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The (im)possible and (un)desirable climate politics

A critical governmentality study of a neoliberal rationality in the European Green Deal

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Abstract

The purpose of the study is to examine how the European Green Deal shapes and constrains what is considered possible and desirable in order to tackle the climate crisis. More specifically, the objective is to expose its underlying assumptions, interrogate what is taken for granted and left unproblematic. In order to examine how established knowledge shapes and constrains political action the study takes inspiration from a Foucauldian discourse analysis. While the theoretical framework is composed by a critical governmentality approach the methodology has elements of Bacchi's WPR approach and Foucault's genealogy. The study shows that the European Green Deal could be understood as an expression of a neoliberal rationality. It is presented as a new growth strategy with focus on competitive markets, cost-efficiency as well as consumers' behavior and choice. By analysing the socio-historical conditions of the European Green Deal the study demonstrates how a neoliberal rationality has become a hegemonic discourse in economic theory as well as in policy making, and therefore shaped how we respond to the climate crisis. Realizing how particular climate politics only exists as long as an institutional framework provides conditions of possibilities opens up for alternative political actions.

Keywords: The European Green Deal, Climate Change, Climate Politics, Neoliberalism, Governmentality

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1 Introduction

Contemporary climate politics is characterised by a worrying paradox. At the same time as we are all aware of the urgent climate crisis, human impact on our planetary environment is getting worse day by day (Death 2014, p. 1). As early as the beginning of the nineteenth century, scientists have proven that carbon emissions are the primary determinant of climate change. In 1886 the Swedish scientist Arrhenius argued that burning coal and oil would increase the concentration of carbon in the atmosphere, but also cause a warmer planet. However, it was not possible until 1963 to claim that carbon emissions are increasing every year (Newell & Paterson 2010, p. 13; Okereke & Charlesworth 2014 p. 42). In 1988 UN established the IPCC in order to provide consolidation of scientific and political consensus regarding the controversies of climate change (Newell & Paterson 2010, p. 18) and today they have become an authoritative voice providing standards and recommendations (Okereke & Charlesworth 2014 p. 43). In their special report, they stated that global warming should be limited to 1.5-2 degrees, compared with the preindustrial period, which requires that the emissions have to decline by 25 percent in 2030 and reach net zero around 2070 (IPCC 2018). The Paris Agreement, that was adopted 2015, followed these standards with the aim to peak global greenhouse emissions "as soon as possible" (UNFCCC 2015, p. 4).

This far, however, emission reductions have only occurred in economic depressions (Klein 2014, p. 21) and last time the temperature was 2 degrees higher than today was around 129.000 years ago. Although sea levels, during this period, were 5-6 meters higher than now the IPCC only estimates that it will rise with 60 cm (Newell & Paterson 2010, p. 5). According to the scientific consensus global emissions would have to peak *before* 2020 and then decrease with at least 3 percent per year to reach the 2 degrees goal. This is the same speed as the greenhouse emission nowadays are increasing. If the peak occurs ten or twenty years later, which seems increasingly likely, the emissions need to decrease even more brutally (Malm 2016, p. 383).

Besides this worrying paradox it is evident that people who suffer most of climate degradations neither *have* nor currently *are* contributing to the problem. Therefore, climate change raises a vital issue of injustice and inequality (Newell & Paterson 20120, p. 7). In 2019 the European Commission launched the European Green Deal as an attempt to tackle the

climate crisis through a just and inclusive transition (European Commission 2019). Nevertheless, although we agree that climate change is driven by human activity and causes asymmetric impacts, controversies remain on which efforts are needed in order to tackle the climate crisis. Yet it is questionable whether rich people, companies and countries are taking appropriate responsibility. Governments tend to rely on economists' cost-benefit analysis and are therefore stuck with the idea of commodifying carbon and constructing carbon markets in order to respond to the climate crisis (Okereke & Charlesworth 2014, p 41-51).

Contemporary reliance on fossil energy could be comparable with the historic economic dependency on slave labour. Both are forms of exploitation driven by the idea of eternal economic growth, profitability and expansion. However, although burning fossil fuels isn't morally equivalent with owning slaves and occupying countries, moving away from the dependency in both cases causes economic costs for the elite (Klein 2014, p. 456). From the start of the industrial revolution there has been a great acceleration of economic growth *and* greenhouse emissions (Steffen et al 2015, p. 94; see Appendix 2). Since the evolvement of modern capitalism is interlinked with large-scale exploitation of fossil fuels (Newell & Paterson 2010, p. 12) our economic model and planetary system are at war. While the climate needs to avoid human use of resources, our economic model demands an unfettered expansion (Klein 2014, p. 21).

That fact that climate change is fundamentally caused by the obsession of economic growth, as well as its consumerist and competition values, raises an issue of how to deal with environmental degradation without undermining human existence (Okereke & Charlesworth 2014, p. 48-49). Meanwhile governments and businesses continue to focus on economic growth, we have still not seen any impact of global emission reductions (Newell & Paterson 2010, p. 34). The tension between our fossil dependent capitalist economy and the ecological system (Koch 2012, p. 12-13) therefore not only challenges business-as-usual politics (Okereke & Charlesworth 2014, p. 42) but also the foundations of our societies.

1.1 Purpose and research question

Since the roots of climate change are embedded in a fossil dependent capitalist economy, it is evident that the response to the problem requires a systemic transformation. However, it seems like policy that both aims to reduce inequalities and tackle the climate crisis, instead reproduces structural power relations that caused these issues in the first place. Therefore, I intend to

examine how the framing of climate politics affects what's considered possible and desirable in order to tackle the climate crisis. More specific, the purpose is to examine how a neoliberal rationality shapes and constrains political action. By exposing the underlying assumptions of the European Green Deal and investigating how they have come about, my intention is to deepen the comprehension of the solutions that are presented to achieve a transition.

I will use the European Green Deal to illustrate the paradox of EU's large ecological footprint (see Appendix 1) and how the union at the same time frames itself as a role model for ambitious climate action. In order to examine how discourses shape and constrain political action, the study will be done through a Foucauldian inspired discourse analysis. While the theoretical framework is composed by a critical governmentality approach the methodology both takes inspiration from Foucault's genealogy and Bacchi's WPR approach. This said, the purpose is to deepen the comprehension regarding climate politics through the research questions:

How does the European Green Deal shape and constrain our ability to think about what is possible and desirable in order to tackle the climate crisis?

- *What solutions are represented in the European Green Deal?*
- *What deep-seated assumptions underlie the representation?*
- *How has this representation come about?*
- *What is left unproblematic?*

2 Literature review

It's not surprising that the literature about climate politics to a large extent have been influenced by critical approaches. Since the Stockholm UN Human Environment Conference 1972 the awareness of environmental degradation has increased significantly. As Death (2014) points out we can therefore observe discourses of "an era of post-ecologism", "politics of unsustainability" (Blühdorn & Welsh 2007; Blühdorn 2013), "end of nature" (McKibben 1989), "end of environmentalism" (Wissenburg & Levy 2004) and "death of environmentalism" (Shellenberger & Nordhaus 2009). However, it's possible to distinguish diverse intellectual traditions of critical theorizing in social sciences.

Although the Marxist/Gramscian and the poststructuralist tradition share a critical approach they are associated with different scholars and concepts (Death 2014, p. 3). While classical Marxists argue for binary opposition between freedom and domination, poststructuralists break binaries by rejecting freedom as a natural condition (Milchman & Rosenberg 2002, p. 137). Marxist/Gramscian theorists emphasize hegemonic social forces with the aim to create economic transformation and political change. Poststructuralists, on the other hand, are less willing to suggest alternative political projects (Death 2014, p. 3). However, even though the theoretical traditions sometimes are positioned opposite to each other, with different perceptions of 'truth', power and subjectivity, they share a critical concern as well as a commitment of making the unfamiliar more visible (Ibid., p. 4).

Skoglund (2011) follows the poststructuralist tradition in her PhD thesis *Homo Clima*. Building on Foucault's as well as Miller & Rose's ideas about productive power she examines how statements on prevention and mitigation of climate risks express certain rationalities (Skoglund 2011, p. 4-5). Tracing how the language of climate change is being constituted through knowledge production she exposes the 'ideal' climate citizens. With inspiration from Foucault's governmentality approach, she therefore examines how individuals conduct themselves in everyday practices through social interactions (Ibid., p. 28).

Stephan and Paterson (2012) problematize politics of carbon markets by challenging norms and practices that are taken for granted (Stephan & Paterson 2012, p. 551). Through different governmentality perspectives they interrogate practices that have enabled carbon trading (Paterson & Stripple 2012) as well as how practices of the science community

have contributed to the emergence of these markets (Fuhr & Lederer 2009). Therefore, they illustrate how politics of carbon markets represent forms of knowledge claims that underpin these markets but also contribute to constitute them through everyday practices (Stephan & Paterson 2012, p. 545).

Malm (2016), on the other hand, follows the Marxist tradition. In his PhD thesis *Fossil Capital*, he examines the historical development of capitalism showing how our economy has become dependent on fossil energy. Malm argues that the fossil economy has a socio-ecological structure in which economic processes and energy are connected. Demonstrating how people that are born into the fossil economy perceive the system as an objective fact, he illustrates how its historical dimension obscures. He argues that "the fossil economy was once constructed and has since been produced and enlarged, and anything built over time can potentially be torn down (or escaped)" (Malm 2016, p. 12-13).

Mitchell (2013) also emphasises that historical context by introducing the concept 'carbon democracy'. Referring to the Middle East he means that "[t]he transformation of oil into large and unaccountable government incomes is not a cause of the problem of democracy and oil, but the outcome of particular ways of engineering political relations out of flows of energy" (Mitchell 2013, p. 5). However, since politics and economies in Western countries are based on fossil energy they should also be considered as oil states. He demonstrates that our way of eating, traveling and consuming goods and services are unsustainable because of how it requires large amounts of fossil energy. Therefore, Mitchell argues that democratic politics as well as energy from fossil fuels, that both are connected from the start, should be considered as a recent phenomenon rather than as something 'natural' or eternal (Ibid., p. 6-8).

Taking these diverse theoretical traditions into consideration I seek to address a theory development approach. Primarily, I find it interesting analysing climate change by combining an understanding of power/knowledge as productive with a historical dimension of embedded power structures. Secondly, I intend to deepen the comprehension regarding European climate politics through these theoretical approaches. This said, the study both seeks to develop its own theoretical framework and illustrate it through the European Green Deal. The study has therefore an evident interdisciplinary relevance with the ambition to both *develop* and *examine* critical theoretical approaches of climate change, capitalism and neoliberalism. Moreover, it opens up for a broader debate about environmental issues as well as governance, social justice and international political economy.

3 Theorizing climate politics

3.1 A discursive understanding of climate politics

Although there is a variety of approaches and strategies in discourse analysis it could very broadly be explained as a certain way of speaking and understanding (parts of) the world (Winther-Jörgensen & Philips 2000, p. 7). Because of its ontological and epidemiological premises, the theoretical and methodological framework can't be separated in discourse analysis. Theory and method are required to share a social constructionist approach of language as socially constitutive as well as a critical attitude to established knowledge. Knowledge about climate change should therefore be understood as a representation of its socio-historical context rather than as an objective 'truth'. Although established knowledge constantly is being redefined some practices related to climate change are going to be considered as 'natural' while others as unthinkable (Ibid., p. 8-12).

Foucault shares these social constructionist assumptions of truth as discursively constructed which leads to his conclusion of knowledge and power as mutually constituted. He understands discourses as "practices that systematically form the objects of which we speak" (Bergström & Ekström 2018, s. 255) and examines in what conditions statements get accepted as meaningful and therefore considered as 'true'. He exposes how dominating discourses limit what is possible to say and what is considered as impossible or undesirable. Power is both understood as productive and obstructive as well as constantly present. Since power and knowledge constitute each other, established truths about climate change are understood according to power structures which are being reproduced through social interactions. Therefore, we should not consider power as a determined force with given interests, it should rather be comprehended as something practiced through social relations (Winther-Jörgensen & Philips 2000, p. 20-21).

It is possible to distinguish a structuralist and poststructuralist approach in discourse analysis. While poststructuralism considers structures as temporary and eventually

contradictory, structuralism emphasises on fixed and underlying structures. Therefore, the poststructuralist approach enables discursive change to a larger extent (Winther-Jörgensen & Philips 2000, p. 15-18). Structuralism is, on the other hand, characterized by a more deterministic approach and understands discourses as *constituted* rather than *constituting*. Since Foucault both emphasises discourses as constantly created and recreated in social relations as well as embedded in a historical context, I find it possible to position myself in between these two approaches (Ibid., p. 26). Therefore, I understand climate politics as a combination of produced and reproduced discourses that also are constituted, and to some extent, determined by its historical conditions.

3.2 A Foucauldian governmentality approach

Just as in discourse analysis governmentality studies consist of many different approaches. What they all have in common though is to refuse what is taken for granted. The aim is to examine how things are given meaning within government practices, exposing claims of truth and knowledge assumptions, in order to open up for alternative political actions. Governmentality studies highlight the relationship between ways of thinking and ways of governing (Nyberg 2017, p. 34-35). It should not be understood as restricting people's capacity to act, instead it is "an attempt to *produce a certain behaviour* by making people *govern themselves* in particular ways" (Ibid., p. 38). Therefore, governmentality studies understand governments as productive, rather than restrictive, which implies that they shape people in ways that both could constrain and enable thinking and acting (Ibid., p. 39).

Although Foucault himself never addressed climate change, it's possible to find his analytical legacy in both political geography and environmental politics. Still there are not any established 'environmental governmentality studies', there are however a lot of Foucauldian contributions in environmental theory (Lövbrand & Stripple 2014, p. 114). A governmentality approach allows me to advance the ability to rethink past and present forms of climate governance. It provides an understanding of governance, not as a set of ideologies, but as forms of rationalities and strategies (Walters 2012, p. 2-3).

A lot of Foucault's work seeks to understand liberalism as a political rationality rather than an ideology (Rose et al 2009, p. 84). Liberal governmentality could be described as a political style of 'least possible' government where the market is considered as a 'natural'

process, located outside the political sphere, and where freedom of trade appears desirable (Walters 2012, p. 30-31). Foucault illustrates how traditional liberalism has developed to neoliberalism where exchange, as the principle of market, has been replaced by competition (Foucault 1979/2008, p. 118). He argues that the problem with neoliberalism is how it exercises political power, transferring principles of the market economy into general governance and thereby, perceiving competition as given by nature (Ibid., p. 131). Since we understand the market as something spontaneously created, he intends to show how the effects of it only are produced if its rationality is being defended. Foucault argues that "the market, or rather pure competition, which is the essence of the market, can only appear if it is produced, and if it is produced by an active governmentality" (Ibid., p. 121). Therefore, our perception of the competitive market should be understood through its socio-historical context, rather than as something 'natural' that *should* or *must* be respected.

3.3 Towards a critical governmentality approach

A critical governmentality approach could be explained as a "project of making the familiar strange and the unfamiliar clearer […] to think more clearly and more imaginatively – more critically – about the causes, rationalities, relationships, practices, subjectivities and politics of the environmental crisis" (Death 2014, p. 2). Foucault describes it as an intention to expose things to not appear as obvious as people believe and therefore interrogate what is taken for granted (Ibid., p. 6). In other words, it seeks to clarify the conditions under which people think and act as well as to problematize what is given as necessary. Just as Foucault, Harvey (2005) shares a critical approach to neoliberalism which he defines as a "theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms from skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade" (Harvey 2005, p. 2). Harvey points out how neoliberalism values market exchange as an 'ethic in itself' that should guide all human action. The 'social good' is therefore to maximize the reach and frequency of market transactions in order to bring as much of human action as possible into the market. Harvey demonstrates how neoliberal practices and thinking since the 70's has been incorporated in governments all around the world, but also embraced by influential actors as universities, media, financial and international institutions (Ibid., p. 2-3).

This said, it's evident that neoliberalism has become a hegemonic discourse with its pervasive effects of thought which implies that it has become a part of common-sense, of how we interpret and understand the world (Harvey 2005, p. 2). Harvey explains in what way it is possible for discourses to become dominant. He argues that some concepts need to appeal to our institutions, values and desires as well as to the possibilities that we inherit from the social world. If this succeeds the concepts are going to get embedded in our common-sense and therefore taken for granted. Harvey illustrates how neoliberalism is built on concepts of dignity and individual freedom which are powerful ideals that could appeal to almost anyone. But since the concepts are based on assumptions of guaranteed freedom of the market and trade they also reflect interests of businesses, private property, multinational corporations and financial capital (Ibid., p. 5-7).

Nyberg (2017) highlights competition as an expression of a neoliberal governance rationality. She examines how it historically has been associated with liberal objectives of reduced state interventions and increased freedom of choice (Nyberg 2017, p. 57). Moreover, competition is often described as a win-win solution to political problems since it is considered to lower prices, provide higher quality, greater choice and innovation. However, treating competition as an idea built on rationality and efficiency may obscure its neoliberal agenda (Ibid., p. 56-57). Nyberg shows how neoliberalism is based on the assumption of competition as a self-regulating and 'natural' process in which government interventions may disturb its efficiency. Since state and market are separated into different spheres, governments are considered as external to competitive markets. She means that we rather should understand governments as something that from the beginning created markets and afterwards constantly shapes them in order to preserve their institutional framework (Ibid., p. 83).

3.4 Neoliberalism as a political rationality

Newell and Paterson (2010) claim that climate change involves every aspect that keeps us alive since its roots are embedded in the global capitalist economy. Although we make optimistic assumptions of carbon emission reductions, they mean that we already have passed earth's ecological threshold (Newell & Paterson 2010, p. 1-9). In order to tackle the climate crisis successfully they therefore argue that we need to decarbonize the economy which requires a restructuring of an economic system in which the whole global development is based on. They argue that neoliberalism has placed its stamp contemporary climate politics (Ibid., p. 34) by

pointing out how the global response to climate change has been conditioned by free-market capitalism (Ibid., p. 9). Klein (2019) talks about a 'bad timing' referring to how international climate negotiations took place at the same time as governments all around the world learnt how to starve public institutions (Klein 2019, p. 120).

Paterson (2014) demonstrates how environmental commodification could be understood, through a governmentality approach, in which economic calculations have internalised a market-oriented and individualised response to climate change (Paterson 2014, p. 61). Since cost-benefit analysis and market mechanisms have been used in order to achieve environmental goals, economic growth and environmental protection have been assumed compatible (Newell & Paterson 2010, p. 24). Although emission trading has been criticised for not achieving decarbonisation of the economy there are now over 20 regional or national carbon trading systems in the world (Hulme 2020, p. 89). Paterson shows how commodification, which is central in our growth-dependent capitalist economy, has become a dominant part of how we respond to the climate crisis. By giving carbon a price emission trading has occurred as a cost-efficient way "to 'internalise the external costs' of pollution" (Paterson 2014, p. 55). However, when governments set general incentives and overall pollution limitations, allowing markets to decide when and where emission reductions are being done, the responsibility to make an effort is being put on individuals and companies (Newell & Paterson 2010, p. 25). Therefore, many scholars indicate that the construction of carbon markets have failed to deal with climate change adequately (Paterson 2014, p. 57; Koch 2012, p. 168).

Koch (2012) examines the homology between the development of finance driven capitalism and climate governance (Koch 2012, p. 174). He demonstrates how the economy has moved towards a focus on financial profits and foreign investments. Since the financial sector got deregulated at the same time as the liberalisation of international capital, financial transactions and profitability increased significantly (Ibid., p. 88). Just as Harvey, Newell and Paterson he points out how neoliberalism has become hegemonic in economic theory as well as in policy making. Commodification and privatisation of public goods have thus been considered preferable over state regulation and public ownership (Ibid., p. 174-176). This said, it's possible to notice a shift among investors where they start to identify climate change as a business opportunity as well as a mean to make profitable investments (Newell and Paterson 2010, p. 73-74).

Newell and Paterson argue that "[t]he character of neoliberal capitalism has fundamentally shaped how we have responded to climate change" (Newell & Paterson 2010, p. 23) referring to the obsession of markets, the dominance of finance as well as a rising focus on

public-private partnerships (Ibid., p. 24). This could explain why governments, international organisations and private actors, since the Kyoto Protocol, have focused on emission trading and investment opportunities (Ibid., p. 34). Klein argues that people have learnt that there is no alternative to our economic system, that both destabilize the planet and exploit people (Klein 2019, p. 273) and Malm adds that "[i]t has become easier to imagine deliberate, large-scale intervention in the climate system than in capitalism" (Malm 2016, p. 388). Newell and Paterson point out a connection between "the weak response to climate change and the domination of the world by neoliberal capitalism" (Newell & Paterson 2010, p. 31). Klein follows the same argument emphasising that we do not succeed to lower the emissions because it fundamentally conflicts with today's deregulated capitalism (Klein 2019, p. 249). Since the market rationality paralyzes our effort to tackle the climate crisis, she means that we not only have to change policies and spend more money, but also start to think radically different of the possibilities of change (Klein 2014, p. 23).

4 Methodology

A Foucauldian inspired discourse analysis allows me to examine the European Green Deal in depth. Exposing how political rationalities shape and constrain practices and thinking opens up to interrogate its underlying assumptions, what is taken for granted as well as what is left unproblematised. A critical governmentality approach, moreover, allows me to problematise past and present forms of climate governance. Although it doesn't necessarily tell what to struggle for or against it could be considered as a transformational practice (Lövbrand & Stripple 2014, p. 118). This said, there is of course a risk that the approach itself could take certain concepts and assumptions for granted. However, it opens up to avoid political prescription by highlighting the specificity of governance, denaturalizing strategies of rule which could provide alternative political actions (Walters 2012, p. 142-148).

Since the study seeks to develop its own theoretical framework and illustrate it through the European Green Deal, my interdisciplinary ambition is to both *develop* and *examine* critical approaches of climate politics. However, it is important to be aware that the material is read through the lenses of the theoretical framework which affects the outcome of the analysis. In order to answer my research question, I have taken inspiration from Bacchi's WPR approach and Foucault's genealogy. I believe these approaches both have the potential to strengthen and complement each other sharing a critical attitude with the aim to interrogate what is taken for granted. While genealogy provides a greater understanding of the socio-historical context the WPR approach contributes with an understanding of what is left unproblematized. This said, the structure of the analysis will be organized according to four analytical questions that are inspired from Bacchi:

- What solutions are represented in the European Green Deal?

The first question seeks to demonstrate how the European Green Deal is framed. In this first step I will identify, describe and make clear the appearing solutions of the representation.

- What deep-seated assumptions underlie the representation?

The second question examines the rationality of the representation by exposing its presumptions, what is taken for granted and considered as 'natural'. The aim is to explain

how strategies in the European Deal legitimizes according to established knowledge and 'truths'.

- How has this representation come about?

The third question highlights the socio-historical context and the conditions that allow a particular representation to dominate. The aim is to trace the 'roots' in order to demonstrate how previous practices and thinking could explain the proposed representation.

- What is left unproblematic?

The fourth question exposes what is *not* mentioned in the European Green Deal. The aim is to reflect upon what issues are being silenced, how the representation constrains what is considered in need to change as well as what is *not* considered as relevant.

4.1 Addressing a policy analysis

As mentioned, I will address a policy analysis with elements from Bacchi's WPR approach. Bacchi understands discourses beyond its language dimension as "socially produced forms of knowledge that set limits upon what is possible to think, write or speak about" (Bacchi 2009, p. 35). Just as Foucault, she shares a social constructionist approach which implies that what we are taken for granted should be understood as a product of a particular time and space (Ibid., p. 264). In the same sense she understands governance as productive, rather than restrictive (Ibid., p. 2) and uses a governmentality approach in order to identify rationalities and strategies of rule (Ibid., p. 26). However, I have chosen to not include the idea of productive power in terms as 'conduct of conduct' where individuals and groups conduct themselves in everyday practices through social interactions (Walters 2012, p. 11). Instead, underlying assumptions and embedded power structures will be emphasised, rather than the lived effects of the European Green Deal.

Using elements from Bacchi's policy analysis provides me an extensive methodological technique to address the purpose of the study. The WPR approach offers a strategy to interrogate, compare and rethink commonly accepted governing practices (Bacchi & Goodwin 2016, p. 13). By exposing how policy is being framed and what the underlying assumptions are could therefore contribute to broadening the comprehension of climate politics and how it affects what is considered possible and desirable to tackle the climate crisis (Bacchi

2009, s. ix). Reading the European Green Deal through four analytical questions allows me to interrogate what deep-seated assumptions are taken for granted, how the representation has come about and what is left unproblematic. By examining how the European Green Deal is being represented, though the theoretical framework, could therefore deepen the comprehension regarding climate politics and how certain rationalities shape and constrain political action.

4.2 A Foucauldian genealogical approach

The second and third question will be answered with inspiration from Foucault's genealogical methodology. A genealogical approach takes its starting point in the present and attempts to analyse its roots in order to expose the historical conditions. Foucault describes genealogy as a "critical historical-philosophical project" (Walters 2012, p. 114) and just as Bacchi, he emphasises the importance of contextualizing present forms of governance (Ibid., p. 20). This implies that who we are and what we are should neither be considered as 'natural' nor eternal, which provides a possibility to imagine other forms of climate politics. The methodological implications are therefore to make the unfamiliar familiar in the European Green Deal by giving concepts that are taken for granted a socio-historical context (Bacchi & Goodwin 2016, p. 46-47).

Although it would be possible to trace the roots back to the evolvement of modern capitalism, I will rather emphasise the establishment and expansion of neoliberalism, the European integration and international climate action. However, setting these limitations the aim is still to deepen the comprehension of how certain knowledge is created, maintained and reproduced (Bergström & Ekström 2018, s. 259). The task is to denaturalize strategies, in the European Green Deal, that appear given and exert on our political imagination, in order to show that other existences are possible (Walters 2012, p. 118). This provides an insight of prevailing power structures that could explain why particular rationalities have come to dominate (Bacchi 2009, p. 11). Contextualizing present forms of governance in the European Green Deal through the theoretical framework, therefore allows me to explore the conditions of possibilities as well as how our imaginations are shaped and constrained (Walters 2012, p. 115-119).

5 Analysing the European Green Deal

The European Green Deal was communicated by the European Commission the 11th December 2019 as a response to the climate related challenges we are facing. It should be understood as an initial roadmap of key policies as well as an integral part of the Commission's strategy to implement the sustainable development goals of the UN 2030 Agenda. The overall purpose of the European Green Deal is to "transform the EU into a fair and prosperous society, with a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy" for a sustainable future (European Commission 2019, p. 2). It is a new growth strategy that "responds to the challenges posed by climate change and environmental degradation, improving the quality of life of current and future generations" (Ibid., p. 23-24). The analysis will start by describing and making clear what solutions are represented in the European Green Deal. Afterwards, the rationality of the representation will be examined by exposing its presumptions, what is taken for granted and considered as 'natural'. The socio-historical context will then be highlighted in order to trace the 'roots' of the representation. Lastly, the analysis will expose what is left unproblematized and *not* mentioned in the European Green Deal.

5.1 What solutions are represented in the European Green Deal?

In order to achieve the objectives of the European Green Deal the Commission presents a set of transformative policies, such as regulation and standardisation, investment and innovation, national reforms, dialogue with social partners and international cooperation. The main goal is to achieve climate neutrality 2050 by transforming the EU economy. This will be done through implementation of a climate law, extension of the European Emission Trading System and effective carbon pricing (European Commission 2019, p. 4-5). Another goal is to decarbonise the energy system in which the Commission means that efficiency must be prioritised. In order to develop an energy sector based on renewable sources they argue that it is "essential to ensure that the energy market is fully integrated, interconnected and digitalised" (Ibid., p. 6). The Commission talks about 'smart integration' of renewables and energy efficient solutions across

sectors that involve and benefit consumers and where decarbonisation is achieved at the lowest possible cost (Ibid., p. 6).

The Commission proposes a new circular economy action plan where a full mobilisation of the industry is required to achieve climate neutrality. The action plan implies a 'sustainable products' policy to promote new business models of renting and sharing which is supposed to increase producer's responsibility. The Commission argues that there is a significant potential in global markets for low-emission technologies, sustainable products and services. Therefore, they mean that the industry transition will stimulate 'inclusive growth' by expanding sustainable and job-intensive economic activity. Moreover, the circular economy action plan encourages companies to offer, and consumers to choose, reusable, durable and repairable products. The Commission emphasises the importance of consumer policy, reliable and comparable information which allows buyers to make sustainable decisions (European Commission 2019, p. 7-8).

Since construction of buildings and renovations accounts for 40 percent of the consumed energy the Commission wants to include these emissions in the European Emission Trading System. The reason is to "ensure that the relative price of different energy sources provide the right signals for energy efficiency" (European Commission 2019, p. 9). Moreover, since the transport accounts for 25 percent, and still grows, the Commission proposes a sustainable and 'smart mobility' strategy. They mean that the price must reflect the impact it has on the environment and therefore argue to stop fossil fuel subsidies and to extend the European Emission Trading System (Ibid., p. 10-11).

The 'Farm to Fork' strategy will be established to stimulate a broad stakeholder debate in order to achieve a circular economy. The aim is to reduce environmental impact of food processing but also to encourage sustainable and affordable food consumption (European Commission 2019, p. 11-12). Since the ecosystem is essential to provide food, water and clean air the Commission wants to enhance preservation and restoration of ecosystems and biodiversity. Therefore, they present a new forest strategy where 'effective afforestation' is the key objective to increase absorption of carbon emissions. They mean that if all member states, as well as the industry, collaborate it's possible to combine environmental protection and increased global competitiveness (Ibid., p. 13-15).

In order to achieve the ambitions of the European Green Deal huge investments are needed. The Commission presents a new sustainable finance strategy where they emphasise the importance of the private sector. The strategy will strengthen the foundation of sustainable investments, increase the opportunities for investors and companies to identify these

investments and integrate climate risks into the financial system. The Commission also proposes a Just Transition Mechanism to ensure a fair and inclusive transition. Since some regions, sectors and workers that are dependent on fossil energy also will be most affected of the transition, they will be supported and protected. 'Greening' national budgets and sending right price signals are presented as a strategy to achieve a cost-efficient transition to climate neutrality. The Commission wants to implement 'well-designed' tax reforms which they mean will boost economic growth by providing incentives for sustainable behaviour by producers and consumers (European Commission 2019, p. 16-18).

Mobilising research and fostering new technologies and innovation are presented as essential to achieve the objectives of the European Green Deal. The Commission will therefore encourage partnerships with industry and member states, increase new technologies and build new innovative value chains in order to keep EU's competitive advantage. Moreover, experimentation, data-driven innovation and digital transformation will be supported. In order to activate education and training the Commission will facilitate exchange of good practices, offer re-skilling and upskilling, but also provide member states with financial resources to make schools more sustainable. Furthermore, they will ensure that climate initiatives achieve their objectives "in the most effective and least burdensome way" (European Commission 2019, p. 18-19).

The Commission emphasises the EU as a global leader. They will therefore "continue to promote and implement ambitious environment, climate and energy policies across the world" (European Commission 2019, p. 20). Using a 'green deal diplomacy' they will convince and support others by leading by example. The EU will also continue to ensure the importance of the Paris Agreement as a multilateral framework of tackling climate change. The Commission argues that increased action by other regions is crucial since EU's share of the global emissions is falling. Therefore, the EU will involve all partners in order to increase the collective long-term climate action. One strategy is to develop international carbon markets but also to use trade policy to create economic incentives for climate action. Moreover, the Commission will shape international standards for sustainable growth that follow EU's climate ambitions, facilitate trade and support an open market for sustainable products. Another strategy is to use diplomatic and financial tools to create green alliances in which the Commission will set up financial systems, that support global sustainable growth, to mobilise international investors. This said, the ecological transition will "reshape, geopolitics, including global economic, trade and security interests" (Ibid., p. 20-22).

The Commission will establish a European Climate Pact in order to achieve the objectives of the European Green Deal. It will encourage information sharing and public awareness, facilitate grassroot initiatives and create platforms for people to work together on ambitious climate action. Since they mean that citizens should be the driving force of the ecological transition the Climate Pact will build on social dialogue committees which also will empower local and regional communities. Finally, the Commission will ensure that policies, legislation and implementation are enforced and delivered effectively. They mean that this is essential to ensure that the objectives of the European Green Deal are being achieved (European Commission 2019, p. 22-23).

5.2 What deep-seated assumptions underlie the representation?

By analysing the European Green Deal through the theoretical framework it's possible to expose a neoliberal rationality. The Commission puts a lot of focus on markets, competition, cost-efficiency, trade, financial capital and freedom of choice. Therefore, it's evident that the presented policy is based on particular established knowledge which implies that some assumptions are legitimized and taken for granted. Framing the European Green Deal as a new growth strategy demonstrates how economic growth is highly prioritized. It is possible to expose an economic rationality where market mechanisms are supposed to stimulate climate action and economic growth at the same time. Since the Commission relies on economic incentives, they allow the market to decide when and where emission reductions are being done. This implies that consumers and producers receive the responsibility of climate action rather than governments (Newell & Paterson 2010, p. 24-25).

The European Emission Trading System could illustrate the underlying assumption of the market as best adapted to tackle the climate crisis as well as how privatisation of public goods is considered preferable over state regulation and public ownership (Koch 2012, p. 174-176). By commodifying carbon, the Commission assumes that sending right price signals will provide incentives for consumers and businesses to change their behaviour (European Commission 2019, p. 17). However, pointing at the risk of carbon leakage they argue that emission reductions won't occur as long as countries "do not share the same ambition as the EU" (Ibid., p. 5). An economic rationality could therefore both explain why the Commission proposes an extension of the European Emission Trading System as well as why they want to

develop global carbon markets (Ibid., p. 20). This reflects liberal assumptions of the market as something 'natural' (Walters 2012, p. 30-31) but also how increasing market integration is considered desirable (Harvey 2005, p. 2-3). Therefore, it exposes neoliberal ideas of reducing emissions with as little state intervention as possible (Newell & Paterson 2010, p. 96).

Competition is a central concept throughout the European Green Deal which could be understood as an expression of a neoliberal rationality (Nyberg 2017, p. 57; Foucault 1979/2008, p. 118-120). The Commission repetitively emphasises competitiveness, partly as a strategy to encourage business, trade and innovation within the European market, but also as an approach towards the global market. They emphasise new technology and innovation as a strategy to ensure EU's competitive advantage in the global economy (European Commission 2019, p. 18). This could reflect a neoliberal rationality of "as much competition as possible and as much planning as necessary" (Foucault 1979/2008, p. 89). In this context competition is considered as a self-regulating process (Nyberg 2017, p. 83) as well as a win-win solution of lowering prices, providing higher quality, greater choice and innovation (Ibid., p. 56).

This said, it's evident that competitiveness is based on assumptions of the market as efficient. Since efficiency is mentioned several times, it seems like the Commission values it a lot. They communicate ideas of a resource-efficient economy (European Commission 2019, p. 2), energy efficiency (Ibid., p. 6), building efficiency (Ibid., p. 10), efficiency of the transport system (Ibid., p. 10), energy-efficient housing (Ibid., p. 16) and efficient policy (Ibid., p. 19). This could express a neoliberal rationality of reducing emissions with as little state intervention as possible (Newell & Paterson 2010, p. 96) where it's assumed to disturb the 'natural' effects of the market (Ibid., p. 19). The Commission also mentions cost-effectiveness several times which relates to the aim of achieving a transition at the lowest possible price (European Commission 2019, p. 6, 18, 19, 23). This could further reflect an economic rationality as well as neoliberal practices and thinking.

The Commission emphasises the importance of private investments and financial systems. Since they argue that the private sector is the key to finance the transition, they propose support to businesses, investors and companies to identify sustainable investments (European Commission 2019, p. 16-17). Besides this, they want to coordinate an international financial system that promotes investments as an "opportunity to put Europe firmly on a new path of sustainable and inclusive growth" (Ibid., p. 2). This could reflect a neoliberal rationality where investors identify climate change as a profitable business opportunity (Newell & Paterson 2010, p. 73-74).

Even though the European Green Deal doesn't expose the lived effects of how people conduct themselves through social interaction, freedom of choice is related to consumption. The Commission refers to individuals as 'consumers' and how price signals provide right incentives for sustainable behaviour (European Commission 2019, p. 5, 6, 17). Therefore, they want to support business and "empower consumers to make informed choices and play an active role in the ecological transition" (Ibid., p. 8). The focus on consumers' choice and behaviour exposes assumptions of the free market as desirable which further reflects a neoliberal rationality (Harvey 2008; Nyberg 2017; Foucault 1979/2008). Since states' capacity to govern in order to meet their citizens' needs is (self)limited in a neoliberal context, individuals need to take responsibility over their own well-being (Walters 2012, p. 62-64). However, although the Commission argues that "[c]itizens are and should remain a driving force of the transition" (European Commission 2019, p. 22) they express a neoliberal rationality of individual, rather than a collective, responsibility to tackle the climate crisis (Paterson 2014, p. 61).

5.3 How has this representation come about?

In order to understand the European Green Deal and its underlying assumptions I will now highlight the socio-historical context and under what conditions the represented policy has come about. Through a critical governmentality approach, it's possible to understand the relationships between thinking and acting as well as to expose what is taken for granted. Contextualizing present forms of governance therefore allows us to explore the conditions of possibilities but also how our imaginations are shaped and limited. This could further provide an understanding why the proposed solutions to tackle the climate crisis are considered as coherent and desirable. Even though it's possible to trace the roots back to the beginning of today's modern capitalism I will rather highlight the establishment and expansion of neoliberalism, the European integration and international climate action.

One way to understand the neoliberal rationality, that appears in the European Green Deal, is to look back at the evolvement of European economic thinking. When economics developed into an academic discipline competition became central in theories of how prices are shaped on the market. Adam Smith formulated neoclassical ideas of competition and self-interest where he assumed that the 'invisible hand' would structure people's behaviour on the

market and unintentionally lead to positive outcome for everyone. He argued for an equilibrium process "that regulates and facilitates market exchange between buyers and sellers in a way that leads to efficient use of resources" (Nyberg 2017, p. 58-59). Competition was, in other words, assumed to bring maximum profit for the seller and minimum cost for the buyer (Foucault 1979/2008, p. 53-54). However, during the mid-18th century ideas of freedom and competition started to get associated with each other and the discourse changed from 'freedom and competition' to 'free competition' (Nyberg 2017, p. 60). Neoclassical assumptions of the market as the best way of allocating goods (Koch 2012, p. 156) as well as of mobilizing human instincts (Harvey 2005, p. 20) could therefore explain why the European Green Deal proposes solutions of free market mechanisms that aims to change behaviour through economic incentives (European Commission 2019, p. 5, 17, 20).

In 1952 the European Union was established as the European Coal and Steel Community. The purpose of the initiative was to create common markets, by integrating coal and steel industries, as an attempt to avoid conflicts after the war. During the 1960's the main task was to reduce the excess production of coal and replace it with petroleum, and in the 1970's the union strived to achieve competitive advantage in steelmaking (Britannica 2016). Nowadays, however, the EU could be understood as a project of market integration. By reducing the amount of state intervention in the economy the goal is to provide free movement of goods and services between the member states (Nyberg 2017, p. 88-92). Assuming that competitive markets will lead to the most efficient allocation of resources (Ibid., p. 95) creating lower prices, higher quality and innovation, but also greater freedom of choice, could therefore legitimize the EU as a political project. Through a neoliberal rationality, where competition is considered to protect the common good, it's possible for the Commission to justify their climate politics based on market principles, as a way to act in the interest of EU citizens (Ibid., p. 87). Since competitiveness is perceived as a win-win situation, where economic growth benefits everyone, EU's inherited objective of increased market integration therefore legitimizes (Ibid., p. 96).

During the 1970's the global economy experienced several crises which led to a rightward shift in the dominating economic ideology. Since there was a struggle to identify the causes of the economic problems a group of economists at the University of Chicago, who had influential positions in the government as well as in international institutions, proposed a theory that later got picked up by Reagan and Thatcher (Newell & Paterson 2010; Harvey 2005; Klein 2014, 2019; Koch 2012). This neoliberal approach explained the crises as a consequence of too much state intervention where the 'natural' effects of the market had been distorted. The

Chicago economists therefore proposed solutions that promoted free-markets, deregulation and privatisation (Newell & Paterson 2010, p. 19; Klein 2014, p. 19) but also favourable conditions for financial capital and investments (Koch 2012, p. 94).

During the same time as neoliberal ideas got incorporated in international institutions (such as IMF and the World Bank) as well as in almost every state, the international response to climate change took place. In 1988 UN established IPCC in order to provide consolidation of scientific and political consensus of climate change (Newell & Paterson 2010, p. 18; Paterson 2014, p. 56) and 1997 the Kyoto Protocol proposed strategies dominated by flexible mechanisms and free-market solutions (Newell & Paterson 2010, p. 11; Hulme 2020, p. 88). Since the Kyoto Protocol was the first global legally binding environmental agreement it could be considered as a foundation of further international climate action (Koch 2012, p. 147). The political and scientific obsession of market efficiency and competitiveness during this time could therefore explain why emission trading has been considered desirable over regulations and taxes (Newell & Paterson 2010, p. 26; Klein 2014, p. 19). Therefore, it's possible to understand the European Green Deal as an expression of a neoliberal rationality shaped by international climate negotiations that took place, and still exists, in a neoliberal context.

The European Emission Trading System was established 2005 as the world's first large scale emission programme. Because of its reliance on markets as well as its attempt to reduce emission with as little state intervention as possible, it could illustrate a neoliberal rationality (Newell & Paterson 2010, p. 96; Paterson 2014, p. 57; Hulme 2020, p. 88). Even though EU first was critical to emission trading, during the UN negotiations, they completely changed their mind and created their own internal emission trading to meet their Kyoto target. The carbon market could both be justified in relation to EU's broader objective of full market integration, but also as a strategy to share the burden by allocating the responsibility of tackling the climate crisis between the member states (Newell & Paterson 2010, p. 99-100).

However, since emission trading disadvantaged European companies, in comparison with the global economy, their interest was to negotiate for a higher quota of allowances (Koch 2012, p. 168). This could explain why the price of carbon emissions collapsed in the initial phase. Because of the almost unlimited availability of allowances, the trading more or less stopped (Newell & Paterson 2010, p. 102) and the price fell to 0.3 euros. Therefore, the credibility of the system was thrown into question and it got hard to defend it as a way to create incentives of implementing environmental measures. Critics mean that emission trading never really has reduced emissions and that energy companies transfer the prices into

their costumers' energy bills (Koch 2012, p. 164-165). Therefore, it's possible to argue that allowing corporations to tackle climate change at the lowest financial cost, opening up for investment opportunities, undermines the ecological transition (Koch 2012, p. 177). Over nearly two decades of practicing, carbon markets are still growing worldwide, although much indicates that they have failed to achieve any structural transformation from fossil energy (Hulme 2020, p. 89-93). However, it seems like the support to emission trading after the Paris Agreement has declined (Michaelowa et al. 2019, p. 15).

This said, it's possible to observe how a neoliberal rationality has become a hegemonic discourse in economic theory as well as in policy making, and therefore shaped how we respond to the climate crisis (Koch 2012, p. 174). Since there has been a consensus among investors, workers and employers that economic growth stimulates well-being, it's possible to see how "[t]he economy produces legitimacy for the state that is its guarantor" (Foucault 1979/2008, p. 84). Neoliberal climate politics could therefore be understood as a matter of making competitive markets into the 'formative power of society' where business and consumption is encouraged (Ibid., p. 148-149). Since strategies to tackle the climate crisis is threatening the extreme elite it's understandable why neoliberal climate politics still persist (Klein 2014, p. 18). When the European Green Deal naturalises markets, competitiveness, cost-efficiency, trade, financial capital and freedom of choice, it incorporates in our common-sense as the best way of tackling the climate crisis (Harvey 2005, p. 2). Understanding the socio-historical context of climate action therefore allows us to problematise the assumptions of neoliberalism. This said, it's possible to interrogate the idea of the competitive market as a natural process. It rather exists as long as an institutional framework provides conditions of possibilities (Foucault 1979/2008, p. 163). Denaturalizing eternal economic growth, competition and cost-efficiency therefore opens up for alternative political actions.

5.4 What is left unproblematic?

Having claimed that the European Green Deal expresses a neoliberal rationality I will now expose what is left unproblematic. When market principles are taken for granted it is evident that some solutions to tackle the climate crisis are legitimized while others are considered as impossible or undesirable. An evident example is how circular economy and carbon markets are embraced while planning the economy is considered as "the ultimate taboo" (Malm 2016, p. 388). By exposing aspects which the Commission doesn't problematise could therefore

reveal how a neoliberal rationality shapes and constrains our imaginations of possible and desirable climate politics.

As I have made clear, the Commission perceives the European Green Deal as a new growth strategy and therefore proposes policies that strive to facilitate trade and boost the economy (European Commission 2019, p. 11, 21). However, arguing that economic incentives for consumers and producers will lead to sustainable behaviour (Ibid., p. 17) may obscure the conflict between environmental goals and business interests (Koch 2012, p. 161; Paterson 2014, p. 59). Framing price signals as economic 'incentives' rather than 'interests' leaves their destructive force of tackling the climate crisis unproblematic. When the Commission relies on the private sector and consumer behaviour to achieve carbon neutrality, the issue of responsibility is being unproblematised. Furthermore, it obscures the issue of companies' strategies to avoid regulations by showing "their 'good behaviour' and so prevent stricter form of action imposed by governments" (Newell & Paterson 2010, p. 31).

Throughout the European Green Deal the Commission argues that it is possible to achieve climate neutrality 2050 with continued focus on economic growth. However, arguing that economic growth will be decoupled from resource use obscures European citizens' consumption of goods that are produced outside the EU (European Commission 2019, p. 2). EU's consumption-based emissions have between 1990 and 2016 constantly been larger than its territorial emissions due to imported manufactured goods (Karstensen et al. 2018, p. 131-132). In 2018 EU's total carbon footprint was 7.0 tonnes carbon dioxide per person whereas 1.1 of the tonnes were 'avoided' because of imported goods that had been emitted outside the EU (Eurostat 2020). But even when the Commission explicitly demonstrates how they have decreased their greenhouse emissions by 30 percent between 1990 and 2018, they don't mention their consumption-based emissions (European Commission 2019, p. 4). Framing emission targets in terms of production, rather than consumption, may therefore obscure the asymmetry of ecological footprint as well as the correlation between energy use and economic growth (Newell & Paterson 2010, p. 15; see Appendix 1 & 2).

Although the Commission addresses issues of inequality by emphasising a just and inclusive transition, they leave global structural inequalities unproblematised. In 1990 the Global North, which only corresponded for 25 percent of the population, accounted for 70 percent of the global emissions because of their economic model of growth based of on fossil energy that progressively has been expanded to the rest of the world (Newell & Paterson 2010, p. 13). By framing itself as a role model the Commission fails to expose the large impact European countries and companies have *had*, and today also *have*, on vulnerable people because

of climate degradation (Ibid., p. 156). Furthermore, promoting international carbon markets (European Commission 2019, p. 20) obscures the issue of how rich individuals, companies and countries are able to buy a 'clean conscience' instead of making any structural effort (Paterson 2014, p. 59).

When the Commission proposes strategies that facilitate trade (European Commission 2019, p. 21-22) and enhance EU's competitive advantage (Ibid., p. 18) they also leave unequal capabilities to tackle the climate crisis unproblematised. By proposing that the EU will lead international efforts, promote and implement climate policy across the world "when others are unwilling to act" (Ibid., p. 2) obscures the vital issue of global structural inequalities. While the global ecological footprint increased from 1.0 1970 to 1.73 2017, the European increased from 2.08 1970 to 2.97 2017 (Global Footprint Network 2020; see Appendix 1). The European Green Deal therefore obscures the crisis as a result of some having more than others (Malm 2016, p. 390-391). Leaving the socio-historical causes of climate change unproblematised, as well as the illusion that all 'players' on the market have equal access to information and power, obscures the issue of markets causing social asymmetries between high- and low-income countries (Koch 2012, p. 176). Moreover, talking about setting standards, "convincing and supporting others to take on their share" (European Commission 2019, p. 20) raises a question of EU as modern imperialist project (Walters 2012, p. 126-127; Foucault 1979/2008, p. 107-108).

6 Concluding discussion

So, how does the European Green Deal shape and constrain our ability to think about what is possible and desirable in order to tackle the climate crisis? Although the Commission proposes ambitious strategies of achieving climate neutrality 2050, through a just and inclusive transition, it's evident that a neoliberal rationality profoundly has influenced EU's response to climate change. It's not surprising that the European Green Deal is presented as a new growth strategy. There is a huge focus on markets, competition and cost-efficiency as well as consumers' behaviour and choice which reflects interests of business, private property and financial capital. It's also evident that the Commission promotes as much competition as *possible* but as much planning as *necessary*. This indicates that the presented policy is based on particular established knowledge which implies that some presumptions are legitimized and taken for granted while others are considered as undesirable. Price signals and economic incentives are assumed as the best way of tackling the climate crisis and freedom has been so interconnected with competition that the concepts are not even considered possible without each other. Therefore, it's possible to observe how a neoliberal rationality has become a hegemonic discourse in economic theory as well as in policy making, but also incorporated in our common-sense, and therefore shaped the response to the climate crisis.

Through a critical governmentality approach the socio-historical conditions of the European Green Deal clarifies the relationship between practices and thinking. By contextualizing the proposed policy, where competitiveness is considered as a 'natural' process and where increased market integration appears desirable, allows us to understand how our imaginations are shaped and constrained by a neoliberal context. Taking into consideration the historical conditions of European integration as well as international climate action could therefore denaturalize eternal economic growth, competition and cost-efficiency as well as interrogate market mechanisms as the best way to tackle the climate crisis. When a neoliberal rationality constantly persuades us that there is no alternative to our economic system, capitalism is being maintained as 'nature law'. Realizing how neoliberal climate politics rather exists as long as an institutional framework provides conditions of possibilities therefore opens up for alternative political actions.

Since neoliberalism fundamentally has placed its stamp on contemporary climate politics it's understandable why the total greenhouse emissions are not decreasing as well as why structural global inequalities persist. By obscuring asymmetric ecological footprints, consumption-based emissions but also unequal capabilities, climate politics may reinforce rather than solve the climate and inequality crises. Taking into consideration structural inequalities of climate change class divisions becomes a matter of life and death where "there *will* be lifeboats for rich and privileged" (Malm 2016, p. 391). This opens up for further investigation related to climate change and asymmetric power relations *within* as well as *between* countries. One specific issue I have found interesting is to examine European climate politics as an expression of contemporary imperialism. Other areas for further investigation could be to examine the lived effects of the European Green Deal and how individuals as well as groups conduct themselves in everyday practices through social interactions. Moreover, it would be interesting to investigate to what extent the European Green Deal will live up to its ambitious expectations. Until now, only the future could tell.

7 References

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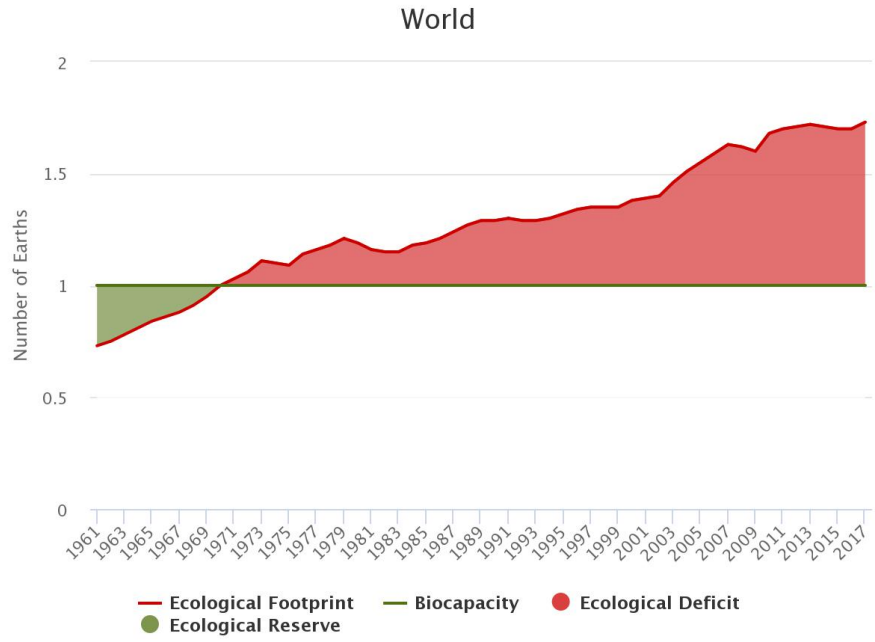
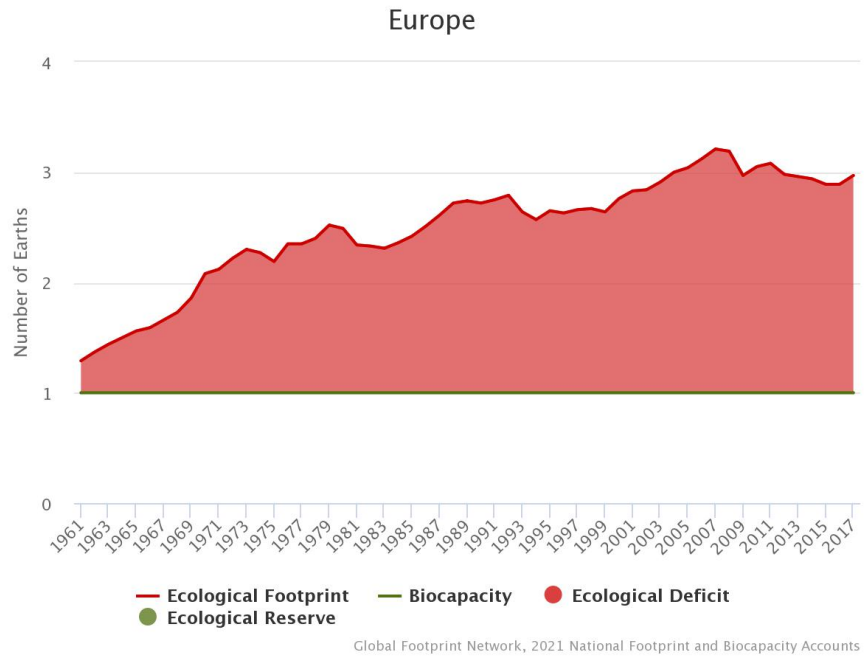
8 Appendix

8.1 Ecological footprint





8.2 The great acceleration