

Be better Than Nationalism: Overcoming Economic Inequality for International Solidarity

Using Social Movement Theory to Deconstruct the Cultural Ideology of the Alternative for Germany

Lisa Neidl

Master Thesis Series in Environmental Studies and Sustainability Science,
No 2021:005

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of Lund University
International Master's Programme in Environmental Studies and Sustainability Science
(30hp/credits)



LUCSUS

Lund University Centre for
Sustainability Studies



LUND
UNIVERSITY

**Be better Than Nationalism: Overcoming Economic
Inequality for International Solidarity**

Using Social Movement Theory to Deconstruct the Cultural Ideology of the
Alternative for Germany

Lisa Neidl

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of Lund University International Master's
Programme in Environmental Studies and Sustainability Science

Submitted January 4, 2021

Supervisor: Turaj Faran, LUCSUS, Lund University

Empty page

Abstract: 242 words

This thesis advocates for the evaluation of current sociopolitical conflicts through the lens of social movement theory, as a decisive path to deconstruct the premises of the German right-wing party Alternative for Germany (Alternative für Deutschland, AfD). The party is conceptualized as an institutionalized social movement, which is insufficiently answering public material grievances caused by economic inequality with the cultural response of nationalistic solidarity.

In a globalized world facing the shared challenge of climate change, anticipated, and needed international solidarity is fading whilst ultra-nationalistic tendencies are on the rise. In the case of Germany, this manifests in the party AfD. Drawing on social movement theory synthesized by McAdam, McCarthy and Zald, the thesis characterizes the AfD as an institutionalized social movement (ISM) by examining the party's political opportunities, resources, and framing. Analyzing the political discourse contributions of the party on Twitter using critical discourse analysis (CDA), this thesis exposes that the AfD is giving a cultural response of nationalistic solidarity to the material problem and public grievance of economic inequality. At present, this framing is successful due to the political elite creating a political vacuum by not giving sufficient responses to public grievances.

Having exposed this leverage point, the thesis calls for a counter-hegemony that fosters international solidarity through economic equality, which is a prerequisite for sustainable development. This counter-hegemony synergizes sustainable development on an international level whilst pushing back right-wing ultra-nationalistic tensions, which emphasizes the far-reaching potential of interdisciplinary sustainability science.

Keywords: Economic Inequality, Social Sustainability, International Solidarity, Institutionalized Social Movements, Social Movement Theory, Alternative für Deutschland (AfD)

Word Count: 11 632

Acknowledgements

Thank you.

To my companion in all the adventures, Zlatko. Thank you, for seeing so much in me, helping me believe that I can grow to be all that. For unconditional love and support, in good times and in bad, and in all the moments in between. For knowing my demons, withstanding them, and helping me do the same. For keeping me sane and challenging me when needed. For endless laughter. For always looking on the bright side. For walking together on all these paths. Für alles und immer, meine Motte.

Mama, Papa, Sophie, Marie. Through your unconditional love and belief in me, I am. Thank you for being home in your arms, forever. Thank you especially, Marie, for allying on this ride, sharing your endless stamina, strategic foresight, and pragmatic efficiency.

Thank you Turaj, for patience and wisdom. Your enlightenment is best enjoyed in inspiring conversation, so bringing it into the formal requirements of a thesis means writing a cookbook whilst we should just be eating pastries together. Thank you, David & David, for collecting the right recipes with me anyways.

To Fran and Farzi, my partners in crime. For your open ears, hearts, minds. Might your brilliance continue to intimidate misogynists. To Mathilde, for all the nature that you are. I have a fairy in my life. To all the Cozies, for keeping me warm, and Silfranha, for making me laugh.

To LUCSUS, for calibrating my compass. My binoculars have new lenses, supply is aboard, the water is wild, and I am hungry to set sail.

Thank you.

Abbreviations

AfD	Alternative for Germany [Alternative für Deutschland]
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CDU	Christian Democratic Party [Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands]
CSU	Christian Social Union in Bavaria [Christlich-Soziale Union in Bayern]
DA	Discourse Analysis
EC	European Community
EEC	Economic European Community
EU	European Union
FDP	Free Democratic Party [Freie Demokratische Partei]
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
ISM	Institutionalized Social Movement
RQ	Research Question
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SEA	Single European Act
SMO	Social Movement Organization
SPD	Social Democratic Party of Germany [Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands]
UN	United Nations

Table of Contents

1. Prologue: Living in a State of “Should-Be”	1
1.1. Research Aim and Research Questions.....	1
1.2. Contribution to Sustainability Science	2
1.3. Thesis Structure	3
2. Solidarity – One Concept, Many Manifestations	3
2.1. The Promise of Solidarity in a Globalized World	4
2.2. Solidarity Within Neoliberalism.....	5
2.2.1. <i>Justification of Inequalities</i>	6
2.2.2. <i>The European Union – Solidarity Emerging From an Economic Incentive</i>	6
2.3. Mirroring Reality: The Alternative for Germany	8
3. Theoretical Framework: Social Movement Theory	9
3.1. Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements.....	9
3.1.1. <i>Framing Processes</i>	10
3.1.2. <i>Mobilizing Structures</i>	11
3.1.3. <i>Political Opportunity</i>	11
3.2. Ontology and Epistemology: Critical Realism.....	12
4. Methodology: Putting Theory into Practice	13
4.1. Critical Discourse Analysis	13
4.1.1. <i>Text Analysis</i>	14
4.1.2. <i>Discourse Practice</i>	17
4.1.3. <i>Sociocultural Practice</i>	17
4.2. Model: Understanding AfD as a Social Movement Through Critical Discourse Analysis.....	18
5. Results: The AfD as an Institutionalized Social Movement	19
5.1. Framing Processes: Against Political Elite, Against Everything	19
5.2. Mobilizing Structures: Benefits of Being a Party on Social Media	25
5.3. Political Opportunity: Economic Inequality Creating a Vacuum of Social Solidarity.....	29
6. Outlook: Be Better Than Nationalism	31
7. Conclusion	32
References	
Annex	

Annex 1: Data Summary

Annex 2: Automated Data Coding

Annex 3: Main Themes Coded Tweets

Annex 4: Summary Criticism within AfD Twitter contributions

Annex 5: Examining Child Nodes of Parent Node 'Criticism'

1. Prologue: Living in a State of “Should-Be”

In the year 2021, the world is living in a state of “should-be”.

75 years since the founding of the United Nations (UN), 72 years since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 5 years since the Paris Agreement and Agenda 2030, and presently facing a global pandemic, there are a lot of promises the global community has pledged to fulfil. That we *should* fulfil. We should be collectively fighting climate change. Everyone should be free and equal. Human rights and dignity should be unimpeachable. In Europe, the European Union (EU) should be a prime example of solidarity, in strong cooperation and collaboration meeting the challenges of the forceful displacement of refugees and fostering sustainable development across member states. As poverty indicators state a decrease in absolute poverty, the world should see fewer poor people, increased life qualities and a fairer and more equal society on a national and global level. This is not happening.

Instead, the world is seeing ultra-nationalistic tensions reinvigorating. Solidarity within the European Union is overshadowed by the inhumane treatment of refugees at EU Borders. In Germany, the right-wing party Alternative for Germany (Alternative für Deutschland (AfD)), is increasingly gaining influence. Holding significant political momentum, they are framing the public discourse with ideologies targeting the foundations of a humanistic, socially fair democracy. Sustainability approaches seem to be in far reach. What is the explanation for this divide?

Using social movement theory to analyse the dynamics that allow the AfD to gain such strong rise as an institutionalized social movement, this thesis explores how international solidarity is currently obstructed by neoliberal economic injustice, which thereby gives room to fascist tensions. Socio-economic justice being the answer to deconstruct ultra-nationalistic social movements in order to foster international solidarity emphasizes the power of the interdisciplinary approach provided by sustainability science.

1.1. Research Aim and Research Questions

The aim of this thesis is to deeply critique the political elite’s insufficient recognition and treatment of economic inequality as a public grievance in the neoliberal context of Germany and the European Union. I argue that these instances obstruct international solidarity and instead result in institutionalized social movements that reinforce ultra-nationalistic ideologies in German public discourse. The thesis furthermore advocates for the development of a counter-hegemony that convincingly alleviates economic inequality, which would not only rebut the nationalistic movement but also foster social solidarity, which I argue to be a prerequisite for sustainable development.

Hence, the consequential objective of this paper is to explain the role of the AfD in influencing the public discourse through the lens of social movement theory, supported by a conducted discourse analysis that empirically understands the conceptual theoretical stages of the social movement. Three main research questions and three subquestions guide this process (Table 1):

Table 1: Research Questions (RQs)

Research Questions	Central Section
RQ 1: How can the AfD be understood as a social movement?	Chapter 5
RQ 1a: What are framing processes developed by the AfD?	Chapter 5.1
RQ 1b: How is the AfD using mobilizing structures to engage in discourse practice?	Chapter 5.2
RQ 1c: Which political opportunity gives room for the social movement AfD to emerge?	Chapter 5.3
RQ 2: What sustained interactions are developing out of AfD’s influence as a social movement on sociocultural practices?	Chapter 6
RQ 3: What role does solidarity play in fostering sustainable development?	Chapter 2 Chapter 6

1.2. Contribution to Sustainability Science

This thesis contributes to sustainability science by demonstrating the extensive power of its interdisciplinary sustainability lens in the process of approaching topics deeply intertwined between the political, economic, and social sphere. A primary example for this are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) formulated by the United Nations in the 2030 Agenda as an international consensus, as eight of them are concerned with social aspects of sustainability, such as no poverty (SDG 1), reduced inequalities (SDG 10) and Partnerships for the Goals (SDG 17) (United Nations [UN], 2015a).

Whilst this already constitutes legitimacy for social concerns, the full relevance of the social component within sustainability science lies even deeper in the reality of climate-related politics. Various examples, such as the Yellow Vests in France, have shown that environmental policies and aspirations cannot collaboratively manifest in a democratic society if the needs and concerns of the most vulnerable are not considered (Martin, 2019). In this sense, and that is heavily emphasized by my thesis, ignoring the grievances of the most vulnerable not only obstructs social sustainability, but also

environmental sustainability, and, to put it pointedly, endangers the very basis of a democratic, humanistic society. Proposed solutions to mitigate climate change and to foster sustainable development therefore crucially must ensure collaborative compliance to the needs and social concerns of the most vulnerable. This thesis will prove how effective such an approach can be if carried out to its full potential.

1.3. Thesis Structure

In the following part presenting context and case (Chapter 2), the potential of international solidarity is sketched out, including both the theoretical concept and the practical interpretation within the context of the *European Union* and the currently dominant neoliberal economic paradigm. Contrasting this potential with the concrete case of political development within Germany, the emergence of the nationalistic party AfD is depicted. Subsequently, *social movement theory* is introduced as the theoretical framework for understanding AfD as a social movement, comprising the three elements framing processes, mobilizing structures and political opportunity. Furthermore, the research approach is embedded within the ontology and epistemology of critical realism (Chapter 3). The appropriated research method of *critical discourse analysis* is introduced in the subsequent section (Chapter 4). Its threefold structure of text, processing and social analysis is related to the three elements of the theoretical framework, which synergizes in the developed research model (4.2). For data collection, discourse contributions of AfD (deputy) federal spokespersons are gathered from the political discourse platform *Twitter*. In the following chapter, the results of the analysis are discussed based on the established research model (Chapter 5). Understanding AfD as an institutionalized social movement and contrasting their framing with the public grievances that opened the political opportunity for the AfD to emerge, allows for the subsequent deconstruction of the social movement's strategy, exposing the ideological cultural response the AfD provides to material public grievances. The outlook then evaluates the AfD's response as unfit and flawed, since an ideological cultural response is given to a material problem, which will not solve original grievances, but instead just shift the spotlight to a momentary outlet by marginalizing vulnerable groups. Implications of these findings for policymaking are examined (Chapter 6). Concluding the research, the central findings are summarized, closing with potentials for policymaking and emphasis on the importance of sustainability science (Chapter 7).

2. Solidarity – One Concept, Many Manifestations

To introduce the reader to my case, the following chapter presents the sociological premise as well as the academic and political circumstances in which it is embedded. As this thesis is advocating for

international solidarity for sustainable development, the theoretical assumptions and consequential potential of solidarity are outlined. The preceding political realms of the case, which comprise of the EU's history, its self-evaluation of international solidarity and solidarity within neoliberal logic, are presented. Finally, this is mirrored to the current political developments within German politics, succinctly assessing the rise of the AfD in Germany.

2.1. The Promise of Solidarity in a Globalized World

A powerful entry point for striving towards solidarity lies in connecting the theoretical underpinnings of solidarity as a socio-philosophical concept, drawing from work regarding solidarity and structural functionalism of sociologist *Émile Durkheim (1960 [1933])*, with the aspired goals of sustainable development. In his prominent publication *The Division of Labor in Society (1960 [1933])*, Durkheim formulates that through the process of industrialization, western societies became *organic*, which implies that the division of labour is in accordance with each individual's strengths and interests. Through that, according to his conceptualization, interdependence strengthens the relations between the individuals, allowing for a high-density population whilst leaving room for individual reflection. These dynamics are supposed to limit socio-economic inequalities to the extent of one's own merit, guaranteeing equal opportunities and social justice (Jary & Jary, 1991). To ensure this equity, moral and economic regulation are required (Durkheim, 1960 [1933]). This solidarity leads to the intrinsic understanding that you are relevant for the system and acknowledged as a valuable part of the community, as well as any other community member.

Moving from theory to practice, it is fair to say that some sort of international community has formed due to economic globalization fostering long-distance transactions (Tilly, Castañeda, & Wood, 2020). At least to some extent, this community has also been institutionalized through the United Nations (United Nations, 2014). This international community faces many shared sustainability challenges, one of the most dominant ones being climate change as a threat to all societal spheres. More recently, and more apparent on the level of the European Union, the movement of refugees demands joint action and collaboration among the EU member states. Logically, faced with challenges that require collaboration and societal solidarity, the question of international solidarity is raised.

Matching Durkheim's conceptualization with the aspired goals of sustainable development shows the potential that international solidarity holds and answers research question 3. As mentioned in the introduction, sustainable development aims to successively reduce socio-economic inequality, improving quality of life for all individuals and thus, society. Furthermore, especially considering the challenges due to climate change that will affect society on a global scale (IPCC [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change], 2014), an international solidary society with reduced inequalities allows for

needed just cooperation and collaboration. Here, the global community has already set its own ambitious expectations towards themselves. Adopting the Paris agreement in 2015, the world community pledged to keep global warming “well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, recognizing that this would significantly reduce the risks and impacts of climate change” (UN, 2015b, p.3). As mentioned previously, answering environmental struggles is only possible if providing social justice simultaneously (Chapter 1.2). The global community states to be aware of this, which is why several of the SDGs aim at closing gaps of socio-economic inequality and fostering global partnership. Consequently, on paper, the global community aims for a global solidary and equal society, which is seen as the prerequisite to effectively foster sustainability (Piketty, 2020).

If international solidarity is sought to be concretely implemented within the political sphere, remaining solely on the global level does not seem feasible. To thoroughly draw a comprehensible connection between the presented case of right-wing tensions within Germany and the currently noble, yet abstract aspirations of global solidarity, too little instruments or institutions of judiciary, legislative and executive are currently at hand. Instead, the idea of international solidarity is translated to the European level, looking at a coalition to whom the discussion around solidarity is all too familiar: The *European Union*.

2.2. Solidarity Within Neoliberalism

As economic incentives provided the first and foremost motivation to form the EU, the following part provides a brief excursion into the logic of neoliberalism, the presently dominating economic paradigm within the EU and globally. This is followed by its interpretation of solidarity.

D. Harvey (2007) provides a concise definition incorporating the most fundamental features of the neoliberal ideology:

“Neoliberalism is a theory of political economic practices proposing that human well-being can best be advanced by the maximization of entrepreneurial freedoms within an institutional framework characterized by private property rights, individual liberty, unencumbered markets, and free trade.” (D. Harvey, 2007, p.22)

As this definition shows, the architects of neoliberalism do not have a strong focus on fostering solidarity, or, even more basically, community and society as such. This is because within the logic of neoliberalism, to use the (in)famously quote from Margaret Thatcher in 1987, “there is no such thing as society” (Margaret Thatcher Foundation, n.d.). Instead of acknowledging people as citizens and parts of society, the neoliberal logic perceives them as individuals fulfilling their roles as consumers. Their *consumer agency* is claimed to provide individuals with sufficient scope to influence its surroundings, incorporating not only political engagement (Kyroglou & Henn, 2017) but also social

responsibility and participation (Castro, 2015). Most importantly, the idea of autonomous individualism creates ground for one of the most distinct, yet devastating pillars of neoliberalism - its justification of inequalities.

2.2.1. *Justification of Inequalities*

Any value system characterizing the path of humanity for any significant period must provide an ideology that justifies its parameters and inequalities (Piketty, 2020). Neoliberalists, retaining a strong focus on the speeding market, assume that economic grounds entail a coherent and harmonious society whilst tremendous economic inequalities exist (Alvaredo, Piketty, Saez, Chancel, & Zucman, 2018). Within strong neoliberal logic, this is no contradiction. Any inequalities experienced are, in their understanding, the result of entrepreneurship and individual merits. Following this logic, any power imbalances, economic advantages, or financial shortcomings are the fair results of one's own performance. This logic is ingrained in the societal concept of a system that seeks to appropriately honour these personal performances and achievements, called *meritocracy* (Piketty, 2020). In consequence, the neoliberal formula suggests that individuals will accept experienced inequalities, as they would be the fair outcome of one's voluntarily executed performance commitment. One's individual fate, wealth and societal position would therefore be the rational outcome of that commitment (Piketty, 2020). Drawing on socio-economist Karl Marx, Belina (2019) formulates this as the *abstract equality for all human beings* that allows to process and accept the contradictions of neoliberalism. If theoretically everyone has the same chance to participate in the exchange of market goods, abstractly, every subject is equal, thus eventually making them citizens of democratic societies (Belina, 2019). As for the development of a global community, due to the idea of this abstract equality, real inequalities are therefore not expected to be a hindrance, as individuals are expected to consensually accept their place in an organically forming global society. The stretch from this theoretical conceptualization to the experienced reality within German politics is gravely significant, as the chapter 2.3 depicts.

2.2.2. *The European Union – Solidarity Emerging From an Economic Incentive*

As the history of the European Union portrays, this coalition is grounded on an economic incentive, with the sociocultural sphere trying to keep up with the speeding pace of market dynamics. As a predecessor to the EU, the first attempt in "turning backs on traditional nation-state aspirations" by building a European integrative alliance was taken in 1951, when the European Community (EC) and shortly afterwards the Economic European Community (EEC) was formed (Dinan, 2014, p.6). The main binding element was the enhancement of trade between European countries and the consequent economic benefit leading to intra-European as well as global market power and influence (European

Union [EU], n.d.). In the 1980s, the *Single European Act (SEA)* was designed to transform the EC into a socio-economic solidary community, aspiring to eradicate inequality between the member states and moving towards globalization by finalizing the European Single Market, building and reforming institutions and starting European political cooperation (Parsons, 2010). In the following decade, the *Maastricht Treaty* was formulated on the backdrop of the German unification and the end of the cold war, officially founding the EU as “an aspiring global power, trying to achieve the unified political clout to match its rising economic weight” (Dinan, 2014, p.8). Since then, the ongoing development of the EU, including additional reforms, treaties, and the introduction of the Euro in 1999, is meant to improve the union and meet demanding concerns from the member states and, especially, their citizens. Popular concerns include the pace of European integration and the insufficient acknowledgement of citizens’ concerns by the political elite (Dinan, 2014). The impression that economic intentions are the dominant incentive for EU aspirations only accompanied by sociopolitical pledges in the second row puts into question how the EU interprets themselves and their expectation for sustainability.

2.2.2.1. Solidarity within the European Union

Based on EU proclamations, solidarity is a central component of the union’s aspirations. Mentioned in the SEA, the Maastricht Treaty and the Treaty of Lisbon from 2006, not only the member states but also individual citizens are pursued to be connected as a solidary community, so that “each member state is defined and distinguished by its commitment to social justice” (Sangiovanni, 2013, p.214). The aforementioned interdependency of environmental and social justice is also present among EU politics. When ratifying the Paris Agreement, the EU as a political organ as well as all its member states separately joined the global consensus to combat climate change (UN, 2015c). In light of Agenda 2030, the EU further intensified their self-conception of a sustainable union, expressing the ambition to become a global leader in environmental and social development (Furness, Lightfoot, Ghica, & Szent-Ivanyi, 2020). Just recently, this ambition cumulated in the *European Green Deal*, which is set to lead all member states to a net-zero of carbon emissions by 2050, with additional rules and laws implementing a low-carbon economy that improves life quality for citizens through e.g. job creation while ensuring environmental protection (F. Harvey & Rankin, 2020). Passionate EU-advocates see it as a prime example of the EU making joint progress in sustainability and improved solidarity across member states (F. Harvey & Rankin, 2020).

2.3. Mirroring Reality: The Alternative for Germany

This thesis is zooming in on Germany as a member of the European Union, mirroring the ambitious self-conception of the EU against reality. When looking at the political landscape of Germany it becomes apparent quite quickly that neither on a national level nor with their EU partners the much-vaunted solidarity is manifested. Instead of solid international solidarity prospering, we see two phenomena coexisting: the pressures of climate change demanding fast and large-scale action, and a society that, instead of using the global stage to create a solidary community that could efficiently answer the challenges of climate change, retreats into ultra-nationalistic ideologies with the rise of right-wing civic social movements and parties (Piketty, 2020).

Looking at the German political landscape, this draws attention to the party Alternative for Germany. The origins of the AfD lie further in the past than their current role might suggest. Founded in response to the Euro crisis in 2013, the party first positioned themselves as an EU-sceptic, economically liberal, and socially conservative-nationalist party, focusing on economic disputes such as the euro bailout for Greece and only subordinated addressing immigration (Decker, 2016). During this time, large parts of their economic agenda were comparable to the liberal Free Democratic Party (Freie Demokratische Partei (FDP)), and culturally they advocated similar positions as the conservative parties Christian Democratic Union of Germany (Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands (CDU)) and Christian Social Union in Bavaria (Christlich-Soziale Union in Bayern (CSU)) (Kroh & Fetz, 2016). In these years, the AfD mainly focused on their EU critics, was fairly unsuccessful and did neither develop a convincing identity nor was perceived as a significant fighter for public grievances in the political sphere. Over the course of the years though, their programmatic focus and composition of personnel changed drastically in reciprocal influence, culminating in a turnover of leadership positions in summer 2015 (Decker, 2020). Especially with the increasing pressures of refugee movements, this marked the turn towards nationalistic motives as their guiding principle, toning down EU-related topics (Kroh & Fetz, 2016). Following collaborations with right-wing populist parties from other EU members, it manifested its role as the nationalistic right-wing populist party (Kroh & Fetz, 2016). It was during this time that the AfD started to gain more widespread public support. In 2020, AfD is the largest opposition party in the German parliament, holding 88 of 709 seats in the German federal parliament, as seen in Figure 1 (Deutscher Bundestag, 2020). How did it come to this point?

Distribution of seats in the 19th electoral term

Last updated: December 2020

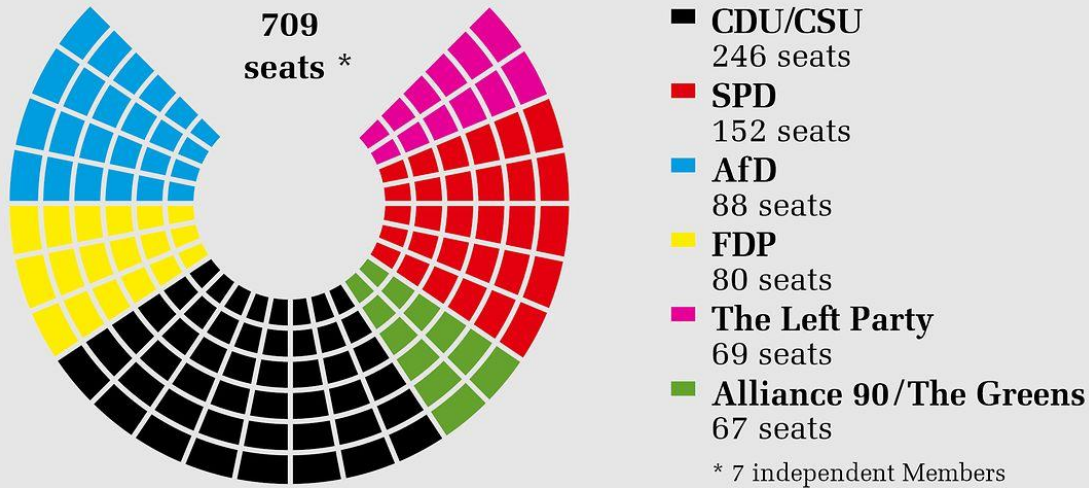


Figure 1. Distribution of seats in the German federal parliament. The right-wing party AfD is holding 88 of 709 seats, As the CDU/CSU and the Social Democratic Party of Germany (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (SPD)) form the coalition government, the AfD is the largest opposition party. (Deutscher Bundestag, 2020)

3. Theoretical Framework: Social Movement Theory

As the last chapter carved out the emergence of the AfD, the following part will provide the framework to understand this party as an institutionalized *social movement* using *social movement theory*. To logically bridge this framework with the afterwards introduced method of *critical discourse analysis (CDA)*, their shared ontological realm of *critical realism* is covered as well.

3.1. Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements

Following the understanding of Tilly, Castañeda & Wood (2020), social movements are understood as *contentious politics*, meaning that “social movements involve collective making of claims that, if realized, would conflict with someone else’s interest” (p. 6). Specifying this definition according to Tarrow (2011), making the claims is based on “common purposes and social solidarities, in sustained interactions with elites, opponents and authorities” (p.9). As such a channel for public political interventions, social movements are part of the fundamental political process, and in the presented case the social solidarities will be especially considered. Within past and present research, different academic strings formulated varying interpretations of the social movement phenomena. This is due to the ongoing process of social movements developing and redefining themselves. Through concrete observation of specific cases in the field, researchers determine designating and evolving features (Tilly et al., 2020). Consequentially, social movement approaches from different fields are quickly

accumulating. Social scientists McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald (1996) took it upon themselves to formulate a synthesis of these different fields, carving out three core elements that provide a comparative perspective on social movements: the current political landscape and political opportunities for the social movement via *political process theory* (Tilly & Tarrow); the movement’s capacities regarding organization and resources via *resource mobilization theory* (McCarthy & Zald), and the movement’s framings, beliefs, ideas and culture via *framing theory*, as elaborated by Benford and Snow (2000). Naturally, these elements influence each other, together identifying the movements emergence, ideological approach, and strategy, as illustrated in Figure 2.

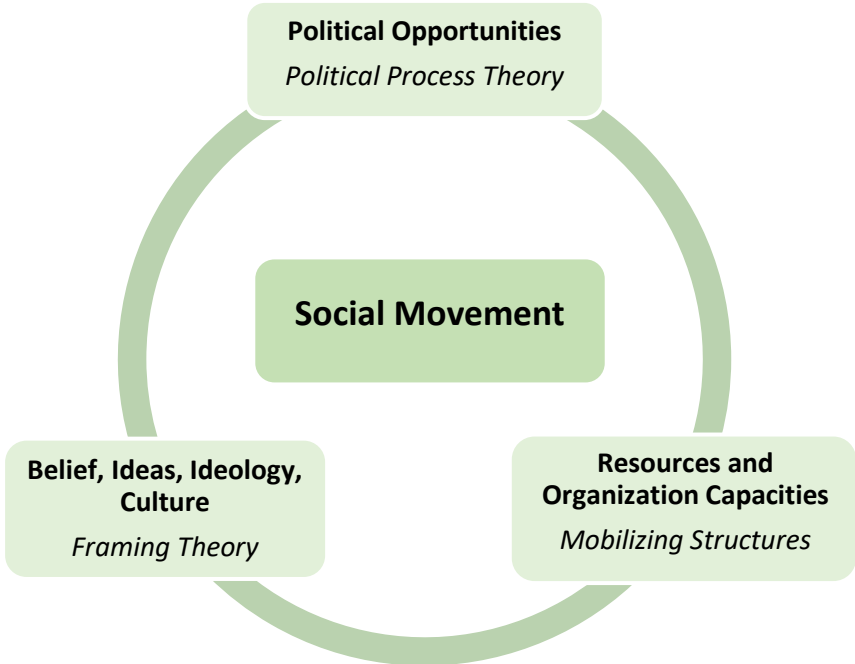


Figure 2: Comparative perspectives on social movements. Synergizing multiple research strings within social movement theory into the three core elements of political opportunities, resources, and framing. Examining a social movement on this basis allows deconstructed insights into the movements emergence, ideological approach, and strategy. (own figure, based on Tarrow (2011))

3.1.1. Framing Processes

Framing processes as the first element are the “cognitive liberation” of a social movement (McAdam et al., 1996, p.5). It examines the self-conception of social movements and allows for the analysis of its perception of reality, explaining the motivations, values, ideas and beliefs behind their exercised repertoire (Weiss, 2015). By doing this, the agency of the social movement is understood. This can also help to comprehend how a political process is perceived as an opportunity by the social movement, as the values of the social movement might contradict the dominant values of the political elite. In contrasting them, perceived injustices are exposed (Tarrow, 2011). As mentioned above, these shared values serve to form social solidarity amongst social movements participants, aligning under the

common cause of pursuing these values collectively (Tarrow, 2011). Throughout its development, a social movement must pay close attention to the development of its framing: outer parties can influence its frames through co-optation, media influence, or governmental interaction. It can furthermore lose the shared identity of pursuing the same values, developing different framings within one social movement. For the analysis, this will be further examined.

3.1.2. Mobilizing Structures

Mobilizing structures as the second core element are “collective vehicles, informal as well as formal, through which people mobilize and engage in collective action” (McAdam et al., 1996, p.3). Firstly, this regards the structural organization capacities, including practical organization strategies on the meso-level in forms of group organizations or informal networks. Following the theory of resource mobilization, this element is primarily concerned with the practical organization of the movement. Here, the most important term in direct action is the *repertoire* (Tilly et al., 2020). This entails the collective actions implemented by the social movement to express their demands, which can take many different forms, including protests, petitions or creative performances (Tarrow, 2011). In addition, a particular relevant concept within this approach is the understanding that dynamics of public social movements lead to the emergence of *social movement organizations (SMOs)*, also called institutionalized social movements (ISM), which function as professional executives for the movement’s aims and demands (McAdam et al., 1996). Instead of a loose alliance amongst citizens, SMOs help a social movement to become politically institutionalized, either by supporting efforts of the existing social movement or merging it into a more formal structure, becoming an SMO (Tilly et al., 2020). In the process of these formations, the mobilizing structures can influence the aims and demands of the social movement (McAdam et al., 1996). As in my presented case I argue for an official party to be the manifestation of a social movement, this displays a prime example of SMOs, which is why I will primarily use this concept for my analysis.

3.1.3. Political Opportunity

As a third element, *political opportunity* examines the political setting in which a social movement emerges, looking especially at the degree of openness an institutionalized political system displays (McAdam et al., 1996). As previously mentioned, this means that a social movement can be understood as part of the political process, being in mutual exchange with the regime (Tarrow, 2011). The opening of a political opportunity can be determined by several factors, such as (in)stability of the political elite, prospective partners for the collective within this elite, potential crises, or oppression by the government. These factors can be intensified by “changes in the institutional structure or informal power relations of a given national system” (McAdam et al., 1996, p.3). In any case, the

element of political opportunities remains heavily characterized by the understanding that political chances and challenges are unique in this exact constellation of realpolitik, emphasizing the importance of closely examining the surroundings of the social movement (McAdam et al., 1996). Within the presented case, this translates to the level of German politics on the backdrop of the European Union. To comprehend the implications of understanding AfD not only as a party but as a social movement, the element of political opportunity thus analyzes the socio-economic and political circumstances of its emergence.

These three elements underline the indication that understanding AfD as a social movement rather than just a party is important: Framing processes understand the ideology of the social movement whilst mobilizing structures examine how successful their strategy is to implement this ideology in the public discourse. With political opportunity, and this is emphasized, not only the emergence of the social movement into the public discourse is identified. Moreover, it also shows a potential loss of momentum and consequential dissolution of the social movement. In contrast to a party, a social movement does not emerge to establish as a permanent organ, but rather has an agenda set and will dissolve once it is successful, proven to be fundamentally flawed or met with counterstrategies that force the social movement to fail. Finding these leverage points motivates the following research.

3.2. Ontology and Epistemology: Critical Realism

The ontological-epistemological placement of this paper is situated within critical realism, stating that fundamental social structures are acknowledged as well as dynamic processes within a society, which are constituting the social reality we interact in (Fletcher, 2016). Within this approach, ontological and epistemological categorizations are approached simultaneously, as they are mutually dependent. Critical realism “defines an objective reality as one that exists independently of individual perception but also recognizes the role that individual subjective interpretation plays in defining reality” (Taylor, 2018, p.217) bridging middle ground between positivist and constructivist paradigms (Fletcher, 2016). This ontological-epistemological frame allows my research to attribute relevant agency to social movements, genuinely arguing that fundamental societal paradigms can be changed, which allows for practical policy recommendations (Fletcher, 2016). It is the fusion of adjudging individual agency to a social movement and its participants whilst acknowledging that other fundamental circumstances such as economic inequality, poverty and hardships of climate change are not a question of perception but manifested grievances in reality that indisputably must be answered, that distinguishes critical realism as an effective paradigm for social movement research.

4. Methodology: Putting Theory into Practice

4.1. Critical Discourse Analysis

In this thesis, I conduct a *critical discourse analysis* (CDA), which is a specification of the discourse analysis (DA) methodological approach, a technique that has been repeatedly interpreted with varying focuses. The understanding in this thesis follows the DA approach by Fairclough (1992) reasoning that discourse not only has the purpose to communicate and exchange information in order to understand reality. Much rather, it has the power to *shape reality*, with our language influencing our values, surroundings and perception (Bryman, 2012). Critical discourse analysis narrows the concept down further and aims to critically examine the discourse with a focus on the social implications (Wodak & Meyer, 2001), seeking to unveil the "role of language as a power resource that is related to ideology and sociocultural change" (Bryman, 2012, p.536). Connecting to the ontological-epistemological placement within critical realism, this thesis acknowledges that some highly impactful real material conditions will exist independent from discourse framing and influence the possibility of social constructions, such as the finiteness of natural resources or the reality of climate change. However, aside from fundamentally solid material actualities, our perception of reality is socially constructed by discourse, and CDA therefore provides a powerful tool to research these constructions (Fairclough, 1992)¹.

Applying this method to examine social movement development, AfD's influence as a social movement on the public discourse is analysed. Social movement researcher Hank Johnston (1995) suggests that studying the concrete speech of social movement participants allows for an understanding of the framing and ideological orientation of the social movement on a larger systemic scale. With this comprehension, CDA thereby provides a practical tool to investigate discourse contributions by AfD representatives to carve out AfD's impact on the public discourse, and therefore, on the social construction of our reality. To do this, the CDA is divided into three stages, the *text analysis* descriptively focusing concretely on written discourse contributions, and the *discourse practice* as well as *sociocultural practice* seeking interpretation and explanation of the contributions through processing and social analysis (see Figure 3).

¹ As (Flatschart, 2016) emphasizes, the current conceptualization of CDA inherits features that allow for a potential connection to anti-realism in the tradition of Foucault or Althusser. In times of post-truth elements, especially taken on by right-wing populism, this thesis is explicitly demarcated from these approaches, referring to the previous chapter of critical realism.

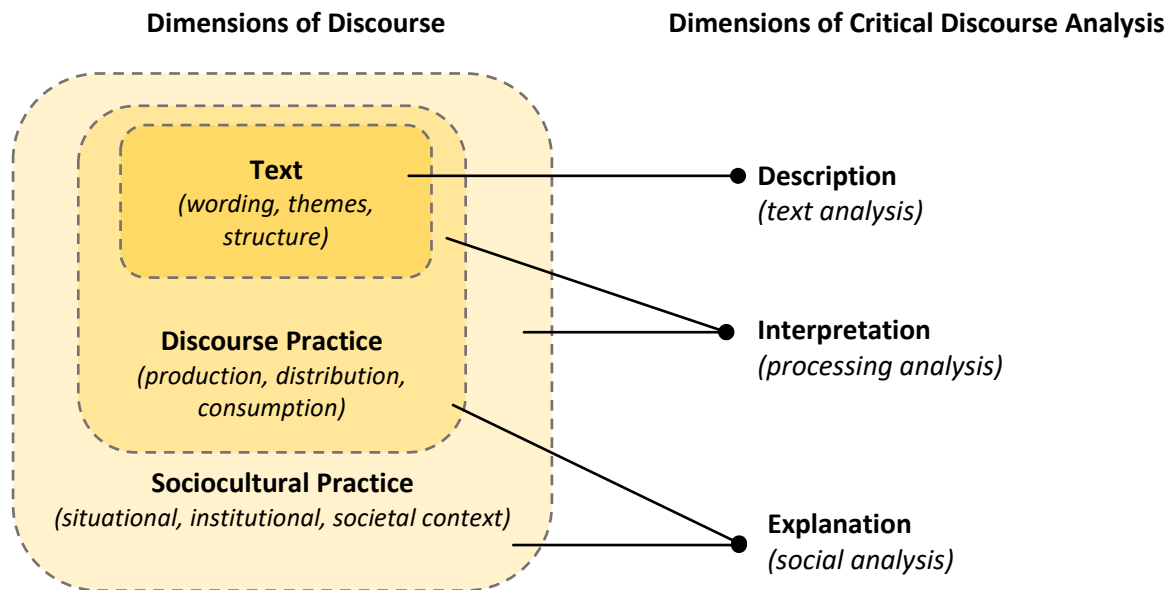


Figure 3: CDA as a research method. The analysis consists of three stages, text analysis descriptively focusing on written discourse contributions, and discourse practice as well as sociocultural practice seeking interpretation and explanation of the contributions through processing and social analysis. (own figure, based on Fairclough (1992))

In the following, the three stages are defined for the presented case of analysing AfD as a social movement. In doing so, each of the three stages of CDA analysis is assigned to an element of social movement theory. This is subsequently related to the associated research questions and visualized in the synergized research model (see 4.2).

4.1.1. Text Analysis

For data collection regarding the text analysis, I decided to gather discourse contributions from the social media platform Twitter, as it is intensively used by political figures to create campaigning output that reaches out to their followers (Stier, Bleier, Lietz, & Strohmaier, 2018). Drawing on Johnston (1995), these statements produced by concrete representatives allow an understanding of the social movement's ideology on a larger scale. Hence, as this stage is analyzing the content, themes, and connotations, it is connected to the element of *framing* from social movement theory which provides insights into the AfD's beliefs and ideology.

The data collection spans a 3-month time period from the 1st of October 2019 up to and including the 31st of December 2019. This time frame was chosen to gather data unaffected by the context of the current global pandemic, in which the coronavirus COVID-19 forced countries across the globe to drastically alter their daily life and take adaptative and mitigative measures affecting all societal spheres (World Health Organisation [WHO], 2020). Without going deeper into the political implications of the global pandemic, it is self-evident that the public discourse in 2020 is exceptional, and political

discussions are entering uncharted territory. As it goes beyond the focus and the scope of my thesis to analyse the implications of the pandemic on the public discourse, I decided to collect and analyse data from the time period shortly before the virus' emergence in Germany. In the selected period, two anomalous events occurred that influenced the discourse topics, being (1) a federal state election in Thüringen (27.10.2019) and (2) an antisemitic terror attack in Halle (09.10.2019). The impacts of these events are considered in the analysis. As discourse contributors, all AfD federal spokespersons or deputy federal spokespersons with active Twitter accounts in the analysed period are determined as representatives for the AfD's influence on the public political discourse. These are:

1. Jörg Meuthen, AfD federal spokesperson (https://twitter.com/Joerg_Meuthen)
2. Tino Chrupalla, AfD federal spokesperson (https://twitter.com/Tino_Chrupalla)
3. Alice Weidel, AfD deputy federal spokesperson (https://twitter.com/Alice_Weidel)
4. Beatrix von Storch, AfD deputy federal spokesperson (https://twitter.com/Beatrix_vStorch).²

Holding the primary federal representative positions within the party and presenting the party in public contexts, their statements are representative discourse contributions of the AfD, offering more universal insights than statements from local party members or AfD voters would. For the text analysis, their discourse contributions on the platform within the period examined, so-called tweets, are analysed. This cumulates in a data set of 376 samples (see Table 2).

Table 2. Data collection. Twitter contributions (tweets & retweets) from four (deputy) federal spokespersons of the AfD between 01.10.2019 and 31.12.2019, resulting in 376 data samples. Detailed corresponding data overview is provided in Annex 1.

AfD (deputy) federal spokesperson	Twitter Discourse Contributions between 01.10.2019 and 31.12.2019		
	Tweets	Retweets	Total
Meuthen	80	33	113
Chrupalla	15	0	15
Weidel	110	20	130
Von Storch	81	37	118
	286	90	376

² AfD's third federal deputy spokesperson Stephan Brander also contributed to the Twitter discourse over the selected time period. However, his account produced an overextensive level of discourse contributions since then, which is why the data analysis program was not able to capture data from this account.

The data set is limited to written contributions, as the technical conversion did not allow for pictures, videos, or ideograms (emojis)³. The text analysis for the CDA was implemented using the qualitative data analysis software NVivo, drawing input from Bryman (2012) regarding the use of this software for DA. Themes, wording structures, and connotations were identified in order to understand the framing approach of the AfD. To identify themes, a set of empty *nodes* (= coding themes) was created before the analysis, based on the research questions and knowledge gathered via literature in the preceding chapters. Throughout the manually performed chronological coding, additional nodes and belonging references were gathered from the data, cumulating in a total of 81 theme nodes. To confirm the linguistic foundation of the manual coding, an automated text search query for all nodes was performed afterwards (see Annex 2). The nodes were thematically grouped and hierarchically ordered as concepts emerged throughout the coding process, creating *parent nodes* and subordinated *child nodes* (see Figure 4). An element was coded for the child node as well as separately for the parent node if two different aspects were covered in parent and child node.⁴ Negative statements towards a topic were coded as *criticism*, which includes objective criticism, groundless criticism, hate speech and lies. For extensive or more diverse nodes, an explicit definition was given. References in child nodes were aggregated into the parent nodes for data evaluation. In addition, automatic coding identified quantitative word use in word clouds (see Figure 10), with stop words (articles, local and temporal prepositions and unexplicit semantic information) cleaning the results.

³ This limits the capacities of a linguistic analysis, as for example the frequent use of the term 'Germany' cannot be captured, as it is regularly replaced with a flag ideogram.

⁴ Example: A sample which firstly posed criticism of Fridays for Future (FFF) and afterwards separate general criticism of climate efforts led to a coding under the child node 'Criticism Fridays for Future' and the parent node 'Criticism Climate Efforts', producing two references for the parent node. If the reference was distinct to one aspect (e.g. FFF), then it was only coded under this child node, though still aggregated to the parent nodes.

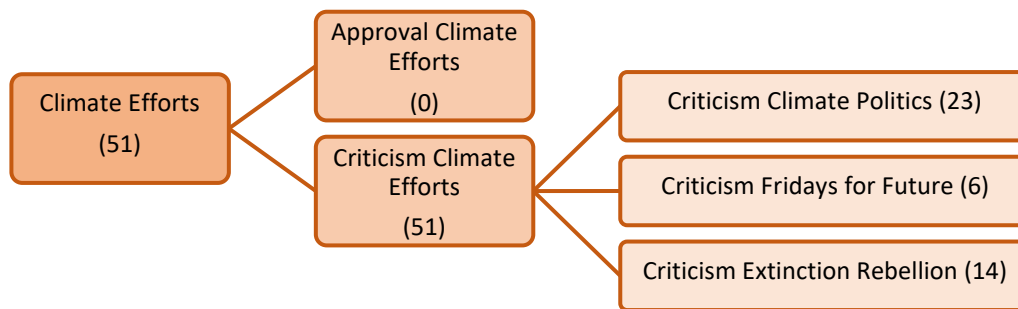


Figure 4. Example of hierarchical parent-child coding for ‘Climate Efforts’, number of coded references in brackets (own research)

4.1.2. Discourse Practice

In the second stage, the processing analysis examines the production, consumption, and distribution of AfD’s discourse contributions. To interpret and explain their impact on the discourse practice, I firstly investigate social media communication, especially the many-to-many communication platform Twitter (Meikle, 2016), as the presented discourse channel. Drawing from literature regarding Twitter as a political platform (Hwang, 2013), I connect academic insights with AfD’s self-conception and the consequential impact regarding their discourse practice. To rank AfD’s discourse practices in relation to other parties, quantitative data of social media accounts from the political elite is gathered and compared. Special attention is also paid to the status AfD representatives hold as politicians, depicting the impact this composition has on the AfD as a social movement. As this stage is analysing the mobilizing structures by examining the resources used to spread the movement’s discourse contributions, it is connected to the element of *mobilizing structures* from social movement theory.

4.1.3. Sociocultural Practice

In the last step, the social analysis provides the interpretation and explanation of AfD’s discourse contributions in relation to the situational, institutional, and societal context, thus understanding the impact AfD as a social movement has on the sociocultural practice. At this point, the analysis is connected to the proclaimed aspirations and actual developments regarding solidarity, synergizing the academic discourse around AfD’s development with AfD’s discourse contributions. The divide between expected international solidarity and emerging national solidarity is explained through analysing sociocultural practices of Germany and the European Union. Thus, the socio-economic and political circumstances that fostered the AfD’s emergence are recognized, which connects to the element of *political opportunity* from social movement theory.

4.2. Model: Understanding AfD as a Social Movement Through Critical Discourse Analysis

Concluding the development of theory and methodology, I provide a compact research model (Figure 5) that synergizes the three core elements of comparative perspectives on social movements *framing processes, mobilizing structures and political opportunity* with the three spheres of CDA *text analysis, processing analysis (discourse practice) and social analysis (social practice)*. A chronological structure around the research questions is provided that identifies three stages of analysis.

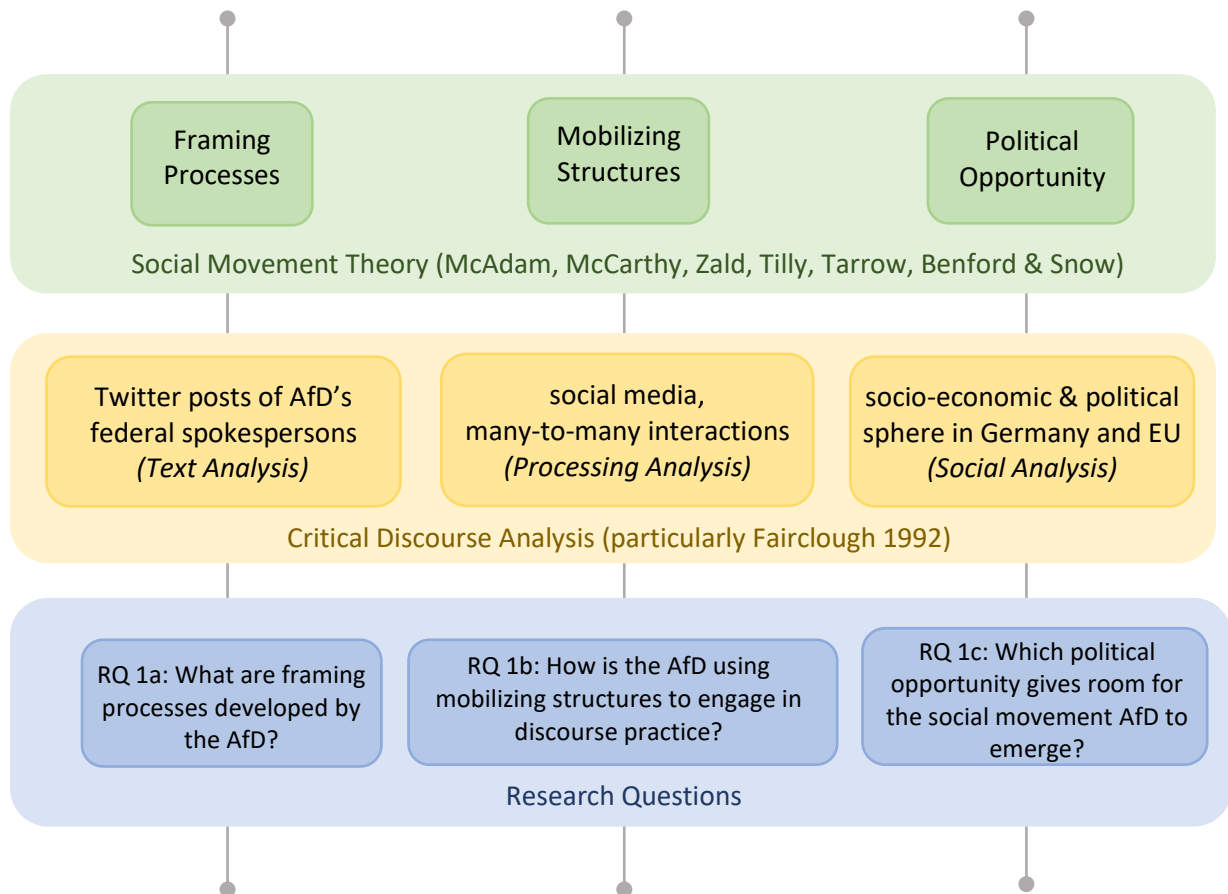


Figure 5: Research model combining three elements of social movement theory (framing processes, mobilizing structures, political opportunity) with the three stages of CDA (text analysis, processing analysis, social analysis) to guide the research process along three of the thesis' research questions. (own figure)

5. Results: The AfD as an Institutionalized Social Movement

Building on the preceding chapters, the presentation of my results will follow the threefold structure of social movement theory (McAdam et al., 1996). As visualized in the research model (4.2), my findings are clustered by the three stages of CDA (text, discourse practice, sociocultural practice), each primarily informing one attributed element of social theory (framing processes, mobilizing structures, political opportunity). I hereby emphasized that naturally, as previously shown in Figure 3, the transition between the stages is partly fluid, which also applies for the data evaluation. Nevertheless, the threefold approach facilitates a structural understanding throughout data interpretation.

5.1. Framing Processes: Against Political Elite, Against Everything

To understand the self-conception of the AfD and its perception of reality, its content alignment, ideas, and beliefs are researched. When performing the text analysis for the AfD Twitter contributions, a first impression suggests a wide range of themes covered, as the analysis produced a total of 81 nodes. However, taking the allocated number of references into account, a first meaningful finding becomes clear: The AfD has a distinct theme agenda, with the most-coded topic being *Political Elite* by a clear margin with 194 references coded, followed by themselves as the theme of contribution with 87 references coded for *AfD*. The six other main themes identified are *Extremism & Radicalism*, *Migration & Refugees*, *Climate Efforts*, *Political Left*, *Media*, and *International Politics* (see Table 3).

Table 3. The number of coded references for eight main themes, sort by AfD (deputy) federal spokesperson. Political Elite is the most prominent theme by a clear margin (194), followed by the themes AfD (87) and Extremism & Radicalism (58). The threshold to classify main themes was put at equal or more than 40 references allocated to a theme (coded & aggregated). Graphic visualization of the table is provided in Annex 3.

AfD (Deputy) Federal Spokesperson	Amount Twitter Contributions (Tweets & Retweets) for 8 Main Themes							
	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.
	Political Elite	AfD	Extremism & Radicalism	Migration & Refugees	Climate Efforts	Political Left	Media	International Politics
Weidel	77	11	3	30	18	12	8	12
Von Storch	57	36	39	15	19	15	15	10
Meuthen	53	35	15	12	11	20	21	16
Chrupalla	7	5	1	0	0	2	3	2
	194	87	58	57	48	49	47	40

The clear focus on the political elite as their main theme, considerably ahead even of discourse contributions about themselves is a distinct first indicator of the AfD as a social movement rather than only a political party. A newly emerging party would most likely primarily focus on their party program to convince potential voters of its political ambition. For the AfD instead, focus lies on making the political elite the subject of discussion. Keeping in mind that a social movement is formulating its discourse contributions “in sustainable interactions with elites, opponents and authorities” (Tarrow, 2011, p.9), a first indicator to classify the AfD as a social movement is found.

After having a brief understanding of *what* the AfD is talking about, a closer look is taken at the connotations their discourse contributions are having to examine the *how*, relating to the framing process of understanding values and motives. To do this, all statements with more than ten coding references⁵ are classified in *positive sentiment* or *negative sentiment*. This categorization solely entails if the AfD is positioning themselves with their discourse contributions towards or against a theme. A positive sentiment signifies an endorsing, productive or constructive contribution, such as e.g. proposing new policies or declaring solidarity with other movements or politicians. A negative sentiment signifies the limited expression of being against a topic, without posing alternatives or giving an objective, comprehensible argumentation for the criticism. An exceptional case are the mentions of AfD as a party. As the AfD sees the existence of themselves already as an expression of alternative and constructive discourse contributions (according to their name), all explicit mentions or appearances of the AfD as a political actor are counted as positive sentiments. The parent node ‘Misleading Statements’ (including e.g. irony) is excluded to ensure clear allocations. Using this approach, no statement is made regarding ethical categorization at this point, e.g. classifying both *criticism of anti-Semitism* and *criticism of social security* as negative sentiments. This allows for an exploration of the AfD’s framing and connotation processes detached from the content alignment of their discourse contributions. As Figure 6 shows, the AfD is significantly prioritizing negative sentiments, with roughly 70 percent (353 aggregated references) expressing damnation of themes without posing alternatives or giving a comprehensible argumentation for posed criticism. Only 30 percent (152 aggregated references) are endorsing or productive contributions.

⁵ Threshold due to technological constraints

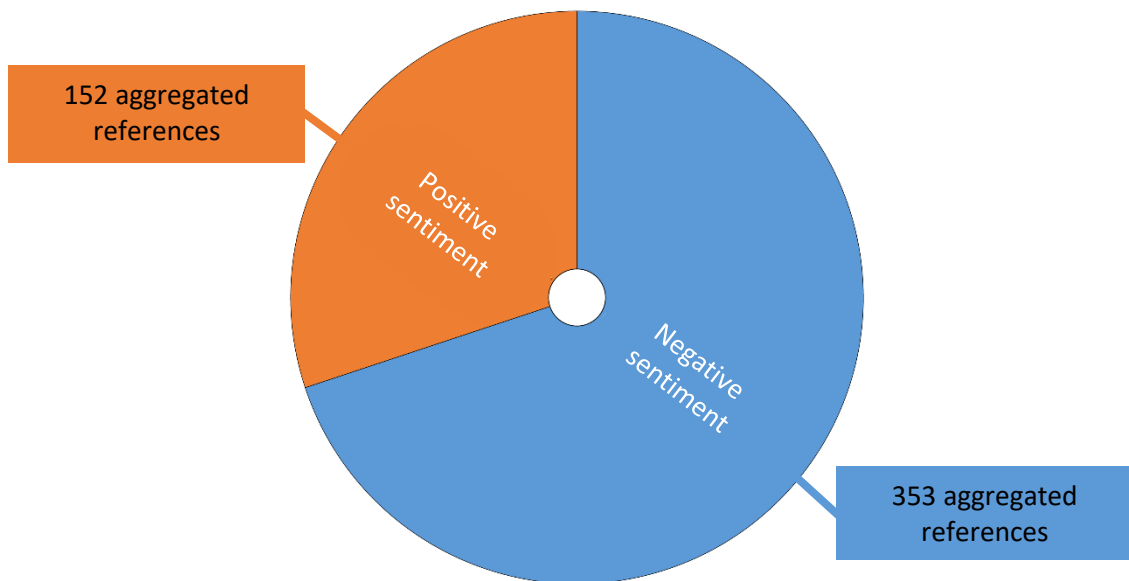


Figure 6: Sentiment connotation of AfD discourse contributions. Out of 505 aggregated references classified according to sentiments, 69,9% (353) of aggregated references show a negative sentiment (being against a topic, without posing alternatives or giving an objective, comprehensible argumentation for the criticism) whilst 30,1% (152) of aggregated references display a positive sentiment (endorsing, productive or constructive contributions). Positive sentiments include all appearances of AfD as an active political actor.

This impression of the AfD hardening fronts by contributing destructive criticism rather than constructive solutions is further intensified when looking at the content nodes. To visualize the extent of negative sentiment within their discourse contributions, all content child nodes which cover criticism for themes are gathered under the temporary parent node ‘Criticism’. Displaying all content nodes in a pie chart (see Figure 7), the contrast becomes clear to the reader’s eye, as with 537 aggregated criticism references, more than half (57%) of the identified themes within AfD’s discourse contributions are critiques.

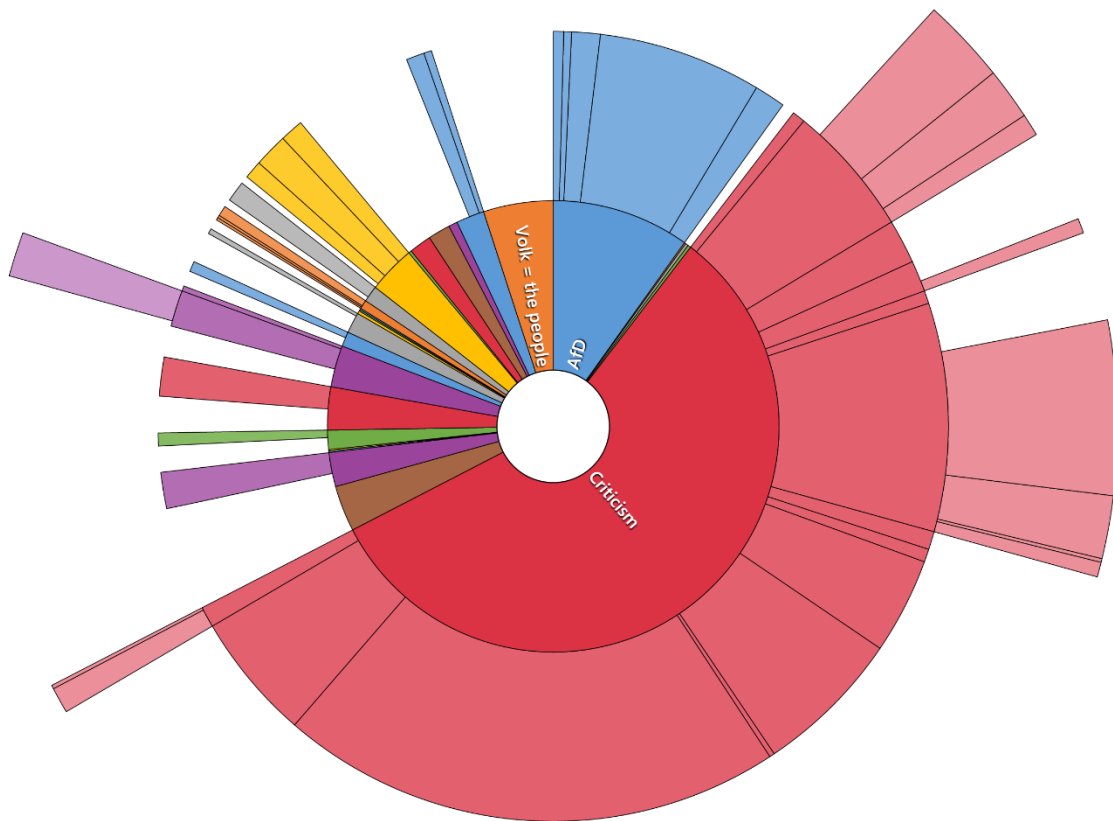


Figure 7: Pie chart of content themes (aggregated references in nodes), with the temporary parent node 'Criticism' encasing all child nodes covering criticism. From a total of 942 references, 57% (537 aggregated references) are coded for criticism. Second largest theme group is the parent node AfD, with 9,8% (93 aggregated references). A detailed table of the figure is provided in Annex 4.

Therefore, the second finding of text analysis is the realisation that Framing Processes of the AfD are dominated by being *against*. Whilst I will show in the next step against what their contributions are formulated, it is significant at this point to realize the apparent connotation that the simple act of being *against* is important to the AfD. This allows to appeal towards a broader audience, as many citizens feel heard by the AfD in the variety of criticism, might it be criticising old-age poverty, nurses salary, raised taxes or gender studies (see Annex 4).

In a third step, I bring these two results together to identify AfD's self-conception and determine the key value and ideological belief of the AfD. Relating the child nodes under the temporary parent node 'Criticism' to the overview of main themes (Table 3), 6 out of the 8 main themes are identified to also be the main areas of critique (see Figure 8).

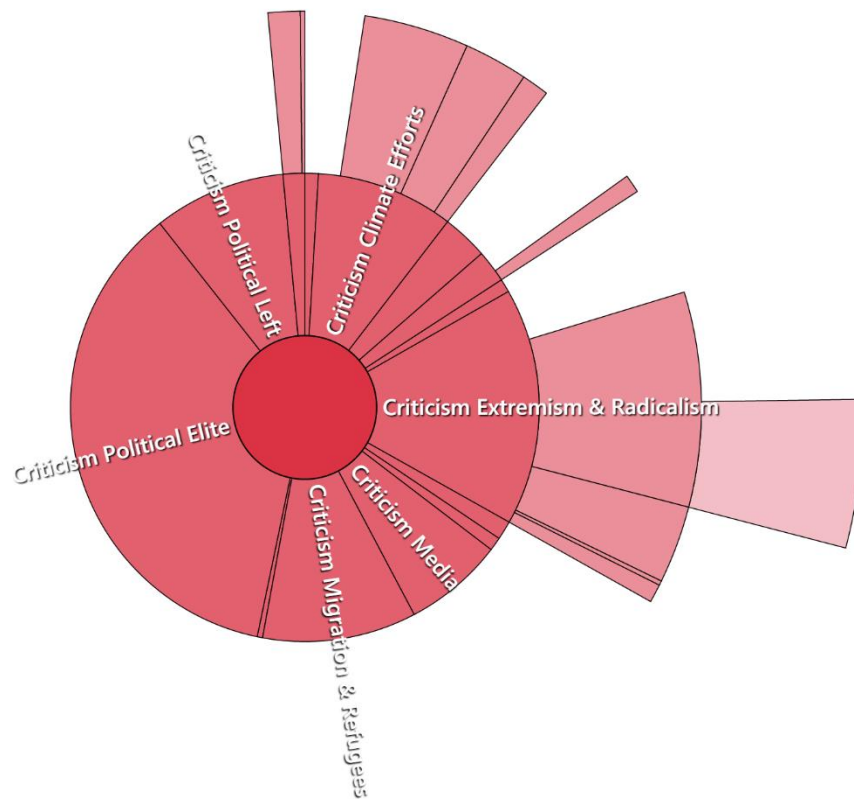


Figure 8: Composition of child nodes under the temporary parent node 'Criticism' related to main themes. Six of the eight main themes are also the main focus of criticism, in ranking order: *Political Elite (36%), Extremism & Radicalism (16%), Migration & Refugees (11%), Climate Efforts (9%), Political Left (9%) and Media (7%)*. From the remaining two main themes (*AfD & International Politics*), only the child node 'Criticism EU' (3%) is present as a significant theme. Full corresponding data overview is provided in Annex 5.

This finding identifies AfD's most important topic to not only be the political elite but more specifically *criticism towards the political elite*. Furthermore, plotting a matrix of the remaining 5 dominant criticisms nodes with the parent nodes of 'Political Elite' and 'AfD', the results display a strong overlap of the criticisms child nodes with the parent node 'Political Elite' and a significantly smaller connection to the parent node 'AfD' (see Figure 9). The most visible connection of a criticism node to the parent node 'AfD' displays the 'Criticism Extremism & Radicalism'. This is due to the aforementioned antisemitic neo-Nazi attack in Halle on Jom Kippur on the 9th of October 2019 and must be interpreted with caution. As large parts of the public were drawing correlations between AfD introducing nationalistic frames into the public discourse and the attack, the AfD heavily emphasized their distinction from antisemitism.⁶ This presents a delicate nuance in the discourse: A point of public critic congruent to the collected data formulates that the AfD intensively criticised antisemitism but refrained from condemning neo-Nazism or right-wing extremism with the same fervour. Some of the data collected in this thesis even evinced a correlation of the AfD using this attack to place Islamic anti-

Semitism in the discourse, therefore detaching the attack from its right-wing origin and redirecting it towards an anti-Muslim discourse. Dismissing the neo-Nazism that characterized this attack can be interpreted as silent support or tolerance.

Apart from this theme, the remaining results show that the AfD is associating criticism with the political elite, making the establishment responsible for grievances of current sociopolitical challenges such as migration and threats of extremism and radicalism.

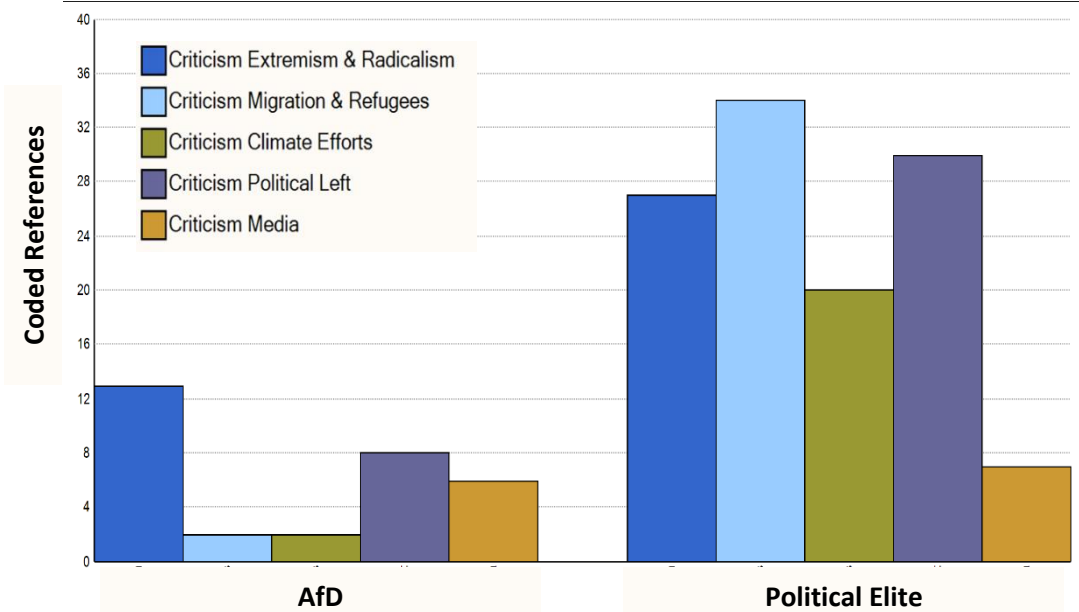


Figure 9 Five remaining dominant criticism nodes plotted in relation to parent nodes 'AfD' and 'Political Elite'. Political Elite is significantly stronger associated with the main criticised themes.

The strong correlation in Figure 9 between 'Political Elite' and 'Criticism Political Left' (being the second most dominant overlap) shows another frequently used framing of the AfD: narrating the entire political elite as the "Political Left", including the whole spectrum of the parliament from CSU to the party The Left (Die Linke) (see Figure 1). In numerous cases, this is not based on explicitly left positions within the spectrum, but rather their narrative that *all* current politics are left. This serves their framing that the *old political elite (Altparteien)* is one single entity, giving no possibility to implement different political positions within this block of "Eco-socialists" (Meuthen, 2019, p.1). Just as they negatively judge the political elite for perceived left political action, they also repeatedly criticize climate policies, which they deem to be out of proportion, too expensive and socially unjust (see Figure 10).



Figure 10: Word cloud to the child node *Criticism Climate Politics*. Negative framings such as *ecosocialists* (Ökosozialisten), *elimination* (Abschaffung), *increased price* (verteuert), *climate refugees* (Klimafüchtlinge), *ideologists* (Ideologen) or *climate planned economy* (Klimaplanwirtschaft) represent the negative connotations through which the AfD is associating climate policies with socialism and aforementioned dominant criticism themes.

To summarize the findings for framing processes and thus answering research question 1a, the AfD is (1) establishing criticism of the political elite as their main topic, (2) overall prioritizing negative sentiments and critics in order to expose perceived public grievances, especially towards the political elite and (3) mainly constricting all established political parties to a single entity of an old political elite, assigning left political views to this entity as well as unreasonable and unjust climate politics.

The shared common cause of the AfD as a social movement is therefore formulating a counterweight to the established parties. With migration and climate efforts as two of their main criticism themes, the AfD is positioning themselves against political efforts. Instead of allying or associating themselves with parts of the elite or introducing own constructive approaches, the strength of their framing lies in this dichotomy, contrasting the political elite as one entity against the Alternative for Germany.

5.2. Mobilizing Structures: Benefits of Being a Party on Social Media

The second step of understanding AfD as a social movement requires to analyze the mobilizing structures they are using and the discourse practices they decide to engage in. At this stage, two aspects are closely examined: the implications of Twitter as a political discourse platform and the characteristic of AfD as an official political party within the context of social movements.

The data collected and the level of discourse practice in this research is focusing on the role of political discourse contributions of the AfD via the social media and micro-blogging platform Twitter. With increasing popularity among political actors, researchers investigate the potential of this platform for political discourse, as it is intensively used by political figures to create campaigning content that reaches out to their followers (Hwang, 2013; Stier et al., 2018). Therefore, it seems logical that the AfD as an official party is drawing on this resource for public communication. More explicitly though, the research from Masroor, Khan, Aib, and Ali (2019) regarding the spreading of political ideologies through political tweets on Twitter is insightful for the context of the presented case. In their study, the researchers found that the political discourse on Twitter furthers ideological binary group identity ('We' vs. 'Them'), by choice of topic, framing, and interaction with discourse participants. Stimulating a cognitive binary by contrasting positive self-presentation with negative other-representation feeds into the goal of political dominance, ensuring public support - and thus legitimization - of political actions. Even more concretely, Van Kessel and Castelein (2016) demonstrated that opposition politicians, especially within populist parties, use Twitter to nurture their permanent campaign of challenging political elites and their dominant political regime of mainstream parties. This discourse practice matches perfectly congruent AfD's identified framing presented in the previous paragraph, as such binary group identity is found within AfD's dichotomy between them and the political elite. Thus, the presented specifications of Twitter as a discourse platform prove it to be a fitting platform for the AfD to influence the political discourse in order to establish their ideology as a dominant framing in the public's consciousness.

As an additional distinct feature of Twitter to understand AfD as a social movement, the non-existing hierarchy of a social media platform allows everyone to engage in a many-to-many discourse using *hashtags* (e.g. #Staatsversagen [government failure]), *mentions* (tagging other discourse actors by using their respective handle, e.g. @Alice_Weidel for the federal spokesperson Alice Weidel) and *retweets*. This mirrors the decentralized characteristic of multi-levelled social movements (Tilly et al., 2020). Interpreting the analysis results regarding the discourse practice on Twitter, AfD exhibits an extensive understanding and successful application of mobilizing structures on Twitter. Referring to the initial overview of data collection (Table 2), they regularly make use of the retweet function, with roughly a quarter of their discourse contributions (24%) being retweets. This shows a connection and interaction with like-minded discourse actors, widens their audience, and allows to easily distribute content that supports the movements framing. Furthermore, especially federal spokesperson Jörg Meuthen provides a clear example of mobilizing structures, as he perceives the platform's limitations and transforms them into a strength of his discourse practice. Previous studies emphasize that expression on Twitter does not offer as strong linguistic characteristics as e.g. traditional press

releases, producing linguistically *noisy, unstructured data*, calling for a more lightweight discourse analysis (Mukherjee & Bhattacharyya, 2012). This is intensified by the unregulated decentralized discourse participation on the platform mentioned above. AfD's federal spokesperson Jörg Meuthen acknowledges these limitations by regularly providing more detailed text contributions on Facebook, which are then distributed with a succinct teaser on Twitter. Furthermore, evaluating the child node 'AfD Media Presence', the AfD, especially Meuthen, is acknowledging the synergy between social media platforms, encouraging their Twitter followers to also interact on additional social media platforms or channels (see Table 4).

Table 4: Child node 'AfD Media Presence' references regarding AfD Social Media Channels (all translated)

AfD (deputy) federal spokesperson	Child node 'AfD Media Presence' References Regarding AfD Social Media Channels												
Beatrix von Storch	In the future, you can be informed about my work directly and immediately via my new #Telegram channel. You can join my official Telegram channel at the following invitation link: https://t.co/YcjrD6JZP8 #Meinungsfreiheit #AfD #NetzDG https://t.co/FtoG2IMXYC												
Jörg Meuthen	<p>++ Thank you very much: We are 500,000! ++ Our citizens' party #AfD has cracked a mark on #Facebook that no other party has so far reached in: We are happy to have an incredible 500,000 subscribers! A great omen just before the # LtwTh19! https://t.co/3cSqeyPGSy https://t.co/lw9kbquBIT</p> <p>Thank you for 5,000 subscribers on #Instagram! Are you already on board? Don't miss out on interesting insights behind the scenes of the EU Parliament: https://t.co/Gc5HIDR0jx Other channels: Facebook: https://t.co/0ms7UnmcNT YouTube: https://t.co/ICJ74wRACw https://t.co/P2KzCpU5BX</p> <p>Do you already know the Twitter accounts of our 11 MPs in the #EUParlament (from left to right):</p> <table border="0" data-bbox="475 1339 1220 1552"> <tr> <td>→ @ Gunnar_Beck</td> <td>→ @ Joerg_Meuthen</td> </tr> <tr> <td>→ @ Nicolaus_Fest</td> <td>→ @ C ____ Anderson</td> </tr> <tr> <td>→ @ GuidoReil</td> <td>→ @ Joachim_Kuhs</td> </tr> <tr> <td>→ @ BernhardZimniok</td> <td>→ @ BuchheitMarkus</td> </tr> <tr> <td>→ @ KrahMax</td> <td>→ @ LarsPatrickBerg</td> </tr> <tr> <td>→ @ Sylvia_Limmer</td> <td>https://t.co/RGyjD3gczn</td> </tr> </table> <p>Subscribe to our YouTube channel NOW https://t.co/ICJ74wRACw https://t.co/pd5WuUZvxW https://t.co/Oe3bCdRLXW</p> <p>++ Complete success: #AfD stronger than all other parties together on #YouTube! ++ Don't have a YouTube subscription yet? https://t.co/ql7eaZnDlw YouTube channel of @AfDimEUParl: https://t.co/zxOGsAGN0Y YouTube channel of @AfDimBundestag: https://t.co/eH6Nqwm9vn https://t.co/7RjHl9Evli https://t.co/NiZ0gaVeMX</p>	→ @ Gunnar_Beck	→ @ Joerg_Meuthen	→ @ Nicolaus_Fest	→ @ C ____ Anderson	→ @ GuidoReil	→ @ Joachim_Kuhs	→ @ BernhardZimniok	→ @ BuchheitMarkus	→ @ KrahMax	→ @ LarsPatrickBerg	→ @ Sylvia_Limmer	https://t.co/RGyjD3gczn
→ @ Gunnar_Beck	→ @ Joerg_Meuthen												
→ @ Nicolaus_Fest	→ @ C ____ Anderson												
→ @ GuidoReil	→ @ Joachim_Kuhs												
→ @ BernhardZimniok	→ @ BuchheitMarkus												
→ @ KrahMax	→ @ LarsPatrickBerg												
→ @ Sylvia_Limmer	https://t.co/RGyjD3gczn												

This synergy is especially useful for their strategy as presently, the AfD’s most popular channel is still Facebook, with Twitter only beginning to catch up. In this way, the AfD can use the benefits of Twitter as a platform for political discourse whilst drawing from their reach of other social media channels. As expressed by Meuthen (see Table 4), AfD runs the by far the most successful Facebook account among all political parties of the German federal parliament, having more than twice the number of supporters on the social media platform compared to any other party (see Figure 11).

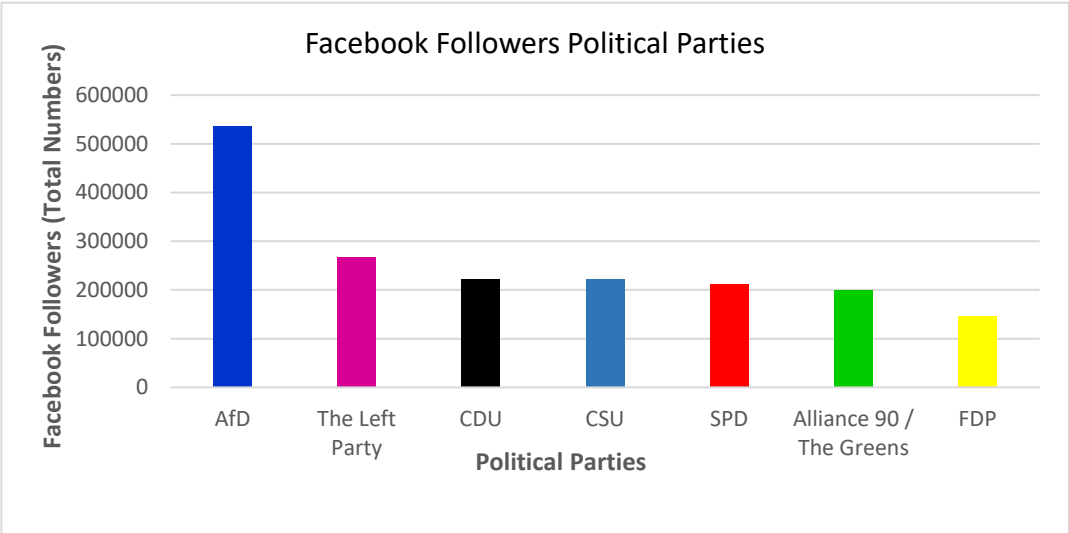


Figure 11: Total Facebook followers of all parties of the federal parliament. With almost 537 000 followers, the AfD has more than twice the number of supporters on the social media platform compared to all other parties (own research).

As this chapter has shown, the successful use of social media platforms, especially Twitter, is related to the resources that AfD holds as a political party. This implication is subsequently taken one step further to answer research question 1b: Drawing on the resources they obtain as a party and seeing the distinct features Twitter offers for oppositional and populist politicians, the AfD’s most significant strength within mobilizing structures lies in their official status as a party. This means that understanding AfD as a social movement is not neglecting their political status. Much rather, it is *emphasized*, as this status allows to classify the AfD as an *institutionalized social movement*. Official AfD politicians representing the movement within the parliament are the professional executives for the movement’s aims and demands (McAdam et al., 1996). This allows for movement participants to distribute, like and comment on official AfD discourse contributions within a wide, well-connected network. It puts the AfD in the powerful position to use political instruments while communicating as a social movement. This communication is not limited to the social media discourse, but also in constant interaction with media and parliament dynamics, where the status of the party as an ISM ensures that space for their contributions is made within the discourse. Having hereby identified the framing as well as the mobilizing structures of the institutionalized social movement AfD, the political opportunity is discussed.

5.3. Political Opportunity: Economic Inequality Creating a Vacuum of Social Solidarity

As a third and final step, I analyze the sociocultural processes to carve out the political opportunity that gave room for the AfD to emerge as an ISM. To do so, I provide a succinct retrospect of German political development. When looking at the German political landscape in the last decade, the absence of a strong opposition becomes apparent. The two largest centrist citizen parties, CDU/CSU and SPD, form the government as a grand coalition since 2013, leaving the opposition to a group of several small parties with contrasting views, who remained unable to form a strong oppositional alliance (Caspari, 2016). This signified strong and long-term stability of the political elite, but also fostered the citizens' impression of having minimized impacts on the political development since new political majorities seemed unfeasible. This becomes problematic when the political course offered by the available political organs is not meeting the public needs anymore. According to French economist Thomas Piketty (2020), this clash is exactly what is presently happening under the current globalized, neoliberal conditions within the EU. German citizens are not feeling safe within the system they are living in. Instead, they are fearing for their place within society.

In his most recent publication '*Capital and Ideology*' (2020), Piketty explicitly dismantles neoliberal reasoning. Whilst he acknowledges the general improvement of indicators such as global health and education, he points out that these changes, even if they appear as a positive development on their own, overshadowed *the rise of inequalities*. Developments such as income per capita rising do seem impressive on a global scale until they are contrasted with the ever-increasing gap of global economic inequality (Greig, Turner, & Hulme, 2007). For the past forty years, parallel to the establishment of a global neoliberal market, socio-economic inequality continued to rise throughout the globe (D. Harvey, 2007). Reaching fatal dimensions, the capitalistic system presently displays a grossly imbalanced distribution of wealth, with the world's richest one percent receiving 82% of the generated wealth (Alejo, Pimentel, Aymar, & Lawson, 2018). Real challenges of social mobility, ever-growing unproportionable wealth and income gaps, as well as the marginalization of minority groups, intensify the systemic experienced economic inequality (Piketty, 2020). Mirroring this reality to the neoliberal concept of meritocracy, inequality is insufficiently addressed solely with a realistic correlation to one's personal skills and performance. The range of neoliberal explanations hence falls short to justify these experienced inequalities (Piketty, 2020).

Thus, the premise of neoliberal meritocracy is balancing on thin ice, and this dawned into the public consciousness. The intense economic inequalities break the promise of neoliberalism, as citizens do not follow the belief of having an equal chance anymore, and thus, questioning their legitimization within the socio-economic system. Durkheim (1960 [1933]) formulates this feeling as *anomie*, which is felt as a lack of security, not belonging to and disconnecting from society. He predicted such tensions

to form when a society and its social, economic, and political parameters change rapidly and fundamentally, as it is the case within neoliberal globalization. Within this society, insecurity towards other citizens rises. Durkheim's fundament of an equal society with organic solidarity is crumbling, replaced by the feeling of anomie in a society of divide. The AfD used this opportunity to foster the feeling of anomie. A leapfrogging development in this political opportunity was the so-called refugee crisis starting in 2015. The narrative of the AfD already before included a nationalistic and anti-European stand (Bieber, Roßteutscher, & Scherer, 2018), but through the refugee crisis, they had the chance to portray a much more simplistic image of 'we' vs. 'the others'. Through the framing of the AfD, anomie in the public discourse is not solely narrated in economic terms, but instead could be felt in multiple spheres, such as the fear of losing one's job to refugees (economic concern) or anomie due to cultural foreign commingling (cultural concern). In this severe situation, citizens are in crucial need of answers from the political elites, who need to prove their role as servants of society by picking up the public grievances (McAdam et al., 1996). The public grievance of socio-economic inequality must be alleviated by the political elite, through regulatory policies or systemic change.

In Germany, as in several other industrialized nations, the political elite so far failed to provide sufficient alleviations of this sort, indicated by the continuous persisting economic inequality in Germany: With 10 percent of the highest income gainers accumulating 40 percent of total income whilst the lower half of the German population only holds 17 percent of the total income, the gap is roughly as large as it was in 1913 (Alvaredo et al., 2018). Answering research question 1c, the broken promise of neoliberalism arrived in the German public's consciousness, as citizens are exceedingly not willing to accept the experienced anomie anymore. Increasing parts of the public desire improvements towards economic equality, an alternative to the insufficient current status quo. As an inevitable consequence to the insufficient responses of the dominant political regime, the answer of the public to political elites ignoring their needs is the AfD emerging as a citizen's social movements. The AfD is picking up the grievances of the public and use the existing political vacuum of social solidarity to embed their ideology in the public discourse. This is the political opportunity the AfD used to reinvent their Eurosceptic party as a right-wing ultra-nationalistic institutionalized social movement.

To summarize the results and succinctly answer research question 1, the AfD shows several characteristics of an institutionalized social movement. In sustained interaction with the political elite, present challenges within international politics are criticized, including migration and refugees as well as climate change. Through their framing, the AfD is characterized as the alternative to these challenges, not by giving concrete solutions, but rather just by expressing disapproval to the current politics. Mobilizing structures are used within the discourse practice especially on social media, where the status of an ISM allows for an in-depth and far-reaching connection between social movement

participants. The political opportunity that allows the AfD to emerge with this limited framing is the insufficient addressing of economic inequality as a public grievance by the political elite. In the following discussion, I will emphasize on the most reasonable leverage point to enter and shrink this vacuum of social security to oppose the AfD's strategy with an answer based on international solidarity.

6. Outlook: Be Better Than Nationalism

Through the sociocultural analysis, it becomes apparent that a nationalistic, cultural framing of the AfD would not solve economic inequalities if implemented. In a potential scenario where AfD's ultra-nationalistic ideology become the dominant political course, it continues to exist in a neoliberal realm, as the AfD is offering no alternative on the economic path, but rather wants to intensify neoliberal practices (Alternative für Deutschland (AfD), 2016). As the spotlight would not be on cultural divide anymore to narrate explanations for economic injustices due to a retreat towards a nationalistic society, the actual material economical divide between wealthy and impoverished would continue to exist, within Germany as well as in the broader context of the EU. This underlines how the AfD's ideology is not only ethically, but also practically flawed, not providing any salvation to the public grievances they claim to represent. No matter how intensively the social movement frames the discourse with a cultural narrative – to reach its objective of reducing anomie and providing economic security, the answers remain socio-economic equality, security and from that, emerging social solidarity.

Taking the findings one step further and linking it back to Piketty's argumentation, an even more distinct leverage point to the political vacuum in which the AfD thrives is detected: The actual answer to public grievances lies in the approach of sustainable development, creating a "new universalistic, egalitarian narrative, a new ideology of equality [and] social ownership" (Piketty, 2020, p.3). In times of post-truth, just leaving the research at the conclusion that the AfD's framing is limited to being against political developments without providing constructive solutions will not be enough. Discouraged by the public grievances, AfD sympathizers are likely to follow their path of just opposing the political elite without a real constructive alternative, pushing Germany further in a state of populism, divide and non-collaboration. The leverage point, as simple as it sounds, must therefore be to efficiently *address* the public grievance that sends citizens into the arms of the right-wing social movement. To put it frankly, an actual and functioning material response must be given to a material problem. Properly addressing the gross economic inequality would enable the political elite to fill the vacuum that the AfD is currently taking up, by providing socio-economic justice – a reform from above preventing the revolution from below. This is the leverage point where seeing the AfD as a social

movement rather than just a party provides a powerful tool to significantly lessen their relevance. If the goal of its supporters, finding justice for their economic grievances, is met, the AfD is likely to reduce in relevance and numbers.

If on the contrary no answer will be given, it is a high possibility that more and more citizens will continue to follow the insufficient ideology of the AfD, being desperate for an acknowledgement of their grievances. Answering research question 2, this thesis therefore argues that it is upon the political elite to develop a counter-hegemony with strategies finding a material response that gives a better answer than AfD's cultural framing. If the political elite is not able to do this, it could have radical, fatal impacts on society. The argument for the need of developing a counter-hegemony is closed by a quote from Piketty, who put into warning words the risk of missing the moment of needed change:

“If we do not radically transform the present economic system to make it less inegalitarian, more equitable, and more sustainable, xenophobic ‘populism’ could well triumph at the ballot box and initiate changes that will destroy the global hypercapitalist, digital economy that has dominated the world since 1990.”
(Piketty, 2020, p.2)

7. Conclusion

The thesis concludes with a retrospect on my research. Preceding the analysis, the crucial need for international solidarity to face global challenges was established. Contrasted with reality, the absence of such solidarity was related to emerging right-wing tendencies, concretised to the German context with the Alternative for Germany. Using social movement theory in a threefold structure with critical discourse analysis, a successful examination of the AfD as an institutionalized social movement was conducted to understand the relationship between absent international solidarity and present intensifying national tendencies. Interpreting AfD's discourse contributions on the political discourse platform Twitter, I identified economic public grievances insufficiently addressed by the political elite creating a vacuum. With their cultural response, the AfD cannot solve this material public grievance of economic inequality. Thus, the ideology of the AfD is dismantled as flawed and unfit to meet the citizens' demands. These findings firstly carve out providing economic equality as the leverage point through which the political elite can significantly lessen AfD's relevance. They secondly show that when economic equality is ensured, fostering international solidarity becomes feasible, which is a prerequisite for sustainable development. Calling for a counter-hegemony informed by motives of sustainable development, my twofold thesis outcome thus not only allows for a promising approach to further international solidarity for sustainable action but it at the same time also proves social movement theory to be an efficient perspective diminishing right-wing nationalistic tensions. This is an homage to the power of and its contribution to the field it is authored in - sustainability science.

References

- Alejo, D., Pimentel, V., Aymar, I. M., & Lawson, M. (2018). *Reward Work, Not Wealth*. In O. International (Ed.). Oxford: Oxfam GB.
- Alternative für Deutschland (AfD). (2016). Programm für Deutschland. *Das Grundsatzprogramm der Alternative für Deutschland*. In A. f. D. (Partei) (Ed.).
- Alvaredo, F., Piketty, T., Saez, E., Chancel, L., & Zucman, G. (2018). *World Inequality Report 2018*. World Inequality Lab. Retrieved January 3, 2021 from <https://wir2018.wid.world/>
- Belina, B. (2019). *Political geography lecture: Social forms, spatial forms, and the New Right. Celebrating Capital at 150 and explaining the rise of the AfD*. Political Geography.
- Benford, R. D., & Snow, D. A. (2000). FRAMING PROCESSES AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS: An overview and Assessment. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 26(1), 611. doi:10.1146/annurev.soc.26.1.611
- Bieber, I., Roßteutscher, S., & Scherer, P. (2018). Die Metamorphosen der AfD-Wählerschaft: Von einer euroskeptischen Protestpartei zu einer (r)echten Alternative? *Politische Vierteljahresschrift*, 59(3), 433-461. doi:10.1007/s11615-018-0103-y
- Bryman, A. (2012). *Social Research Methods* (4 ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Caspari, L. (2016). Gefangen in der Großen Koalition [Trapped in the Grand Coalition]. *ZEIT ONLINE*. Retrieved January 3, 2021 from <https://www.zeit.de/politik/deutschland/2016-08/bundestagswahl-angela-merkel-spd-cdu-sigmar-gabriel-grosse-koalition/komplettansicht>
- Castro, J. C. L. d. (2015). The consumer as agent in neoliberalism. *MATRIZES*, 9(2). doi:10.11.606
- Decker, F. (2016). The “Alternative for Germany:” Factors Behind its Emergence and Profile of a New Right-wing Populist Party. *German Politics and Society*, 34(2), 1-16. doi:10.3167/gps.2016.340201
- Decker, F. (2020). *Etappen der Parteigeschichte der AfD [Stages of the party history of the AfD]*. Retrieved January 3, 2021 from <https://www.bpb.de/politik/grundfragen/parteien-in-deutschland/afd/273130/geschichte>
- Deutscher Bundestag. (2020). *Distribution of seats in the 19th German Bundestag*. Retrieved December 31, 2020 from <https://www.bundestag.de/en/parliament/plenary/distributionofseats>
- Dinan, D. (2014). *Europe Recast: A History of European Union* (2 ed.). Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Durkheim, É. (1960 [1933]). *The Division of Labor in Society*. Illinois: The Free Press of Glencoe.
- European Union [EU]. (n.d.). *EU Timeline*. The European Union through the years. Retrieved September 28, 2020, from https://europa.eu/learning-corner/eu-timeline/overview_en
- Fairclough, N. (1992). *Discourse and Social Change*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Flatschart, E. (2016). Critical Realist Critical Discourse Analysis: A Necessary Alternative to Post-marxist Discourse Theory. *Journal of Critical Realism*, 15(1), 21-52. doi:10.1080/14767430.2015.1118588

- Fletcher, A. J. (2016). Applying critical realism in qualitative research: methodology meets method. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 20(2), 181-194. doi:10.1080/13645579.2016.1144401
- Furness, M., Lightfoot, S., Ghica, L.-A., & Szent-Ivanyi, B. (2020). EU development policy: evolving as an instrument of foreign policy and as an expression of solidarity. *Journal of Contemporary European Research*, 16(2), 89-100. doi:10.30950/jcer.v16i2.1156
- Greig, A., Turner, M., & Hulme, D. (2007). *Challenging global inequality: development theory and practice in the 21st century*: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Harvey, D. (2007). Neoliberalism as Creative Destruction. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 610(1), 21-44. doi:10.1177/0002716206296780
- Harvey, F., & Rankin, J. (2020). What is the European Green Deal and will it really cost €1tn? *The Guardian*. Retrieved December 12, 2020 from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/09/what-is-the-european-green-deal-and-will-it-really-cost-1tn#:~:text=The%20European%20Green%20Deal%20aims,and%20a%20thriving%20natural%20world>
- Hwang, S. (2013). The Effect of Twitter Use on Politicians' Credibility and Attitudes toward Politicians. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 25(3), 246-258. doi:10.1080/1062726x.2013.788445
- IPCC [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change]. (2014). Summary for Policymakers. In: *Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability. Part A: Global and Sectoral Aspects. Contribution of Working Group II to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* [Field, C.B., V.R. Barros, D.J. Dokken, K.J. Mach, M.D. Mastrandrea, T.E. Bilir, M. Chatterjee, K.L. Ebi, Y.O. Estrada, R.C. Genova, B. Girma, E.S. Kissel, A.N. Levy, S. MacCracken, P.R. Mastrandrea, and L.L. White (eds.)]. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, United Kingdom and New York, NY, USA, pp. 1-32.
- Jary, D., & Jary, J. (1991). *Collins Dictionary of Sociology*. Glasgow: Harper Collins Publisher.
- Johnston, H. (1995). A Methodology for Frame Analysis: From Discourse to Cognitive Schemata. In H. Johnston & B. Klandermans (Eds.), *Social Movements and Culture* (Vol. 4, pp. 217-246). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Kessel, S. v., & Castelein, R. (2016). Shifting the blame. Populist politicians' use of Twitter as a tool of opposition. *Journal of Contemporary European Research*, 12(2), 594-614.
- Kroh, M., & Fetz, K. (2016). Das Profil der AfD-AnhängerInnen hat sich seit Gründung der Partei deutlich verändert [The profile of AfD supporters has changed significantly since the founding of the party]. *DIW-Wochenbericht*, 83(34), 711-719.
- Kyroglou, G., & Henn, M. (2017). Political Consumerism as a Neoliberal Response to Youth Political Disengagement. *Societies*, 7(4). doi:10.3390/soc7040034
- Margaret Thatcher Foundation. (n.d.). *Interview for Woman's Own*. Retrieved December 15, 2020 from <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/106689>
- Martin, M. (2019). *Qualifying Cultural and Framing applicabilities within Sustainability Transition Frameworks*. (Master Master Thesis). Lund University, Lund. Retrieved December 6, 2020 from <https://lup.lub.lu.se/student-papers/search/publication/8986098>
- Masroor, F., Khan, Q. N., Aib, I., & Ali, Z. (2019). Polarization and Ideological Weaving in Twitter Discourse of Politicians. *Social Media + Society*, 5(4). doi:10.1177/2056305119891220

- McAdam, D., McCarthy, J. D., & Zald, M. N. (1996). *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements* (9th ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Meikle, G. (2016). *Social media: communication, sharing and visibility*: Routledge.
- Meuthen, J. H. (2019). Keine links-grüne Bevormundung mehr [No more left-green patronizing]. *The European*. Retrieved January 2, 2021 from <https://www.theeuropean.de/joerg-hubert-meuthen/die-linksradikalen-okosozialisten-regieren-in-deutschland-gewaltig-mit/>
- Mukherjee, S., & Bhattacharyya, P. (2012). *Sentiment Analysis in Twitter with Lightweight Discourse Analysis*. Paper presented at the Proceedings of COLING 2012: Technical Papers, Mumbai.
- Parsons, C. (2010). Revisiting the Single European Act (and the Common Wisdom on Globalization). *Comparative Political Studies*, 43(6), 706-734.
- Piketty, T. (2020). *Capital and Ideology*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Sangiovanni, A. (2013). Solidarity in the European Union. *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies*, 33(2), 213-241. doi:10.1093/ojls/gqs033
- Stier, S., Bleier, A., Lietz, H., & Strohmaier, M. (2018). Election Campaigning on Social Media: Politicians, Audiences, and the Mediation of Political Communication on Facebook and Twitter. *Political Communication*, 35(1), 50-74. doi:10.1080/10584609.2017.1334728
- Tarrow, S. G. (2011). *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics* (M. Levi Ed. 3 ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Taylor, S. P. (2018). Critical realism vs social constructionism & social constructivism: application to a social housing research study. *International Journal of Sciences: Basic and Applied Research*, 37(2), 216-222. Retrieved December 6, 2020 from <http://insight.cumbria.ac.uk/id/eprint/3596/>
- Tilly, C., Castañeda, E., & Wood, L. J. (2020). *Social Movements, 1768–2018* (4 ed.). New York and London: Routledge Taylor & Francis.
- United Nations [UN]. (2014). *Global Governance and Global Rules for Development in the Post-2015 Era*. United Nations Publications.
- UN. (2015a). *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. UN Resolution Document. Retrieved May 11, 2020 from http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E
- UN. (2015b). *Paris Agreement*. Retrieved September 29, 2020 from https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/english_paris_agreement.pdf
- UN. (2015c). *Paris Agreement, Chapter XXVII, 7d*. Retrieved September 29, 2020 from https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=XXVII-7-d&chapter=27&clang=_en
- Weiss, J. S. (2015). *Actors and Trends in Brazil's Anti-deforestation Policymaking Process (1979-2012)*. Center of Sustainable Development: University of Brasília.
- Wodak, R., & Meyer, M. (2001). *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*. London: SAGE Publications.
- World Health Organisation [WHO]. (2020). Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Retrieved December 20, 2020 from <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

Annex

Annex 1: Data Summary

Data Summary 31.12.2020 17:38: 2020_12_LN_MA_CDA_AFD

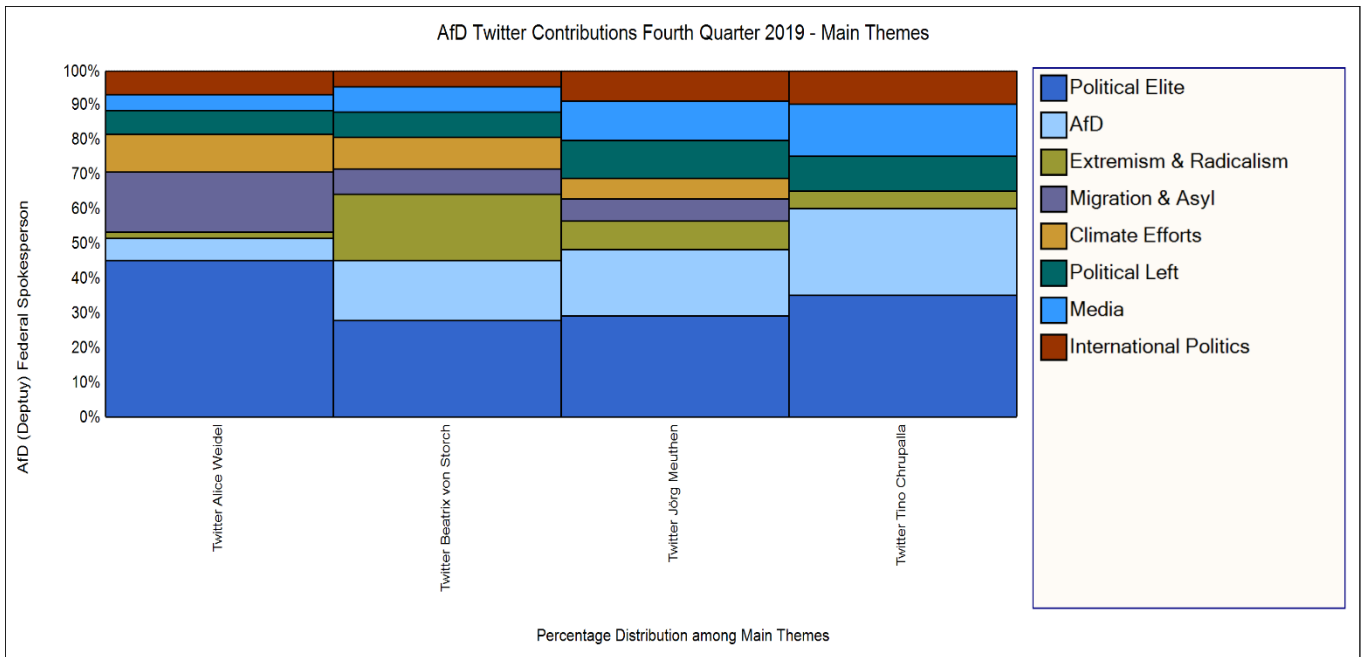
Total Word Count Data Source	Total Count Paragraphs Data Source	Number of Nodes Codes in Data Source	Coded Percentage in Data Source	Number Text References
Dataset				
Dateien\\201213_AW_Tweets_&_Retweets_Alice Weidel				
758	260	54	0,5091	515
Dateien\\201213_BvS_Tweets_&_Retweets_Beatrice von Storch				
471	354	53	0.3844	653
Dateien\\201221_JM_Tweets_&_Retweets_Prof. Dr. Jörg Meuthen				
759	339	53	0,5742	546
Dateien\\201221_TC_Tweets_&_Retweets_Tino Chrupalla				
90	30	24	0,4998	59

Annex 2: Automated Data Coding

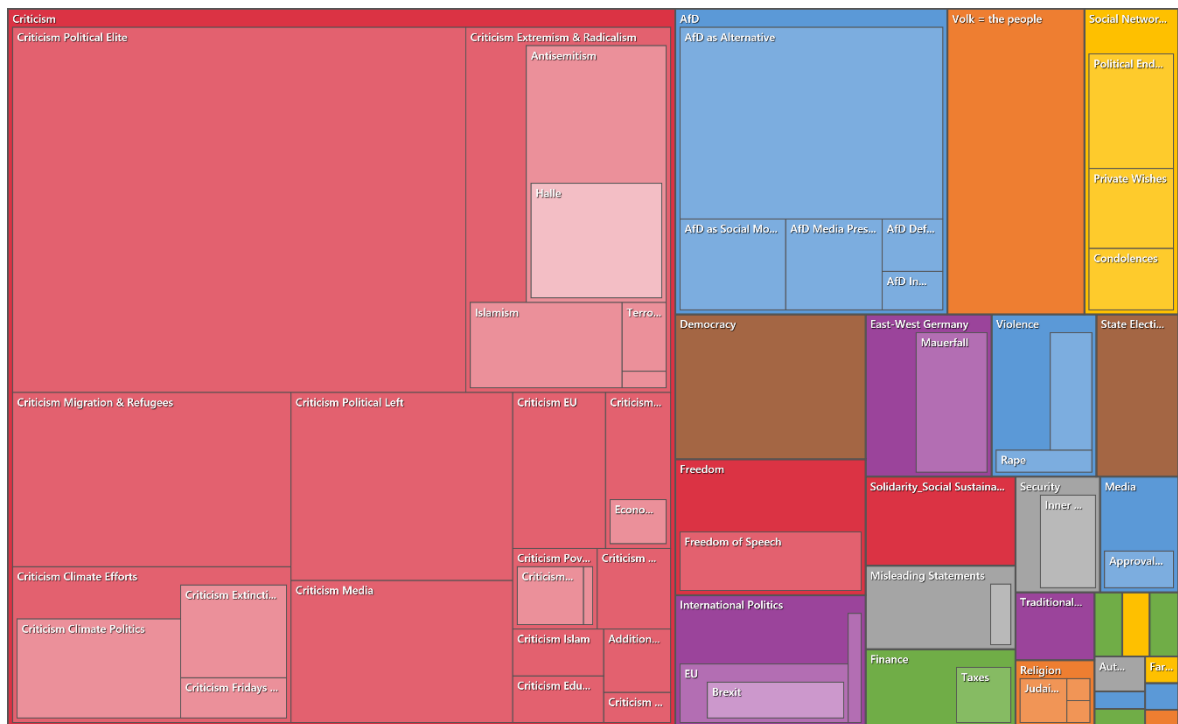
To double-check the linguistic foundation of the manual coding, an automated text search query for all nodes was performed afterwards, its parameters being

- (1) search all data
- (2) for words with the same stem (e.g. politics, political, politician)
- (3) to display a wider context
- (4) on the basis of keywords set (e.g. for Political Elite "Regierung ODER #Regierung ODER #regieren ODER regieren ODER Altpartei ODER Altparteien ODER #Altpartei ODER #Altparteien ODER Staatsversagen ODER #Staatsversagen ODER CDU ODER #CDU ODER SPD ODER #SPD ODER Linke ODER #Linke ODER FDP ODER #FDP ODER Grüne ODER #Grüne ODER Große Koalition ODER #Große Koalition ODER GroKo ODER #GroKo")

Annex 3: Main Themes Coded Tweets



Annex 4: Summary Criticism within AfD Twitter contributions



Annex 5: Examining Child Nodes of Parent Node 'Criticism'

		Content Theme	Coded References	Percentage
1	Main Theme	Criticism Political Elite	194	36%
2	Main Theme	Criticism Extremism & Radicalism	88	16%
3	Main Theme	Criticism Migration & Refugees	57	11%
4	Main Theme	Criticism Climate Efforts	51	9%
5	Main Theme	Criticism Political Left	49	9%
6	Main Theme	Criticism Media	37	7%
7	Main Theme Child Node	Criticism EU	17	3%
8		Criticism Economy	8	1%
9		Criticism Gender Studies	7	1%
10		Criticism Old-Age Poverty	7	1%
11		Additional Criticism	5	1%
12		Criticism Education	5	1%
13		Criticism Islam	5	1%
14		Criticism Economy\Economic Inequality	4	1%
15		Criticism Police	2	0%
16		Criticism Child Poverty	1	0%
		Total References	537	100%