 227, as cited in Wagler, 2009, p. 335).

3 Methodology

3.1 Philosophical understanding

With the theoretical framework established, and before this chapter elaborates on the methodological framework chosen for this thesis, it is important to clarify the philosophical understanding that guides this thesis. In moving away from a positivist approach of proving the causal relationship between two variables (Hesse-Biber, 2006, p.26), this thesis follows a holistic approach that has as its goal to build more evidence for the established conceptual and theoretical framework (p.23). This kind of qualitative approach means to conduct research reflexively and "process-driven", acknowledging its cultural situatedness and producing knowledge "through an ongoing interplay between theory and methods, researcher and researched" (p.5). The concepts used in this thesis are interwoven with each other, thus they do not constitute a cause-effect type of relationship. The goal is not to produce "absolute" knowledge but to reflect on the findings of the discourse analysis from a "situated" view. This "feminist objectivity" (Haraway, 1988, p.581) is necessary to keep a critical perspective of the researched material and reflect on my position as an author. Related to the research problem and the theoretical framework, this thesis follows the philosophical assumption that the meaning of language and signifiers is not fixed but exists within the context of its discourse (Baxter, 2003, p.25). With a queer-feminist "gaze" (Haraway, 1988, p.581), this thesis seeks to avoid binary oppositions but instead challenges the binaries reproduced by discursive and social practices.

3.2 Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis

This thesis uses discourse analysis to make sense of the meaning of social relations that are produced by social actors through a textual analysis of documents relevant to the case of the European Green Deal. This specific discursive event will be situated within the larger discourse on EU growth and EU environmental politics. With the goal in mind, to uncover hegemonic relationships, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a fitting method. CDA was developed as an emancipatory tool, to reveal relations of power and deconstruct them to establish a "just social order". The process of CDA is a "hermeneutic process" which aims to "grasp and produce meaning relations" (Wodak, 2001, p.16). The focus with CDA lies on a linguistic approach, mapping hegemonic relationships by how social actors make use of language to establish power in a societal context.

Given the choice of the theoretical framework and the holistic approach of this thesis, the model of CDA, developed by Norman Fairclough, is viewed through a queer-feminist lens. The goal of incorporating a feminist critique into CDA is to examine how social practices are gendered and how social transformation can be effected (Lazar, 2005, p.6). The binary relationship between the "oppressor" and the "oppressed", that is central to CDA, has been criticized for being too simplistic (Lamb, 2013, p.335). Therefore, a queer-feminist perspective encourages the researcher to be critical of reproducing such binaries and pay attention to how (gendered) binaries are framed in the discourse. CDA's focus lies on the role of language in the creation of power and knowledge within a discourse. By focusing on queer linguistics (Motschenbacher&Stegu, 2013), signifiers of heteronormativity are made visible. Heteronormativity is signified through any discursive practice that constructs heterosexuality as "normal" and "preferable" (Motschenbacher&Stegu, 2013, p.521). In fact, heteronormativity can be articulated through "discursive simplification"(Jessop, 2000, p. 324, as cited in Venkataraman, 2018, p. 245), which refers to a pattern of "silences" and

"absences" within the discourse that exclude and background certain identities and concepts. Consequently, heteronormativity becomes a "social macro-issue" in discourse that is omnipresent in all contexts (Motschenbacher&Stegu, 528).

3.2.1 Steps of Critical Discourse Analysis

Fairclough presents an analytical framework for CDA, which consists of three dimensions (Fairclough, 1992, p. 231): First, a structural analysis is conducted by looking at the "discourse practices". This part of the analysis examines what discourse types are used in the discourse example, how the discourse is produced, and how the relationship between the text producers and the recipients becomes apparent. The second dimensions deals with the "textual analysis" and works closely with the meaning of certain linguistic features of the text. The third dimension then turns to the "social practices*"* of the discourse example, moving away from the text and examining the social context that the discourse is situated in. This step of the analysis is particularly relevant because it shows how discourse "contributes to sustaining particular relations of power and ideology" (Fairclough, 2001, p.126).

3.3 Material selection

The discursive event in this analysis is the EGD within the EU growth paradigm. Inspired by the EGD and its discursive practice of marketing itself as "progressive" in environmental politics, further material was selected to find responses to the policies introduced by the EGD. The selection of material was motivated by the way the actors engaged with each other, specifically looking for resistant voices and alternative approaches to the discourse represented by the EU.

The material chosen for the analysis is therefore made up of the following five documents[7]:

The inspiration for this thesis was the publication of the "Communication on the European Green Deal", therefore, it makes up one of the core texts of the analysis. This document by the European Commission which introduced the EGD in December 2019 is supported by the speech given by Ursula von der Leyen on December 11th, 2019 as she presented the EGD to the press. This helps to understand the role of the EU and its discursive power. To demonstrate the resistances to the EGD, the analysis includes a written statement signed by Greta Thunberg as well as other youth climate activists. These are relevant because of Greta Thunberg's role in public advocacy for climate justice, especially within Europe. Another written statement about the EGD by the Young European Greens is analysed as well, which is relevant because of its political proximity to the inner workings of the EU. In addition, an article responding to the EGD by Degrowth scholars Riccardo Mastini, Giorgos Kallis, and Jason Hickel is included. As experts on growth critique, their statement is a valuable addition to the analysis.

The data corpus is enhanced by supplementary data for the analysis of social practices. According to Fairclough, such supplementary data can come from so-called "panels", meaning people who have an important relationship to the social practices of the discourse (Fairclough, 1992, p. 227). Such "panels" are found in the following documents: The "Green New Deal for Europe" is a report, prepared by the political activist group "Democracy in Europe Movement". This document was chosen to exemplify how alternative approaches to growth are framed, and because the document was referenced in the article by Mastini et.al., making it a relevant contribution to the larger discourse in economic growth within the EU. Another supplementary document is an open letter to the EU institutions, sent by over 200 scientists who called for an end of the "EU growth-dependency" from 2018. As experts on the interdisciplinary sciences behind climate change and the

[7] All documents are linked in the Appendix.

EU growth paradigm, the authors are classified as a “panel”, making this document important for the analysis.

3.4 Limitations

As aforementioned, self-reflexivity is important when conducting qualitative research, in order to break up the binaries between researcher and research material. Holistic research inevitably demands of the researcher to define “what is knowable” and “who is a knower” (Hesse-Biber, 2006,p.5). Therefore this thesis acknowledges the following limitations to the study. The previously identified reality of texts constituting a discourse on the European Green Deal situated within the larger context of the EU growth paradigm is not to be understood as an absolute reality. Considering that “everything is discourse” (Phillips&Jorgensen, 2002, p.35), the selected material is a fragmentation of what can be discussed in order to understand the meanings articulated in the discourse. Due to the scope of this thesis, the analysis provides a more concise perspective on the material from a queer-feminist frame and does not aim to be used for a generalization. Therefore “what can be known” is dependent on the context this research is situated in. The context of this thesis is that the research is conducted with a background in Gender Studies, as well as Political Science, situated in the academic perspective from the Global North. This perspective was influential in the selection of case and material, due to accessibility, as well as political and cultural proximity. This means that the research is limited within its own realm of interpretation.

4 Analysis

4.1 Discourse Practices

The first dimension of the CDA model by Fairclough (1992) is the analysis of discourse practices. This section identifies the discourses at hand and determines how they interact with each other. Through analyzing how texts are produced and consumed, power relations and dominant narratives are made visible (Fairclough, 1992 p.67). The components of this dimension of CDA namely are the analysis of "interdiscursivity", which refers to the discourse "types" that are produced (p.232), as well as the "intertextual chains" of the discourses, which refers to how texts are distributed and how they are "transformationally related to each other" (p.130). Such chains can be quite complex, if for example a political speech can get translated into different languages or get published on several news outlets. Furthermore, the analysis of "manifest intertextuality" shows how texts are drawn upon each other in the discourse and how they represent discourses. This part of the discourse practices shows which "hegemonic struggles" are at play (p.103). Intertextuality is the "insertion of history into a text and of this text into history" (Kristeva, 1986, as cited in Fairclough, 1992, p.). This means that a text is influenced by previous texts and therefore builds on the body of texts form "history" and will influence future texts. Lastly, discursive practices are also analyzed by the "conditions of discourse practice" (Fairclough, 1992, p. 232). This overlaps with the analysis of social practices, as the power relations that go into production and consumption of the texts are examined.

4.1.1 Interdiscursivity

Within the chosen material, there are two different discourses at play: The growth-critical approach coming from activists and academia, and the pro-growth approach, coming from the (dominant) political sphere. The analysis of interdiscursivity shows how the specific types of discourses influence the way they articulate themselves. The texts in this discourse can be ordered by their "genre", which refers to a type of text but also to the "particular processes of producing, distributing and consuming" (Fairclough, 1992, p.127) represented by the text. This influences how the texts are positioned to each other, how they are competing for hegemony, and what narratives they produce. It shows that the pro-growth discourse, as represented by the European Commission – and by extension, the EU – appears to be dominant over the growth-critical discourse. This is seen in how the texts that are drawn upon, possess a certain level of authority. The written-as-if-spoken speech by Ursula von der Leyen, presenting the EGD to the press, in Brussels on December 11th, 2019, maintains a formal tone but is argumentative in favour of the EGD (Von der Leyen, 2019).

> "The European Green Deal is our new growth strategy – it is a strategy for growth that gives more back than it takes away" (Von der Leye, 2019).

The text is retrievable from the press material provided on the official website of the European Commission, both in the form of a video recording of the speech and as the written text. It is furthermore available on other platforms, such as the YouTube channel of the European Commission. Since it is a press release, the text is meant to be consumed by more than just the people in the room receiving the speech, and it is intended for distribution through (social) media. This asymmetrical text has an official and formal tone, proving information to the press and everyone consuming the text.

A similar formal and deterministic tone is observed in the ”Communication on the European Green Deal” from the European Commission, addressed to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions.

> ”It [The European Green Deal] is a new growth strategy, that aims to transform the EU into a fair and prosperous society, with a modern resource-efficient and competitive economy (…) where economic growth is decoupled from resource use” (European Commission, 2019).

The text is available for download in the database for EU law, in all twenty-four official EU languages. This level of distribution indicates that while the original addresses are official EU institutions, the text is intended to be accessed and consumed by EU citizens, who are concerned with the content of the communication as well. The authority conveyed by the genre and style as well as the position of the speakers, both in the speech and the communication, enhances the position of the pro-growth discourse. The platform for distribution of these texts is highly authoritative, given the legislative power of the European Commission within the organizational structure of the EU, further enhancing their credibility.

On the other side, the growth-critical discourse challenges this official and authoritative position of the European Commission. The Federation of the Young European Greens, the youth group of the European Greens, published a written statement titled ”We Want a Real Green Deal” in response to the EGD (FYEG, 2019), engaging with Ursula von der Leyen’s presentation of the EGD and requesting a response. In doing so, they are contributing to and locating the text within the discourse on European climate change politics. This will be further elaborated in the textual analysis of this discourse sample. The text is produced by members of the FYEG, and distributed through the news section on their website, a week after von der Leyen presented the EGD. Contrary to von der Leyen’s

speech and the EC's communication on the EGD the text shows a growth-critical approach, providing a list of demands for the EGD while using a less formal tone:

> ”You can't fix a capitalist economic growth problem with more growth (which is suggested). Eternal economic growth is not a solution, but frankly, is the problem” (FYEG, 2019).

Another critical response to the pro-growth stance of the European Green Deal occurs in the article ” Europe's Green Deal is a tepid response to the climate crisis” (2019) published by Riccardo Mastini, Giorgos Kallis, and Jason Hickel in the NewStatesman, a political and cultural magazine in the UK. The authors are prominent experts on Degrowth Theory, which is reflected in the more scientific tone of the article:

> ”While it's theoretically possible to increase economic activity without adding to a nation's carbon footprint (therefore decoupling GDP growth from carbon emissions), there is growing scientific evidence that this is unlikely to happen fast enough to maintain a carbon budget in line with a 1.5°C to 2°C rise in global temperatures. “Green” growth, in other words, is an oxymoron.” (Mastini et. al., 2019).

The article, written in English, is published online via the political magazine NewStatesman, which can be accessed freely. This type of distribution shows that the article is intended to be consumed by a large readership.

Another example of a resistant reaction to the EGD within the discourse on EU climate policy and growth is found in an open letter to EU institutions and member states, sent by 34 youth climate activists, including Greta Thunberg. In this letter, the authors respond to the EGD, critical of the level of action against climate change represented by the EGD. Regarding the analysis of interdiscursivity of this text, the written letter, published in English, formally addresses EU institutions directly, following a more direct and imperative style:

> ”If you are to reach the commitments you signed up for in the Paris Agreement our carbon emissions must eventually come to an end. And science tells us that process must – drastically – start today.” (Thunberg et. al., 2020).

Since it is an open letter, it is meant to be consumed not only by the addressees but also by others. Therefore it is distributed via the UK based website “Carbon Brief”, which is a political platform, dedicated to publishing news regarding climate science, climate policy, and energy policy, and can be accessed freely.

The analysis of interdiscursivity shows that the growth-critical discourse exists across several platforms, while the pro-growth approach is contained to the political sphere. Given the political power of the European Commission as an actor in this discourse, the pro-growth discourse gains dominance over the growth-critical approach. However, the academic position of the Degrowth experts Mastini, Kallis, and Hickel makes it easier for them to challenge the science behind the EGD, thus gaining credibility. This will be further elaborated on in the textual analysis.

4.1.2 Intertextual chains

Regarding the analysis of the intertextual chains, the texts at hand show stable transformations. The most obvious transformation occurs evidentially in the transcript of Ursula von der Leyen’s speech (Von der Leyen, 2019). This stable transformation makes the circulation of the text easier and thus shows that it was intended to be circulated widely. The fact that the speech is recorded as a video shows that it was intended for broadcasting. The text shows a low level of ambivalence, attempting to minimize room for interpretation. However, public responses to this text and other discourse samples within the discourse show that interpretation varies.

Equally eager to reach as many people as possible is the text of the ”Communication on the European Green Deal” (European Commission, 2019).

This is visible in the translations into all official EU languages, which shows that the text producers anticipate a larger audience than the recipients addressed in the text. While the text maintains a low level of ambivalence, the translation enhances accessibility for a larger readership and thus raises the level of possible interpretation.

Amongst the texts representing the growth-critical approach, there are also intertextual chains visible. The platforms used by the actors have a lower level of popularity and sovereignty than the ones used by the European Commission. However, the letter written by the youth climate activists enters an intertextual chain, as the platform CarbonBrief links the text in a post on their twitter account[8]. With this distribution on a social media platform, the potential for a larger audience is high. All texts are freely available and published in English, which makes the potential for entering intertextual chains high. They could potentially be translated into other languages by fellow activist or academics, or be published on different platforms. The text by the European Commission and the speech by Ursula von der Leyen show a low level of ambivalence and do not engage with critical tones, whereas the texts representing the growth-critical discourse seek out conversation and engagement with the content of the EGD, thus encouraging a discussion of it (Thunberg et. al, 2020; FYEG, 2019).

4.1.3 Manifest Intertextuality

Manifest intertextuality found in the texts shows how the actors in the discourses draw on other discourse examples to validate their positions.Von der Leyen does this in her speech by drawing on the text of the EGD. This is a direct representation of the discourse, cued in the text through referencing the document and its content, such as the “Just Transition Mechanism” (Von der Leyen, 2019). Linking the text of the European Green Deal to this discourse sample enhances

[8] https://twitter.com/CarbonBrief/status/1236273908363538432?s=20

the validity of the speech presented and underlines the importance of the EGD and the discourse around it, which supports the straight-forward presentation of the speech.

The European Commission affirms their political power in the communication on the EGD by drawing up policy instruments and legislation, relevant for this discourse, such as the United Nation's Agenda 2030 (European Commission, 2019, p.3) or the Paris Agreement (p.20). The representation of the discourse on European climate change policies is hereby weaved into the representing discourse on the EGD. These measures help the pro-growth discourse to enhance the meaning of their message, clearly showing the institutional power represented by the European Commission and the EU. Manifest intertextuality is also visible in the growth-critical approach. The statement by the FYEG references the EGD and elaborates on its goals while comparing them to their political demands for the EGD: ”Here's our take on the proposed European Green Deal”.

Therefore, they recontextualize von der Leyen's speech and the Communication on the EGD and include other discourse samples of Civil Society actors, contributing to the discourse. With these examples, the FYEG show that the critique on the EGD comes from several points of resistance:

> ”On the morning on Wednesday, December 11th, a group of Fridays for Future activists staged an action about the Green Deal before it was presented calling for the EU to commit to more ambitious climate action.” (FYEG, 2019).

> ”Youth for Climate Belgium held a die-in action inside of the European Parliament (…), urging MEPs to "#VoteForMyFuture" and block the new EU Commission unless they are ready to commit to a real and fair Green Deal” (FYEG, 2019).

The critical reflection on the pro-growth texts underlines the tense relationship between the different text types interacting with each other in this discourse sample. The EGD is directly represented and clearly distinguished from the demands made by the FYEG, emphasized by the argumentative and polemic style of the statement.

The article by Mastini, Kallis, and Hickel shows another example of manifest intertextuality by bringing up another political initiative: the proposal for a "Green New Deal for Europe" (GNDE) by the Democracy in Europe Movement (DiEM25) (Mastini et.al., 2019). Referencing the proposal and presenting themselves in favour of it, the authors are manifesting their critical position within the discourse on the EGD and the economic growth paradigm with the EU. The GNDE will be further discussed in detail in the analysis of the social practices. Additionally, they draw on texts from international policy models such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) (Mastini et.al., 2019).

The open letter by the youth climate activists also draws on the IPCC, making their goal of climate justice clear:

> "But let us once again remind you: this is only for an estimated 50% chance of staying below a 1.5C global average temperature rise, according to the IPCC"

By referring to the text of the EGD and the resulting EU Climate Law, clarify their strong opposition to the pro-growth approach:

> "This climate law is surrender – because nature doesn't bargain and you cannot make "deals" with physics." (Thunberg et.al., 2020).

They also draw on additional texts published on the same platform (CarbonBrief), signalizing the platform's support and endorsement of the letter's content.

4.1.4 Conditons of discourse practices

These specific patterns of text consumption and production make up the conditions of discourse practice. Von der Leyen states in her speech that her College of Commissioners agreed on the European Green Deal (Von der Leyen, 2019). This makes her a partial "principal" (Goffmann, 1981, as cited in Fairclough, 1992, p.78) of the text since it is her position presented in the speech, which is backed by her College of Commissioners. By delivering the speech, she also assumes the position of the "animator" (ibid.). Provided that she wrote the speech herself, she then also fulfils the role of the "author" (ibid.) of the text. This can not be said with certainty, but by already obtaining the other two roles of text production it is clear that the text production is strongly in the hands of the speaker. In the Communication on the EGD, there is no single author distinguishable and it is published on the European Commission's own platform (European Commission, 2019). The roles of animator, author and principal are therefore all assumed by the European Commission. This enhances the level of authority embodied by the European Commission, as it symbolizes unity among the producers of the text.

Similarly, the FYEG does not have an author named and is published on the FYEG's own website. The usage of the first-person plural pronoun "we" (FYEG, 2019), suggests that the statement was produced collectively. It is also aiming to be consumed collectively since they address EU institutions directly. The stages of production are hereby all obtained by the FYEG, making them simultaneously the author, principal, and animator of the text.

The article by Mastini et.al. has them listed as the authors of the text. By invoking the first-person plural pronoun "we", they include the reader within the imperatives made by the article, for instance:

> "We need to rethink not only our energy technologies, but also how we organise work, welfare, public services, and the economy." (Mastini et.al., 2019).

This suggests that the authors are connected to the discourse, which emphasized by the article listing their academic positions as Degrowth experts. This makes them also the principals of the text. The magazine also functions partially as principal, since they are the ones publishing the text, thus approving of the content and in power of editing it. This makes them also the animator of the text. Whereas the text has been produced collectively, it is also meant to be consumed collectively, given that the article is published in a prominent political magazine.

The conditions of discourse practices seen in the open letter are similar to those of the other texts in the growth-critical discourse. The letter is signed by 34 individual youth climate change activists, including leading figures within the movement, such as Greta Thunberg and Louisa Neubauer. This shows how the authors of the text are clearly identified. Indeed, they are also the principals of the text, by making use of "we" and emphasizing their unified stance against the proposed EGD:

> " We will not be satisfied with anything less than a science-based pathway, which gives us the best possible chance to safeguard the future living conditions for humanity and life on earth as we know it." (Thunberg, et.al., 2020)

CarbonBrief provides the platform for distribution of this text, which makes them the animator of it. This shows approval, which also makes them partially principals of the text.

Thus far, the analysis has shown that in the texts there are two discourses present, battling for hegemony. The growth-critical approach is composed of texts from political and climate activists, and academics while the pro-growth approach is found in texts by persons and institutions of high political power. The prevailing hegemony of the European Commission as a political actor is articulated through an asymmetric communication that presents the EGD and its growth paradigm without engaging in critical responses. This is necessary to solidify the European Commission's position as a powerful political institution of

the European Union. Hereby the European Commission conveys the assumption about economic growth that it goes unchallenged and is to be regarded as an essential component of the EU's political success. Therefore, this powerful institution is a key role player in constructing a certain kind of "knowledge" (Foucault, 1980). As conceptualized by Foucault, power cannot exist without resistance and resistance is born out of power (Foucault, 1978, p.95). This is seen in how resistant texts responding to the EGD create a growth-critical discourse. Coming largely from activists, this power struggle is seen in how the resistant texts require to engage with the EGD to challenge its hegemonic ideas of economic growth, directly addressing the EU institutions and challenging the policymakers do to better.

4.2 Textual Analyis

Following the discourse practices of the selected material, this section presents the textual analysis of the chosen material. This section of the analysis explores how the linguistic features of the texts emphasize the identified discourses. Linguistic analysis grasps the essence of CDA (Fairclough, 1995), it is vital to examine the way language shapes discourse and vice versa. As part of the "obstacles" in social life, linguistic features are integral to the analysis of the identified research problem (Fairclough, 2001, p. 125). The linguistic features of the texts are analysed in detail, with a queer focus (Motschenbacher&Stegu, 2013) in order to capture underlying hegemonic dichotomies. Fairclough suggests a detailed list of linguistic features that are helpful in analysing a text (Fairclough, 1992, p.234). This thesis will focus on the following categories: First, it will analyse how the texts interact with each other and how they exercise "interactional control". This ties in with the previous analysis of the discourse practices. Second, the level of "cohesion" within the texts is analysed, followed by the grammatical analysis of

"modality" and "transitivity". Afterwards, the analysis turns to the vocabulary of the texts and how "wording" and "word meaning" is constructed. This will be an important step in order to identify how "silences" and "absences" (Venkataraman, 2018). Lastly, in the analysis of "ethos," all available linguistic features will be analysed in how they construct social identities and social realities.

4.2.1 Interactional control

All texts show a certain level of interactional control (Fairclough, 1992, p.234), which indicates the way of controlling the conversational agenda and the exchange structures in operation. The material representing the pro-growth approach of the EU displays a high level of interactional control, justifying the hierarchy of speakers within the discourse. Consequently, the resistant speakers within the discourse display a lower level of interactional control, as the thematic structure of the discourse is to a great extent controlled by official speakers within the discourse. In the Communication on the EGD, it is clear that the speaker, the European Commission, is in full control of the conversational agenda. This is made clear by the European Commission through signposting, by announcing the purpose of the communication:

> "This Communication sets out a European Green Deal for the European Union (EU) and its citizens" (European Commission, 2019, p.2).

The document is divided into four sections: the introduction, the section on "Transforming the EU's Economy for a Sustainable Future", the section on "The EU as a Global Leader", and the last section titled "Time to act together: A European Climate Pact" (European Commission, 2019). Subsections are also given headings, which enhances the structure of the document and guides the reader through it. At the end of the text, the speaker invites the addressees to respond to the Communication, which is meant to stimulate further interaction:

> "The Commission invites the European Parliament and the European Council to endorse the European Green Deal and to give their full weight to the measures it contains" (European Commission, 2019, p.24).

Given the political hierarchy between the EU governmental bodies, the high level of interactional control of the text is representative of the EC's powerful position within the EU. The same high level of interactional control is visible in the speech given by Ursula von der Leyen, introducing the EGD to the press. As von der Leyen is introduced as a speaker to the press, it is stated that questions won't be taken. This is absent from the written transcript but shown in the video recording of the speech[9]. Von der Leyen maintains this level of interactional control throughout the speech, which is made clear towards the end when she thanks the press for listening and indicates interaction with the European Parliament and the European Commission, following the press announcement:

> "I am running now to Parliament, I will present there the European Green Deal (…). Tomorrow I will present the European Green Deal to our leaders in the European Council"(Von der Leyen, 2019).

While the European Commission and von der Leyen exercise this level of authority without conflict, the resistant voices within the discourse display a struggle for interactional control. The FYEG shows this in their statement about the EGD, where turn-taking between the discourse samples takes place. In order to make their response clear, they are adhering to a structure that gives room to present he EGD goals, followed by the critique of FYEG on those goals and their suggestions for improvement. By following the topics introduced by the EGD, they struggle for interactional control and attempt to claim it by addressing the responsible EU institutions directly in their demands. A similar struggle for

[9] https://audiovisual.ec.europa.eu:443/en/video/I-182024?&lg=OR

interactional control is found in the article by Mastini et.al, who exhibit a turn-taking pattern of giving room to von der Leyen's political agenda and the EGD, followed by stating their own counter-arguments. They also draw on other elite speakers within the discourse, such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) to strengthen their position. Furthermore, they let the GNDE, a proposal made by DiEM25, "speak" and draw up a scientific study by the Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS) and the journal "Nature, Climate Change" to support their claims. These turn-taking patterns underline the critical tone of the article since the speakers differentiate clearly which other texts within the discourse they agree with. The struggle for interactional control is also seen in the open letter to EU leaders, sent by youth climate activists. They refer to the EU climate law, related to the EGD by quoting it, directly and indirectly, criticizing the content. By using subheadings, they guide the reader through their critique and set the conversational agenda.

The level of interactional control as seen in the texts is an exercise of power relations. The pro-growth approach shows that the European Commission, as a powerful political institution, is in a key position to convey a "truth" about economic growth. Resistances are produced by power but are productive of power "from below" (Foucault, 1978, p.94). The struggle for interactional control as displayed by the growth-critical approach in the discourse shows that the assumptions about economic growth by the European Commission are not being taken for granted, challenging the "knowledge" produced by the EGD.

4.2.2 Cohesion

In the analysis of the discourse practices, it was already touched upon how the texts in the discourse gain credibility. By analysing the level of "cohesion", it is determined how the texts make use of "linkages" between sentences and clauses thus structuring the rhetoric mode (Fairclough, 1992, p.77). The analysis shows

how the texts construct their narratives on growth and draw connections to well-being and sustainability.

The pro-growth approach to the discourse, as portrayed by the Communication on the EGD and the speech by Von der Leyen makes a strong argument for implementing new policy measures to counteract the effects of climate change. In doing so, both texts encourage economic growth to facilitate prosperity. Furthermore, the challenges of the climate crisis are posed as an opportunity to transform the way economic growth is achieved, namely through the creation of innovative technological solutions:

> "The European Green Deal is a response to these challenges. It is a new growth strategy that aims to transform the EU into a fair and prosperous society, with a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy where there are no net emissions of greenhouse gases in 2050 and where economic growth is decoupled from resource use." (European Commission, 2019, p.2).

> "Therefore, the European Green Deal is on the one hand about cutting emissions, but on the other hand it is about creating jobs and boosting innovation." (Von der Leyen, 2019)

Above all, the European Commission constructs a narrative that alludes to the fact that the EGD aims to be including EU citizens in the improvement of climate action and that citizens will profit from the new policies:

> "European Citizens are changing their lifestyle to help protect the climate and the plant. Therefore, our European Green Deal tells them that Europe is at their side" (Von der Leyen, 2019)

> "Second, there should be both real and virtual spaces for people to express their ideas and creativity and work together on ambitious

> action, both at individual and collective level" (European Commission, 2019, p.22).

The same level of cohesiveness is observed in the texts with a growth-critical approach towards the EGD. Mastini et.al. question the effectiveness of the new policy measures introduced by the EGD. While they also make the connection between the threats posed by the climate crisis and the urgent need for political action, they express doubt about the European Commission's focus on the energy technology sector and stress how there are more important sectors to focus on:

> "We need to rethink not only our energy technologies, but also how we organise work, welfare, public services, and the economy" (Mastini et.al., 2019).

> "Von der Leyen's policies reaffirm Europe's commitment to fiscal austerity, a programme of cutting non-growth sectors like education and healthcare, and an economic model that prizes GDP growth over ecological limits." (Mastini et.al., 2019).

They furthermore emphasize how the connection between the increase of economic growth and lowering carbon emissions is not feasible:

> "While it's theoretically possible to increase economic activity without adding to a nation's carbon footprint (therefore decoupling GDP growth from carbon emissions), there is growing scientific evidence that this is unlikely to happen fast enough to maintain a carbon budget in line with a 1.5°C to 2°C rise in global temperatures. "Green" growth, in other words, is an oxymoron" (Mastini et. al., 2019).

“Green growth” is an idea of growth informed by neoliberalism (Kallis et al., 2018, as cited in Kjærsgaard, 2019, p.14).

Equally critical, but worded more strongly, is the argumentation of the FYEG who not only dismiss the idea of supporting climate action that facilitates growth, they also draw a connection between economic growth and the roots of the climate crisis:

> “You can't fix a capitalist economic growth problem with more growth (which is suggested). Eternal economic growth is not a solution, but frankly, is the problem” (FYEG, 2019).

The open letter by the climate activists also follows that line of argumentation. They further accentuate a connection between the European Commission’s alleged lack of political competence and the consequences of it for future generations:

> “This is the uncomfortable truth that you cannot escape, no matter how badly you want to and how hard you try. And the longer you keep running away from that truth, the bigger your betrayal towards future generations” (Thunberg et.al., 2020).

The conflicting meanings of “growth” in the texts are transported convincingly as the highly cohesive argumentations and narratives are constructed through the extensive use of conjunctions, referencing, and ellipses.

4.2.3 Grammar

The analysis of cohesion has shown that the texts offer different and conflicting ”truths” about economic growth and climate justice, while the speakers are all invested in coming across convincingly. To establish how the speakers manage to express their own agency, one has to look at the ”transitivity” of the texts. (Fairclough, 1992, p.178). This was touched upon in the analysis of cohesion as the narratives on growth and climate change have already been established, whilst transitivity focuses then on expressions of causality and responsibility within these narratives (p.236). Following this, the analysis of ”modality” reveals how speakers manage to present these narratives as truthful and how ”committed” the speakers are to their narratives (p.158).

Analysing the speech by Von der Leyen, it becomes clear that there is a high level of agency and responsibility through the use of transitive verbs and modality. The message of the European Commission, as presented by Von der Leyen is that the EGD is an innovative climate action policy, as it rejects previous assumptions about growth:

> ”I am convinced that the old growth-model that is based on fossil-fuels and pollution is out of date, and it is out of touch with our planet.” (Von der Leyen, 2019).

She expresses multiple times how urgent climate action is needed and that it is a common responsibility, by speaking mostly in the first person plural ”we”. There are little expressions of causality that would explain how to address climate change at the root of the problem, the focus lies on calling for action for change. Similarly, the Communication on the EGD shows a high level of modality, showing that the European Commission is convinced of the effectiveness of their set of proposed policies:

> ”The EU can use its influence, expertise and financial resources to mobilise its neighbours and partners to join it on a sustainable path” (European Commission, 2019, p.2).

The level of transitivity shows that the European Commission admits to a certain level of responsibility:

> ”It also aims to protect, conserve and enhance the EU's natural capital, and protect the health and well-being of citizens from environment-related risks and impacts. At the same time, this transition must be just and inclusive.” (European Commission, 2019, p.2).

More precise expressions of causality refer to the connection between climate change and ”the economies of the G20”. The narrative constructed hereby is that there is still cooperation needed with such economies and that they can not be easily challenged:

> ”The EU will continue to engage with the economies of the G20 that are responsible for 80% of global greenhouse gas emissions. Stepping up the level of climate action taken by international partners requires tailor-made geographic strategies that reflect different contexts and local needs – for example for current and future big emitters, for the least developed countries, and for small island developing states” (European Commission, 2019, p.20).

Within the growth-critical approach to the EGD, the contrasting realities between the texts become visible. Whereas the Communication on the EGD and the speech by von der Leyen present a seemingly convincing model of effective climate change policies…

> “The Just Transition Mechanism will focus on the regions and sectors that are most affected by the transition(…)” (European Commission, 2019, p.16)

> “The European Green Deal is very ambitious, but it will also be very careful in assessing the impact and every single step we are taking” (Von der Leyen, 2019).

…the statement by the FYEG provides an equally certain but critical outlook on the possibilities of the EGD’s goals:

> “Without proper enforcement mechanisms for the climate emergency, we will never be able to keep emissions below the 1,5 degrees” (FYEG, 2019).

This shows not only a high level of modality but also establishes a causal link between ”proper enforcement mechanisms and the goal to ”keep emissions below 1,5 degrees”. Mastini et.al. also make use of modality and transitivity to express their certainty about rejecting the growth-focused approach of the European Commission:

> ”European countries do not need more growth in order to improve people’s lives. We already have enough wealth to go around; the problem lies in the distribution of that wealth” (Mastini et.al., 2019).

With a less certain tone, they express alternative possibilities for a ”post-growth economy”:

> ”Equitably sharing this wealth could improve peoples' lives without plundering the Earth's resources. Fairness could be an antidote to the imperative of growth.” (Mastini et.al., 2019).

> ”With public services provided for free, citizens wouldn't need to chase ever-higher incomes to support themselves.” (Mastini et.al., 2019).

A critique of the EGD’s technology-based approach is found in the open letter by the climate activists, carrying a strong sense of urgency:

> ”And until we have the technologies that at scale can put our emissions to minus then we must forget about net-zero or ”carbon neutrality”. We need real zero.” (Thunberg et.al., 2020).

The consensus among all texts in the discourse is that there is a dire need for innovative strategies to combat the effects of the climate crisis. However, the ”truths” constructed by the different speakers differ, as the European Commission and Von der Leyen remain firm in holding on to facilitating economic growth, albeit a ”new growth strategy” (Von der Leyen, 2019). This idea of a ”green growth” contradicts the reality constructed by resistant voices (Mastini et.al., 2019), who advocate for ending ”the dogma of endless growth” (ibid.). The competing approaches in the discourse articulate their positions with a high level of certainty and out of conviction. This lack of self-reflexivity leaves little room for competing interpretations of the constructed ”truths”.

4.2.4 Vocabulary

Part of the textual analysis is to identify keywords used by speakers within the discourse and determine how their meaning changes according to the speaker. The structure of “word meaning” demonstrates the hierarchy within the discourse and the “focus of struggle” (Fairclough, p.236). The texts make use of similar keywords, however, they are assigned a different meaning across the discourse.

“European Green Deal”, “fair”, “just”, “growth”, “vulnerable”, “fair”, “inclusive”, “sustainable” and “we”.

“Growth” and the “European Green Deal” are possibly the most significant keywords for this analysis. Whereas the European Commission and Ursula von der Leyen frame the “European Green Deal” in a positive light, presenting a new idea of “growth” that rejects “the old growth-model based on fossil-fuels and pollution” (Von der Leyen, 2019) and embrace the “new growth strategy” as “ambitious” (ibid.), “sustainable”, and “inclusive” (European Commission, 2019), the critical voices from academia and activists ascribe the “growth” as laid out by the EGD, as “an oxymoron” (Mastini et.al., 2019). The “just transition” as laid out in the EGD is signified to be “fair” and “inclusive” (European Commission, 2019), looking out for the “most vulnerable”. The lack of details, indicating what exactly is meant with “just” and “fair” and who falls under the definition of “most vulnerable”, is criticized by the FYEG (2019). The use of the generic “we” is present in all texts of the discourse at work. The meaning of this differs according to the speakers: Von der Leyen constructs a common European identity to appeal to EU citizens (Von der Leyen, 2019), whereas the FYEG are using it to distance themselves from the policymakers behind the EGD: “We want a real green deal” (FYEG, 2019). Nevertheless, what goes unacknowledged, is that the generic “we” creates the false assumption that everyone included in the “we” is affected by climate change and the measures of the EGD in the same way (Kallis, 2019,p.63). This leaves out identities that struggle more than others under climate change. The European Commission makes an attempt at capturing this underlying inequality by stating: “Citizens, depending on their social and geographic circumstances, will be affected in different ways” (European Commission, 2019), but fails to point out what exact circumstances constitute “vulnerability”. The generic “we” is an example of how absences and silences in a discourse influence the construction of social reality. This distorted version of reality is described as a “mask” (Stibbe, 2015, as cited in Venkataraman, 2018, p. 247).

While significant keywords are ascribed a different meaning in the discourse, it is also important to pay attention to how socially constructed

"meanings" are worded differently (Fairclough, 1992, p.237). It is important for this analysis to understand the "alternative ways of signifying" (Kristeva, as cited by Fairclough, 1992, p.190). What the European Commission calls "Climate change" in the Communication on the EGD (European Commission, 2019), is phrased by resistant voices as "climate crisis" (Thunberg et.al., 2020; Mastini et.al.,2019). What is called "Climate adaptation" by the European Commission (2019), is called "Climate justice" by Mastini et.al.(2019) and Thunberg et.al. (2020) or the "Climate emergency" by the FYEG (2019). These different "ideological signifier" show how the resistant domain chooses stronger wording in the struggle for hegemony (Fairclough, 1992, p. 77).

4.2.5 Ethos

At last, a central aspect in the textual analysis is to look for linguistic features that signalize the formation of a "self" or "social identity". The analysis of "ethos" (Fairclough, 1992, p.166) within the discourse samples reveals that all speakers make strong use of linguistic tools to create a social identity within the discourse. In doing so, they not only create their own identity but also create others. In all texts, the speakers use personal pronouns to distinguish their social identity from others. In Von der Leyen's speech, utterances such as "our goal", "our planet", and "our people" (Von der Leyen, 2019), invoke the sense that she is not only speaking to but also for a community. This method suggests a sense of unity and consensus, including the recipients of the speech, which is necessary to make her presentation of the EGD sound convincing. Another significant example is:

> "The European Green Deal is something – I am convinced – we owe to our children because we do not own this planet" (von der Leyen, 2019).

With this, von der Leyen presents herself as an individual within the unified identity of EU citizens, and the EGD as a way to protect both future generations, as well as the planet. This constructs an exceptional identity for EU institutions as a primary agent in the struggle for climate justice. This is also seen in the third and fourth sections of the EGD, titled "The EU as a Global Leader" (European Commission, 2019, p.20) and "Time to act together: A European Climate Pact" (p.22) which depict the EU in a leadership role in international climate negotiations and how it should "set standards that apply across global value chains" (p.22). This Eurocentric notion is further amplified by the text identifying the EU one of the "world's leading donors of development assistance", and referring to countries outside the EU as "neighbours" or "partners". By calling for a "just transition" that leaves "no one behind" and considers "the most vulnerable" (European Commission, 2019, p.16), the EU is connotated as an institution that is concerned with the wellbeing of its citizens. Moreover, the text emphasizes how the EGD will "bring together citizens in all their diversity" (European Commission, 2019, p. 2). However, the social identity of those marginalized people is not further identified, neither what constitutes their marginalization, thus the definition of "most vulnerable" remains open for interpretation. As aforementioned, such "masks" (Stibbe, as cited in Venkatraman, 2018, p. 247) are a "discursive simplification" (Jessop, as cited in Venkatraman, 2018, p. 245) and constitute a reality where certain identities are excluded.

Contrary to this, the resistant speakers within the discourse use this method to distance themselves (and the reader) from the EU, questioning its leadership capabilities. The FYEG's statement is titled "We Want a Real Green Deal", which shows their unified voices behind the demands for the EGD as well as their disagreement with it. Further examples in the text are:

"our take on the proposed European Green Deal", and

> "We need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and turn our backs on the myth of infinite economic growth"(FYEG, 2019).

When speakers refer to other critical voices in the discourse, for instance, activist groups such as Fridays for Future activists (FYEG, 2019), or renowned experts in the field, such as economist Naomi Klein (Mastini et. Al., 2019), this amplifies the resistances against the EU's construction of a unified social identity.

Together with the discourse practices, the textual analysis has shown how the power relations exercised through the texts form a discourse with two different approaches. While the European Commission and Commission President Ursula von der Leyen maintain a pro-growth stance in light of the challenges faced by the climate crisis, whereas texts from academics and activists challenge the growth-paradigm portrayed by the EGD. In the process of articulating the different assumptions about economic growth and climate justice, socially constructed "truths" are created. In the following section, the interplay of discourse practices and linguistic features of the texts are interpreted within the analysis of the social practices.

4.3 Social Practice

Discourse is situated within social practices, which bear an implicit power to produce knowledge (Fairclough, 1992, p.50). Accordingly, the analysis of social practices is necessary to understand the way discourse practices are shaped and how they, in turn, can shape social life (Fairclough, 1992, p. 237). Fairclough suggests rough guidelines on how to approach this analysis. First, the social matrix of the discourse needs to be analysed. This means that the social structures that enable certain discourse practices are investigated, and how the texts reproduce or challenge the hegemonic structures. These social structures are seen in "particular kinds of social representations, particularly in relation to social exclusion" (Rojo&Esteban, 2005, p.63). Second, the order of the discourse is

examined and how the discourse at hand fits into the hierarchy of other available discourses. Third, the political effects of the discourse are analyzed. This last step "contributes to sustaining particular relations of power and ideology" (Fairclough, 2001, p.126). To interpret the findings of these steps, the analysis utilizes the previously established theoretical framework of a queer-feminist approach to Degrowth and the conceptual framework of knowledge and power by Foucault.

4.3.1 Social matrix of discourse

Within the realm of EU environmental policy and Degrowth, there are certain social practices that have shaped social representation as well as social exclusion.

Advocacy for climate justice has gained momentum in the recent years, partially due to the rise of global climate justice movements such as Fridays for Future[10], incited by youth climate activist Greta Thunberg in 2018. Other social actors, such as numerous NGOs like the Climate Action Network[11], supranational institutions and platforms like the UNFCCC[12], as well as professional associations and networks, have also devoted themselves to promoting climate justice and bringing it to the attention of the public. Moreover, feminist organizations have made vital contributions to the international conversation on climate change, making the gendered dimensions of climate change visible[13]. Furthermore, the issue of Degrowth has gained more attention, which is seen in the regular International Degrowth Conferences and the Degrowth platform[14], providing space for academics and activists to engage in the production of knowledge about Degrowth. The establishment of the FaDA has brought Degrowth activism and Feminism together. While Degrowth is mostly discussed in the academic and

[10] https://fridaysforfuture.se/
[11] http://www.caneurope.org/
[12] https://unfccc.int/
[13] http://womengenderclimate.org/
[14] https://www.degrowth.info/en/

activist sphere, there have been recent instances of political attempts at addressing Degrowth or growth-critical issues, as seen in the Postgrowth Conference in 2018 and the Eco-Social event in 2019 (Kjærsgaard, 2019).

Concerning practices of social exclusion, the aforementioned achievements of addressing climate change, gendered dimensions of climate justice, and growth citicism show less effort in including LGBTQI* people in their practices, despite the fact that the climate change affects LGBTQI* people in particular (Randall, 2020). The general discrimination experienced by LGBTQI* people within the EU has recently been emphasized by the European Union Agency on Fundamental Rights publishing a survey that details how LGBTQI* people are disadvantaged and discriminated against in the EU[15]. This means that social practices that reproduce heteronormativity and cisnormativity are dominant, making the experiences of marginalized groups of people less apparent in social discourse.

The hegemonic structures and relations are therefore widely accepting climate change as a threat to humanity but show a lack of effort to efficiently address growth criticism on a political level, whereas the academic and activist sphere shows considerable concern with growth criticism. The texts of the discourse around the European Green Deal are shaped by these social practices. While the resistant voices within the discourse match the criticism of growth from academics and activists, the political institutions are reproducing the hegemonic growth paradigm within the EU. Within the social matrix of discourse, the texts representing the pro-growth approach are therefore rather conventional (Fairclough, 1992, p. 237), but the growth-critical texts attempt to challenge the hegemonic growth paradigm of the political sphere. However, all texts within the discourse leave the hegemonic structure of heteronormativity (the exclusion of LGBTQI* people) unchallenged.

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[15] https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2020/eu-lgbti-survey-results

4.3.2 The order of discourse

Within the order of the discourse there are a number of other discourses available that are related to the discourse on the European Green Deal:

The EU's focus on economic growth has been articulated in two important discourses: The Green New Deal for Europe (GNDE), a report conceptualized by the Democracy in Europe Movement (DiEM25), as well as an open letter sent to the EU institutions, signed by over 200 scientists, titled "Europe, it's time to end the growth dependency". The latter points out the negative impact of economic growth on the environment, demonstrating how in order to solve the climate crisis and the related social problem, it is necessary to adopt strategies that move away from the growth paradigm, such as "a fairer distribution of the income and wealth that we already have" (O'Neill et.al., 2018). Current political initiatives such as the European Commission's project "Beyond GDP[16]", or the UN Sustainable Development Goals[17] have attempted to define "growth" beyond the measurement of GDP but the general narrative remains that "growth" is a desirable political goal, "despite the fundamental contradictions between growth and sustainability" (O'Neill et.al., 2018). The "growth dependency" of the EU shows itself in the continuous pursuit of growth, even when it is marketed as "sustainable", "green", or "inclusive" (O'Neill et.al., 2018). The conceptualization of a "Green New Deal" in Europe, that successfully addresses the challenges of the climate crisis has been articulated by policymakers since 2008, by the Green New Deal Group in the UK (Green New Deal Group, 2008, as cited by Bauhardt, 2014, p.62). The GNDE reveals how the pro-growth paradigm prevails in hegemonic relations in the EU. The report, consisting of 10 pillars that are needed to construct a "Green New Deal", shows that there is still a need to address the GDP growth dependency in Europe, calling for more "holistic measures of human progress" (GNDE, Pillar 8). It furthermore shows how "equality" needs to be included in conceptualizations of a "Green New Deal". By stressing how race, sexuality,

[16] https://ec.europa.eu/environment/beyond_gdp/news_eu_en.html
[17] https://sdgs.un.org/goals

gender, age, and ability matter in how social justice and climate justice is achieved, it shows that such an intersectional focus is missing from hegemonic discourses in the EU (GNDE, Pillar 6).

This shows how, despite efforts from academia and activists, the pro-growth approach as it is found in political institutions such as the European Commission, continues to inform and shape the order of the discourse.

4.3.3 Political effects of discourse

This last section of the analysis of social practices deals with the political effects of the discourse. In the previous sections, the texts of the discourse around the EGD have been analyzed in the interplay of discourse practices, linguistic features, situated within the social context. The results of this extensive analysis are accumulated in how the discourse produces knowledge, social relations, and social identities (Fairclough, 1992, p. 238).

As theorized by Foucault, ”power creates knowledge” (Foucault, 1980, p. 52). Since all speakers within the discourse are part of a larger ”de-centralized power apparatus” (Fraser, 2003, p. 332), they all take part in constructing knowledge, and compete for defining what can be regarded as ”true”.

While the European Commission constructs growth as a necessary component in generating effective climate action, the resistances in the discourse oppose this meaning of growth completely. Nevertheless, the narrative of the European Commission is regarded as hegemonic because it is sustained by the neoliberal system of knowledge that the discourse is embedded in.

Hegemony is regarded as the continuous, reenactment of what is understood as ”common sense” and does not require justification (Gramsci, 1972, as cited in Fraser, 2013, p. 142). As Klein points out: ”all of us are living in the world that neoliberalism built, even if we happen to be critics of neoliberalism” (Klein, p. 185). This makes it harder for the growth-critical approach to to gain a foothold in

sustainability discourses (Kjærsgaard, 2019, p.67) and establish a truth that holds up against the overarching growth model presented by the EGD. The idea of ”growth” created by the European Commission follows the neoliberal notion of growth which focuses, amongst other aspects, on ”the corporate sector” (Wichterich, 2015, p.72). This is contested by resistant voices in the discourse, such as Mastini et. al. who propose that investment in ”non-growth sectors” such as the care-sector, would ”improve peoples' lives without plundering the Earth's resources.” (Mastini et.al., 2019). As the different growth-critical texts struggle for hegemony in the discourse, they are emphasizing how the relationship between sustainability and growth does not hold up against the goals of Degrowth, even calling ”growth” out as the core problem of the discourse that needs to be tackled (FYEG, 2019). What is missing from both approaches is a thematic connection between growth and social equality. While the European Commission touches upon ”leaving no one behind” (European Commission, 2019), it does not address how people are affected differently according to race, sexuality, gender, age, and ability by sustainabilitx measures (GNDE). This is because under growth-oriented capitalism, gendered inequalities are paid less attention to (Mellor, 2017, p.87)

The established system of knowledge, pro-growth neoliberal capitalism, is sustained by the social relations articulated in the texts. ”Green growth” therefore depends on and reproduces deeply entrenched dichotomies within society (Mellor, 2017). These dichotomies produce heteronormativity which is the ”social macro issue that affects all contexts” (Motschenbacher&Stegu, 2013, p.528). Another dichtomy is: ”people-planet”. These dichotomies are the articulated divison between the technological sector and the care sector. These are seen as representative of the “nature-culture dichotomy” (Bauhardt, 2019, p.23) From an ecofeminst perspective, this dichotomy is constructive of a gender binary and reinforcing further binaries. The care sector, largely female-dominated receives less attention than the technological sector, which is largely male-dominated. Thus, a narrative is constructed that assumes binary social relation as normal.

Lastly, the analysis of social identities within the texts shows that the EU manages to construct itself as a role model, seen in the section in the EGD titled ” “The EU as a Global Leader” (European Commission, 2017). While the resistanz voices in the discourse display a struggle for hegemnony, it cannot be identified as a system that makes a clear distinction between an ”oppressor” and the ”oppressed”, as this is too simplistic (Lamb, 2013, p.335). Rather it is seen how with the use of the first person plural ”we”, all actors within the discourse reproduce dichotomous assumptions, as it is assumed that ”we” encompasses everyone without making distinctions by social class, gender, race, or sexuality even though these distinctions matter in discourse on nature (Lazar, 2005, p.9).

5 Conclusion

This thesis has analysed the political discourse around the European Green Deal from a queer-feminist perspective, through the analytical tool of Critical Discourse Analysis, as developed by Fairclough. The aim was to answer the following questions:

How is economic growth framed in the discourse around the European Green Deal?
What dichotomies are produced by the discourse around the European Green Deal?
How can a queer-feminist perspective on Degrowth capture the underlying power dynamics of the EU growth-dependency?

These questions have been answered as follows:
The analysis has shown economic growth is framed in two ways. One the one side there is "green growth", which is coupled with "sustainability", but is still constructed as desirable, even preferred to the "old growth model" (Von der Leyen, 2019) On the other side there is the growth-critical approach that frames economic growth not only as undesirable but as harmful in the creation of sustainability policies.

There are numerous dichotomies present in the texts, underlined and maintained by neoliberal power relations. These namely are: "reproductive – productive", as seen in the discussion on whether financial investment should go to the emissions technology sector (productive) or the healthcare sector (reproductive). Thus, the central idea of a queer-feminist approach to Degrowth, is that the neoliberal capitalist separation of productive and reproductive work needs to be eliminated (trouble everdayday collective, 2017, p.308). This is difficult to achieve because the capitalist system depends on this power relation (Foucault, 1978, p.141). Another dichotomy seen is "people – planet" which is an analogy to the "human-nature" divide. (Gaard, 1997, p.116). These dichotomies signalize

that the way the speakers of the texts make utterances and articulate their goals is deeply underrun by hegemonic binary assumptions. Furthermore, it shows how the common goal of Degrowth and queer-feminist economic is to overthrow the particular capitalist power relations.

These assumptions lead to reproducing exclusionary practices in the creation of environmental discourse. It is crucial, to adopt an intersectional perspective in the creation of sustainability policies and environmental discourse since climate change affects people differently based on their gender, race, class, or sexuality. As laid out by Greta Gaard, queer ecofeminism is necessary to not only include people of all genders into the discourse but also to prevent the reinforcement of oppressive gender relations (Gaard, 1997, p.114).

This, however, was absent from both the pro-growth approach and the growth-critical approach. By using the generic "we" through a "mask"(Stibbe, 2015, as cited in Venkataraman), both approaches show a level of generalization and discursive simplification. While the generic "we" is also used to signify unity, it can eradicate marginalized identities from the discourse, thus eradicating their potential for articulating themselves and emancipating themselves. While this exclusionary practice is not necessary born out of an individual's conscious choice, the power behind creating the generic "we" is intentional (Foucault, 1978, p.94). The intention is to keep the discourse heteronormative, because "queering" the discourse means to challenge what goes usually unchallenged. It therefore shows that the systemic restrictions, meaning to be situated within a neoliberal context already, require a high level of self-reflexivity from all speakers in order to challenge the articulated dichotomies effectively (Darier, 1999, p. 227, as cited in Wagler, 2009, p. 335).

The lesson drawn from this study is therefore that the binary assumption of an "oppressor" versus the "oppressed" does not hold true, power is reproduced on all levels and heteronormative assumptions are weaved into every discourse. So, to challenge the neoliberal EU growth dependency effectively, the system needs to be challenged from within, which starts with the self-reflection about one's own reproduction patterns of harmful heteronormativity.

For future research, it is possible to keep the same theoretical framework but adopt different research styles, such as participatory action research to investigate how e.g. queer* activist communities create knowledge in environmental discourse.

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7 Appendix

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