

Bachelor Thesis (B.Sc.)

How the European Commission uses rhetoric to justify the use of the contradictory green growth strategy in the European Green Deal and thus tries to reconcile green and growth within

Student: Juliane Schon (s2626292)

University of Twente, Enschede, NL

Management, Society and Technology

Supervisors: Dr. M.R.R. Ossewaarde, Dr. P.J. Klok

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Abstract

This thesis deals with the EGD and its narrative of green and growth with the contradiction that those two paradigms entail. Via a discursive strategy to reconcile those contradictory terms, the EC places itself in a very uncomfortable situation by arguing for the green growth strategy as a solution to the climate problem despite its irreconcilable character, especially considering the deadline of 2050 for the EU to become climate neutral. The research question, *In what discursive ways does the European Commission draw the connection between the contradictory paradigms of green and growth in their strategy of green growth in the European Green Deal?* is to be answered via content analysis. It aims at reconstructing the rhetoric of the EC that they use to justify their new green growth strategy in contrast to what leading scholars claim. The EC is entrapped in its economic growth-oriented strategy that is still, even so not completely, bound to old growth structures that are not reconcilable with the ambitious climate action needed to fulfill the policy objective of the Green Deal. A specific understanding of which discursive ways the EC uses to navigate its way out of this contradiction in policies, speeches, and statements, e.g. by putting emphasis on the newness and innovative character of its growth strategy, will be developed.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Introduction

This thesis has the title *How the European Commission uses rhetoric to justify the use of the contradictory green growth strategy in the European Green Deal and thus tries to reconcile green and growth within*. The thesis is built up by the theoretical argumentation of leading scholars in the field of sustainability, the EU, and growth/degrowth that thematise the European Green Deal (EGD). The Paris Agreement states that global warming needs to be limited at least below 2C° (United Nations, n.d.). To achieve climate neutrality by mid-century as the EU has set as a policy goal, the European Commission (EC) has developed a policy strategy evolving around the EGD that focuses on economic growth while respecting ecology, but won't be sufficient to meet the climate targets as growth is prioritised over green. The aim of this thesis is to understand by what discursive ways the EC rhetorically and strategically justifies its green growth strategy which is of irreconcilable character. By doing this the EC narrates its way out of this impossible task, which is not realising the necessary emission reduction with its policy strategy.

1.2. Background

The EC released its ambition to follow the Paris Agreement with the EGD in 2019. It is a strategic plan followed by different policy documents like the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030, or the new Circular Economy Action Plan. The EC aims at reducing greenhouse gasses (GHGs) by 50% up to 55% by 2030, and to be net-zero by 2050, meanwhile decoupling resource use from economic growth to be able to grow its economy without exploiting the earth any longer. Its main strategy is new green growth. This entails greening the economy while still striving for economic growth with investments in renewable energies, technological innovations for fewer emissions, better regulations, and a more resource-efficient, circular economy (European Commission, 2019) to use fewer new resources which's exploitation harms the earth. However, e.g. Eckert and Kovalevska (2021) or Hickel and Kallis (2019) explain that economic growth will have the consequences of an increase in resource need as well as lead to emitting too many emissions. The EC itself states in the EGD that "current policies will only reduce

greenhouse gas emissions by 60% by 2050” (European Commission, 2019a, p.4). This shows that there is a disparity between economic growth and nature. The EC acknowledges the insufficiency of the policy instruments with the deadline of 2050 and puts itself in a difficult position in reaching the policy objective with its new growth strategy. The EC tries to reconcile the relationship between green and growth with its rhetoric although it is conceived as something irreconcilable by many scholars as will be outlined in the theory.

The core of this research paper will be on clearing up the narrative the EC uses in its Green Deal. The terms green and growth are said to contradict each other by many scholars (Ossewaarde & Ossewaarde-Lowtoo, 2020; Palahí & Hetemäkli, 2020; Eckert & Kovalevska, 2021). The aim here is to reconstruct the discursive ways the EC uses to undermine reason and justification for still sticking to growth prior to green in its policy strategy although the policy objective won't be met.

1.3. Research Question

A more radical transformation to reach the goal of the Paris Agreement and contribute to stopping temperature rise is required by the EC. Policymakers chose the new growth strategy in the EGD knowingly that it cannot fulfill its policy objective as it is bound to old institutional and power structures that go against proper climate action (Ossewaarde & Ossewaarde-Lowtoo, 2020). Acknowledgment for transformation exists but apparently not the capacity and power. Hence, the research's societal relevance is that urgency in re-formulating current climate politics together with reforming power structures is necessary as green growth strategies are outdated (Hickel & Kallis, 2019).

The scientific relevance is in contributing to the current debate around the EGD and its new growth strategy. As the EU is one main polluter, it is necessary to discover its 'newness' and which powerful structures stand behind it. The scientific issue here is to reconstruct how the EC tries to reconcile the irreconcilable in green growth rhetorically to convince of its application. With this strategy, the EC is doing something impossible and talking its way out of the dilemma of sticking to growth while in climate crisis.

To grasp the contrary messages that are entailed in the strategy and to find out about the justifications for the presented connection of green and growth in the EGD and its legislative successors, as well as

examine reasons for the impossible task of reconciliation of green and growth by the EC, the following research question has been established. *In what discursive ways does the European Commission draw the connection between the contradictory paradigms of green and growth in their strategy of green growth in the European Green Deal?* This main research question entails the following sub-questions. *Which discursive justifications is the European Commission giving to legitimise its green growth strategy while being aware of its insufficiency to fulfill the policy objective of the necessary emissions reductions? And what do such discursive ways signify when promoting the EC's climate policy as a possible solution?* For the latter, the significance of the reasoning behind the rhetoric of defending the EC's climate policy will reveal the content influenced by power structures that the EGD follows. I try to develop an interpretive understanding following an interpretive social science approach of the transformation the EC aims at showing with their use of rhetoric but which is not inherent to the actual embodied policy strategy. Within that, as well as a hermeneutic approach focusing on the language used in the selected policy documents, statements and speeches that describe the strategy will be used. Both will contribute to the content analysis.

1.4. Research Approach

Having described the issue, the core of this research paper will be on the narrative the EC uses in its new growth strategy. That is why this study aims at discovering the content of the EGD in terms of the problematic relationship between green and growth and how this is articulated by the EC to serve as a legitimate solution to reduce GHGs to net-zero. The content analysis seems sufficient as it serves to uncover the strategy behind the constructed story by the policymakers behind the articulated message in the policy documents, speeches, and political statements. The rhetoric used by the politicians to justify certain concepts will be examined. Policymakers use their words deliberately to set a certain agenda for which this analysis will offer more insights as this policy discourse of green growth follows a certain ideology.

A critical engagement with the sustainable strategies of global governance is important to push for more ambitious policy action that is innovative and not based on outdated models that do not fulfill the needs for fighting climate change. Also, when being aware of justifications for green growth that are not stable

in terms that they do not contribute to fulfilling the policy and climate goals, this can stimulate further debate on that topic and push for a re-thinking in policy formulations. Hence, the aim of this bachelor thesis is to contribute to the existing critical engagement of the EU's climate ambitions through the analysis of the discursive ways in which it is presented and translated into a narrative. What has not been researched yet is how the EC deals discursively with that contradiction and reconciliation. By analysing the language and narrative the EC uses, more insights on the issue of the contradiction between green and growth will be given which will serve to fill a research gap.

1.5. Concluding Remarks

The EC has given itself an impossible task because it sets a tight deadline for the reduction targets but then it promotes a growth strategy that cannot realise the policy objective by then. The EC has to talk its way out of the contradiction it implemented in its policy programmes of the EGD. The discursive ways in which the EC justifies the reconciliation of the opposing green and growth will be examined in this paper with a content analysis based on the theory that follows.

2. Theory

2.1. Introduction

Given the research question, this thesis is theoretically informed by the discursive ways of how the argument of maintaining growth is articulated by the EC to serve as the right strategy to reach the climate targets, despite the counter-arguments of its contradiction by leading scholars in that field. The arguments from theory serve as a base on which the rhetoric and the arguments by the EC in favour of the new growth strategy will be analysed. The necessary emission reductions cannot be met with the growth model in operation (Hickel, 2020), hence the policy objective of the EGD will not be sufficiently fulfilled with the new growth strategy and that in full awareness of the EC. The aim of this chapter is to present the arguments of leading scholars that green growth is a contradictory concept with green and growth being irreconcilable. Each argument will be presented in a sub-chapter, which at the end refers to the key concepts entailed in the research questions. This will set a base for what will be looked at in the content analysis.

2.2. Argument One: Green traits in the economy

The first argument for green growth as a contradictory concept deals with its economic origin. It is argued that “the use of the adjective ‘green’ in relation to economic phenomena is rather just a symbolic way of drawing attention to the importance and the need to protect the natural factor in the economy” (Adamowicz, 2022, p.1). More than three decades ago, economists made the first step towards implementing the term and the implementation of ‘green’ in environmental public policy connected to the economy. This shows early awareness of the issue of climate change in public policy but with the notion of and connection to the economy. The phenomena of the green economy were strengthened after 2008th financial crisis. The green economy concept was seen as a way out of crisis and as a driving force for better global (sustainable) development with benefits for the economy (Adamowicz, 2022; Ossewaarde & Ossewaarde-Lowtoo, 2020). The original character still remains as the EC frames the new growth strategy as the EU’s solution to the climate crisis. Hence, an economic solution to an ecological problem that was caused by the focus on the economy first, is in operation. The connection

between green and growth is drawn in the way that growth that is green will help to protect the ecology. This way, the EC reconciles green growth based on the green's economic origin. This connection between green and growth can be seen as a justification as the EC sticks to known economic practices and policy concepts to solve the climate crisis. This signifies that the EC is still following the old economic power structures instead of being more innovative to prioritise ecology. This tight bond and strategy of green growth or ecology and economy reconciliation is one main argument that supports the EC's strategy and will be visible in the EC's use of words. This origin and attitude can be summarised as a growth ideology.

2.3. Argument Two: Brown/Old Growth

Argument two entails that the old brown growth power structures, i.e. by big fossil fuel firms, still prevail in present power structures. Ossewaarde and Ossewaarde-Lowtoo (2020) examine the EU Green Deal in regard to its new version of green growth compared to the green growth discourse and the degrowth model. They explore traditions of the growth strategy, the narrative and the departure from it. For a better understanding of the different types of growth-related terms, definitions are given. Brown growth is the focus on growing the economy regardless of the consequences for the environment, as it is based on fossil fuels and the exploitation of natural resources for capitalist sake. Green growth tries to depart from the 'dirtiness' of brown growth and instead aims at "greening capitalism [... by] technological innovations, green investments and green consumerism" (Ossewaarde & Ossewaarde-Lowtoo, 2020, p.2). In contrast, degrowth sweeps focus away from the economy and onto ecology with the highest amount of environmental protection (Hickel, 2020). The EC accepts that the extent of climate change the world is facing is anthropogenic (European Commission, n.d.a) which leads back to industrial economic production and consumerist activity. Still, the EC tackles further growth which is in contrast to what needs to be done to reach the climate targets. Although the green growth discourse differs from its older version, it is still based on power structures rooted in 'brown' capitalism (Ossewaarde & Ossewaarde-Lowtoo, 2020). This, too, accounts for the EC's new growth strategy, although it aims at becoming greener and more innovative, especially through technological solutions. The discursive justifications for the use of a growth strategy still are in its newness and technologically

innovative character. This argument signifies the use of old growth structures as economic growth refers to capitalism which is in its origin not green and is not serving the ecology but the economy (Hickel, 2020). The EGD strategy “displays a heavy focus on economic growth and geostrategic positioning. Energy actors from the field of renewables focus on the predominant economic model (which is more growth than green) and arrange their discursive constructs accordingly“ (Stegemann & Ossewaarde, 2018, p.31). This analysis can be transferred to the content analysis of the EGD strategy and its policies and statements. Old growth structures and actors are inherent in the EC’s narrative and make out significant parts of their strategy, which will be uncovered in their language use, now that it is known that old structures prevail. Also, in this argument, the growth ideology as a priority can be detected, and that growth, no matter how achieved, stands above environmental issues.

2.4. Argument Three: Green Growth

Argument three is connected to the growth strategy, together with technological solutionism, and its insufficiency to meet the policy objective. While the growth of the gross domestic product is said to be decoupled from resource extraction, more can be produced and consumed but no more harm to the environment is caused (European Commission, 2019a). This way, the concept of green growth as the solution to the devastating consequences of climate change meets with popularity among the actors of the current system as capitalist power structures do not need to change drastically. Considering that those power structures do not shift, green growth still covers brown growth structures mostly (Ossewaarde & Ossewaarde-Lowtoot, 2020). Eckert’s and Kovalevska’s (2021) mention the economic, growth-oriented focus of the EC due to the Union’s inherent power structures. Although, values like justice and inclusiveness are mentioned in the strategy frequently (e.g. European Commission, 2019a), the values of brown growth and their power holders that are not conform with the previously mentioned are also inherent in the EGD. In this understanding, nature is framed as a resource, hence nature serves the economy (Ossewaarde & Ossewaarde-Lowtoot, 2020). Again, growth is prioritised over green. Eckert and Kovalevska (2021) found that the ones mainly responsible for climate change – brown growth industries and powerful oligarchs – are not addressed directly in the policy document of the EGD. A passive form of avoiding to state who those “drivers of climate change and biodiversity loss”

(European Commission, 2019, p.2) are, is used. Besides the economic language, technology-focused vocabulary is used (Eckert & Kovalevska, 2021). The focus on digital technology as the EC names it a “critical enabler for attaining the sustainability goals” (European Commission, 2019, p.9) shifts the focus from political structures, societal behaviour, and human-lead enablement to the machine-held enabling power which gives the task an abstract and mechanical notion. Moreover, as a major counter-argument to a crucial part of the EGD, Hickel and Kallis (2019) find, based on empirical scientific research of several authors, that carbon off-setting technologies paired with green growth and the method of de-coupling won't be sufficient to meet the climate targets. The concept of “discursive struggle” (Eckert & Kovalevska, 2021, p. 13) can serve this theory as well as it focuses on how the message of the reconciliation of green and growth is being delivered and by which “arguments, [and] what language strategies of communication and information dissemination” (Eckert & Kovalevska, 2021, pp.13f.). Referring to technological solutionism further supports the narrative of the insufficient green growth strategy (Hickel & Kallis, 2019). Eckert and Kovalevska (2021) found that the old discourse of economic growth was used in the EGD only recreated via a different phrasing – *new* growth strategy. The EC's discursiveness is a rephrasing of old ideas with a new and technologically innovative notion to make it sound like this new growth strategy is the right solution. The justifications also refer to the solution-oriented features of technology as the right way to reduce emissions while still growing the economy (European Commission, 2019a). However, Mastini, Kallis and Hickel (2021) state that a typical Green Deal narrative is based on technological solutionism to maintain the economic structures and benefits of the market. Also, green growth is not further explained or justified by arguments that support its proof of sufficiency except for the innovative use of technologies, and methods like de-coupling growth from resource use (Leipold, 2021). Rather it is used as a given strategy, a logic, that fulfills the needs of the environment and the people, as it does for the economy. This way, the capitalist economy, and lifestyle have not to be given up. The greatest challenge of climate change is being simplified by the use of green growth as solution. The innovative character of this strategy, however, is challenged as Samper, Schockling and Islar (2021) state that the EU is using the same strategies since 2001. Still, in green growth the growth ideology is represented as track to follow and act upon.

2.5. Argument Four: Missing transformation

Argument four incorporates a needed societal or system transformation and connects to Argument Three in regard to technological solutionism. It summarises the necessity to leave the old growth structures behind for effective climate action. Incorporating citizens' inclusion and cooperation for more environmentally sustainable behaviour and reaching the climate targets a whole society is defocused (Ossewaarde & Ossewaarde-Lowtoot, 2020) although only a Green Deal for all is emphasised (European Commission, 2019a). "In line with the green growth tradition, the EU subscribes to the belief that the further technologization of Europe is the pathway for overcoming the ecological crisis" (Ossewaarde & Ossewaarde-Lowtoot, 2020, p.9). When addressing the challenges entangled in climate heating and the urgent need for action from the political and societal side, the EC "does not call for a reassessment of behavioral norms or an imminent social change" (Eckert & Kovalevska, 2021, p.2). The focus on a just transition might mirror a start of rethinking power structures and consisting oligarchical power structures within our capitalist system. "Several studies show that transitions are deeply political and involve considering the power relations and vested interests within energy systems" (Samper, Schockling & Islar, 2021, p.8). As mentioned before political structures are sidelined in the responsibility of achieving a transformation of economic behaviour to meet the emission reduction targets. The crucial aspect of the fundamental change in EU society and politics to change the growth structures of capitalism towards a more nature-aware consciousness is missing (Palahí & Hetemäkli, 2020; Eckert & Kovalevska, 2021). By not mentioning crucial reasons for change in the economic behaviour of the whole political system, power structures, and consumer behaviour, and by not naming the responsible powerholders that steer the prioritisation of growth, the EC defocusses this crucial part deliberately to keep it out of attention. Some steps towards inclusivity and justice are named repetitively (e.g. Von der Leyen, 2019c) but rather in economic terms and not to real change as the unjust power structures stay the same which leads to a further unjust temperature rise. There has not been a change in the narrative of Green Deals over the past years, and the EGD sticks to that same old narrative summarised in Arguments One to Three which does not lead to real change (Mastini, Kallis & Hickel, 2021). Hence, the narrative of economic growth and technocratic solutions remain. As the growth ideology still dominates, no real structural transformation of thinking and behaviour in industry and society can take place in policy-making.

2.6. Theoretical expectation

From the theory, the following hypothesis related to my research questions derives. The EC is entrapped in its economic growth-oriented strategy that is still, even so not completely, bound to old growth structures that are not reconcilable with the ambitious climate action needed to fulfill the policy objective of the EGD. Hence, while trapped, the EC tries to navigate its way out of this contradiction of green growth rhetorically by putting emphasis on the newness and innovative character of its growth strategy. When considering that the EC uses green growth as the new transformative strategy for reaching climate neutrality despite that it is certainly not possible on time, the discursive ways in which green growth is presented seem to be relevant for being analysed and reconstructed. “The discourse reveals a continued tolerance of socio-economic and political power structures responsible for the ecological crisis that frames the *Green Deal* in a new way rather than endorsing a true change in thinking about ecology in the EU future” (Eckert & Kovalevska, 2021, p.2). Hickel (2020) addresses the strong focus of the EU’s circular economy strategy, which is used to be able to maintain growth. But he claims that to be false green anticipation as merely recycling won’t be the solution to the current and future resource extraction and the GHGs caused by our economy while maintaining growth. It is a manifestation of the capitalist growth perspective and the decision for growth over green if anticipated the EC truly wants to achieve climate-neutrality by mid-century. The measures promoted in the EGD like de-coupling are empirically not proven to be a realistic tool to achieve the climate targets but merely an economic-led political construct used in the past and current environmental policies and Green Deals to maintain the status quo with small adjustments (Samper, Schockling & Islar, 2021). It is a narrative used by economic actors and institutions and economically trained politicians. Like them, the EU uses to some extent a “language of green in favour of ‘green economy’” (Hickel & Kallis, 2019, p.2).

2.7. Concluding Remarks

The key arguments of the leading scholars are summarised in this table.

Argument 1 ‘Green traits’ in the economy – economist origin, economically trained politicians
Argument 2 ‘Brown/old growth’ prevails – old inherent power structures
Argument 3 ‘Green growth’ & technological solutionism – insufficient
Argument 4 ‘Missing (societal/system) transformation’ – the core stays the same

The EC follows discursive strategies to justify their use of the contradiction by sticking to the old way of using the ecology to justify an economic solutionism to environmental problems. This way a downgrade of the ecology in the EGD becomes visible. Stegemann and Ossewarde (2018) find a certain emptiness in the words the EC uses and with it, creates a myth evolving around those words unconnected to meaning. The EC denies the contradiction of green growth by not going to the core problem of old growth power structures that still prevail. Narratively, technological solutionism serves to undermine the innovative and new character of the EC’s growth strategy. Furthermore, only rephrasing, the EC still makes use of old growth and power structures. The EC does not break through those structures and hence, does not promote transformation, at least not to the extent to be able to meet the climate targets.

3. Methods

3.1. Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to work out the research approach to analyse the narrative of the EC that covers the outdated growth strategy in the EGD strategy. The content analysis shall grasp the rhetoric by which the EC justifies its use of a strategy that is contested by leading scholars and insufficient in fulfilling the policy objective to net-zero by 2050. This thesis aims to reconstruct the discursive ways in which the contradictory relationship of the new green growth strategy is tried to be reconciled by the EC as the solution to the climate crisis. Considering the deadline for the EU to become climate neutral, the EC places itself in a very uncomfortable situation by arguing for the new growth strategy and its reconciliation of its irreconcilable character despite the fact justified in the theory section that the use of this contradictory strategy will not be sufficient.

3.2. Case Description

The case of this thesis evolves around the narrative of the EGD strategy. The EC, as the deliverer of the EGD strategy, justifies its new green growth as the EU's answer to the climate crisis. The EC does that although many scholars of the field explain that economic growth will lead to an increase in resources as well as emitting too many emissions. It is found that the terms green and growth contradict each other (Ossewaarde & Ossewaarde-Lowtoo, 2020; Palahí & Hetemäkli, 2020; Eckert & Kovalevska, 2021). There is a high disparity between economic growth and the protection of nature, with the latter having limits and limited capacities. The EC acknowledges the insufficiency of the policy instruments with the deadline of 2050 and puts itself in a difficult, even impossible, position in reaching the policy objective. The EC tries to reconcile the relationship between green and growth via discursive ways to argue in favour of this irreconcilable term despite the theoretical scientific background.

The core of this research paper will be on clearing up the rhetoric that the EC uses. The aim of the content analysis is to reconstruct the EC's argumentation to undermine reason and justification for sticking to growth prior to green in the EGD. Because the EC is entrapped in its economic growth-oriented strategy, it has to narrate its way out of the contradiction by putting emphasis on the newness

and innovative character of its growth strategy. Therefore, the EC makes use of specific discursive ways, a strategic and rhetorical way to justify its new growth strategy and to reconcile green and growth. Those ways signify a certain dependence on old power structures.

Timmermans, executive vice-president of the Von der Leyen commission, reaffirms: “Europe has, for now, decades demonstrated that you can grow your economy and reduce your emissions. There is no contradiction between that“ (Timmermans, 2022a). There is a contradiction between what the EC says and what has been found by leading scholars of the field. “The green growth myth [...] seems highly effective in masking contradiction and in unifying diverse and conflicting interests” (Stegemann & Ossewaarde, 2018, p.26). According to Stubbs (2001) the choices of using specific terms, phrases, symbols, and alike do matter when transmitting a message. With the outline of the arguments in mind that there is a contradiction in green growth, the analysis will reconstruct and interpret the EC’s discursive ways of justifying its use of the in itself inherently irreconcilable strategy of (new) green growth.

3.3. Method of Data Collection

The data used for the content analysis consists of 18 pieces. They range from the EGD Communication itself and its follow-up policy documents, programmes, legal frameworks/laws, action plans, to speeches and political statements by commissioners. The EGD consists of a policy set that includes, among other strategies, From Farm to Fork (the agricultural policy strategy paper), the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, and A new Circular Economy Action Plan. Those documents posed by the EC build the policy framework which is proposed to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, and the Committee of the Regions. The Climate Law which is legally binding and sets the EGD’s ambition to become climate neutral. It does not only have a legal status for the EU as a whole but for the member states as well. The speeches and political statements by responsible policymakers like Von der Leyen and Timmermans serve as representatives of the EC. They have been selected as they justify the use of the contradictory-laden strategy as the main strategy to reach the climate goals.

The data is from the years 2018 to 2022, mainly since the existence of the Von der Leyen Commission or from the Agenda for Europe when Von der Leyen was a candidate for the EC presidency. The documents vary in size, with the speeches and statements being rather short, to 20 to 30 pages of policy documents up to 80 pages for the Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on nature restoration or 393 pages for an in-depth analysis of the EC's strategy (European Commission, 2018). The authors are mainly the EC or members of the EC. The data collection has been done via desk research, mainly by selecting the documents and speeches belonging to the current Climate Action Section of the European Commission's website (European Commission, n.d.). The EGD is the core document and the within mentioned strategies have been collected to get an overview of the EC's Climate Action and its policy response to the climate crisis.

3.4. Method of Data Analysis

Given the aim of the thesis, a content analysis will be performed to grasp how the EC tries to reconcile the relationship between green and growth narratively in the deliverance of its policy framework of the EGD. Content analysis is a qualitative research method of interpretative science. By interpreting the discursive ways of delivering the policy strategy of green growth it will show how the EC uses that contradiction as a strategy even with the awareness of its non-functioning to realise the policy objective. For uncovering the rhetorical strategy that delivers the narrative of the EGD regarding the justifications for the use of the contradictory new green growth strategy that signifies inherent power structures, content analysis is the choice that fits best to answer the research questions. The research questions focus on analysing the discursive ways and justifications that signify the use of the contradictory paradigms of green and growth united in green growth. To be able to answer the main research question *In what discursive ways does the European Commission draw the connection between the contradictory paradigms of green and growth in their strategy of green growth in the European Green Deal?* within the content analysis, the two following sub-questions contribute to a deeper understanding of the EC'S rhetoric. *Which discursive justifications is the European Commission giving to legitimise its green growth strategy while being aware of its insufficiency to fulfill the policy objective of the necessary emissions reductions? And what do such discursive ways signify when promoting the EC's climate policy*

as a possible solution? The research questions focus on the discursive ways and justifications that signify the use of the contradictory paradigms of green and growth united in green growth. The analysis of the chosen formulations, half-truths, strategically deployed facts, and even myths used by the EC covering the contradiction of green growth will give insights into the rhetorical structures that are hidden in the texts that construct the reality for the base of the EGD. I expect to find the narrative of reconciling the irreconcilable relationship between green and growth in an attempt to maintain economy-prioritising structures in the current climate action. The latter is being sidelined and shall only cover the EC's urge of growing the economy by becoming a leader in technological innovations.

This analysis is accompanied by the research tool Atlas.ti which “helps [to] uncover actionable insights with intuitive and automatic research tools” (*Atlas.ti*, n.d.). Via coding, words and phrases that try to cover the contradiction between green and growth as parts of the new growth strategy will be categorized. Atlas.ti can help to filter the “primary content and essence” (Saldana, 2016, p.3) of the narrative and show if the older versions of growth strategies are still inherent in the new growth strategy and for that reason the EC tries to argue its way out. The categorisation according to the arguments laid out in the theory section helps label certain text passages and directly connect them to the arguments of the theory. This way the discursive ways of justification will be decoded (Saldana, 2016). The data will be coded accordingly to get a better overview of the EC's arguments for their growth strategy and the narrative behind the arguments. The coding scheme shall help reveal an assumed overlapping in the growth forms as there should be the justification of an old growth strategy visible when justifying the new growth. Those blurry lines between old and new growth show that the new strategy still consists of old growth power structures and the economy as the prevailing factor undermines the praised newness of the EC's strategy as justification.

Coding Scheme

<p>Codes for Argument 1 ‘Green traits’</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Economic growth2) Green in correlation to economy3) Economy as the solver of the ecology problem4) Growth prior to Green
<p>Codes for Argument 2 ‘Brown/old growth’ still prevails</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">5) Economic growth (based on fossil fuels)6) Fossil fuel firms/ main polluters7) Prevailing old power structures8) Nature as resource9) Growth in material extraction
<p>Codes for Argument 3 ‘Green growth’ and technological solutionism</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">10) Economic growth including De-coupling11) Technology as solution12) New growth strategy13) No contradiction
<p>Codes for Argument 4 ‘Missing (societal/system) transformation’</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">14) Just and inclusive/ leave no one behind15) What needs to change / should16) Growth continues17) What should not continue18) Measures are not enough19) Belief in the strategy

The coding categories derive from the arguments from the theory and refer to the key concepts entailed in the research questions. This will set a base for laying out the concepts that will be looked at within the content analysis which are contrary to the arguments of the scholars presented. This coding scheme aims to show that there are thin lines between the growth-related keywords and the new growth meaning

the EC is using in its strategy. The new growth strategy possibly does not differ from the old growth structures that much which is known to have caused the temperature rise. Also, a possible strong attachment to an economic-prioritising language and argumentation is expected to be decoded with this coding scheme. This green growth relation or correlation shall reveal how the EC narratively creates the expectation to reconcile the relationship between growing the economy and ‘saving life on earth’.

Hence, I am trying to show that the new growth strategy is only in parts new and that the EC tries to hide the old growth structures via rhetoric and discursive ways of delivering the message of the new growth strategy and can thereby possibly underline the power structures that are behind those justifications.

3.5. Concluding Remarks

With the content analysis, it will be uncovered how the EC is trying to reconcile ambitious climate action and economic growth within structures of the old, outdated growth strategies in their so-called new growth strategy to achieve the climate targets. This is done by identifying the rhetoric with which the EC argumentatively tries to navigate its way out of the contradiction of green growth by putting emphasis on the newness and innovative character of its growth strategy. Green growth that still aims at growth primarily is characterised by ideas and signified by keywords around innovative technological problem-solving. That overlaps with the EC’s new growth strategy.

First, I am going to code the data and put those into the beforementioned coding categories. With the content analysis, I expect to come to the answers to my research question and that the new growth strategy is still inhabited by old growth structures and not that new in its solutions. The economic relatedness keeps the EC trapped instead of putting forward sufficient action to achieve the climate targets and with it the policy and legislative objective of the EGD. The EC’s political language aims to reconcile the irreconcilable strategy of putting growth priorities to the green/ ecological objective and above the necessity of sufficient climate action to cover the outdatedness of its strategy.

4. Analysis

4.1. Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to outline the communication strategy the EC harnesses to justify the contradictory green growth strategy promoted in the EGD as the European solution to the climate crisis. With the content analysis of the narrative and rhetoric from the collected data, the discursive ways hidden behind formulations the EC uses for its argumentation to reconcile something irreconcilable, are untangled. It shall give an answer to how linguistically the EC aims at drawing the connection between green and growth, which is known from the theory section, as not reconcilable in regard to serving as a sufficient policy strategy when wanting to achieve drastic emission reductions in the upcoming decades. This chapter will be divided according to the sub-questions and the EC's arguments and narrative patterns found within the analysis. The first sub-question focuses on the discursive ways the EC is giving in its policies, political statements, and speeches to legitimise its strategy, knowing that it won't be enough to fulfill the policy objective. Through a buildup of argumentation in favour of that new growth strategy, the EC tries to justify via certain rhetoric their chosen solution to fight the climate crisis. The texts are scanned and coded accordingly to the arguments of the theory section and compared to them. Possible paradoxes arise or statements that are odd considering what the field of scholars suggests when aiming at climate action and emission reductions. The analysis aims at finding narrative patterns throughout the collected data. Focusing on the second sub-question in the follow-up section, this research digs one step deeper into the significations that stand behind the EC's argumentation and what it covers regarding power structures that plaster the political arena. Through analysing the textual data by asking these questions, watching out for patterns, encountering how arguments are formulated and which assertions are made frequently, and connect them to the arguments from theory accordingly, the main research question shall be answered.

4.2. A rhetoric of disconnected facts

What kind of discursive ways the EC uses within its rhetoric of the EGD strategy, will be analysed in this section. The findings will be structured into sub-sections that present the most important linguistic strategies. It becomes visible that the EC uses facts to connect them to the growth solution and make it

look as if this is an adequate response to the problems stated before, as well as inhabits an innovative character.

The EGD's economy-relatedness

First and foremost it is found that in the EGD growth is used as the way out of the green crisis although this strong connectedness to the economy and the sidelining of the ecology has led to the climate crisis in the first place. The continuation of sticking to this growth priority behaviour in policy making appears to be paradoxical, especially when considering that with the current policy measures the climate targets will be failed to meet. On the first page of the EGD, the ecological crisis is described and stated that something needs to be done to protect humankind from the disasters that it brings with it. The new growth solution for the EU is presented accompanied by the vision of a competitive economy and a leading EU position. Only in the following section the importance of the protection of nature and its citizens is stated (European Commission, 2019). The EC highlights the economic part of the solution, which is something positive to be achieved when considering Europe as a market leader and new job opportunities. That order transmits the sense that ecology is secondary to the economy – green versus growth, in which the latter wins. The solutions proposed that are part of the EC's new growth strategy, like the Emission Trading System (European Commission, n.d. b) all involve economy-based and technology-based problem-solving. The EC states that it has been proved in the past that those financial mechanisms work efficiently and sustain growth while reducing emissions (European Commission, 2020a). However, the question is if those work efficiently enough to meet the climate targets. That can be denied or at least questioned heavily, as the EC will fail to meet the emission reduction targets – which are even set into law since the Climate Law – by, so far, around 40% (European Commission, 2019). Maintaining growth (European Commission, 2019b) within the strategy is the priority and the fight against climate change seems only secondary. “To overcome this challenge [i.e. climate change], Europe needs a new growth strategy that transforms the Union into a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy” (European Commission, 2019b). This statement shows that the EC relies on the economy as a problem solver of the ecological problem and puts growth in strong correlation with the

green side, as suggested in Argument One of the theory. Adamowicz (2022) states that the connection of an ecological issue to the economy has always existed in public policy.

Throughout the strategy, the leading role of Europe as a frontrunner and as a competitive actor in the playing field plays a crucial role, as it is several times repeated (Von der Leyen, 2019d, 2020; European Commission 2019, etc.). The “industrial competitive advantage and growth opportunity“ (European Commission, 2018, p.241) seems prevailing and economic advantage is not disconnected from solving the climate crisis but focused. The economically characterised way of thinking shimmers through this competitiveness. The thought of on the one hand working together towards the goal of reducing CO_{2e} - emissions drastically is diminished by on the other hand working ‘against’ each other economically to have an advantage. That steady and heavy growth in general, whether green, resource-efficient or not, might be a driver of the green crises, is not focused on in the documents or speeches; just the transition from a linear economy that uses new resources and materials is replaced by the focus on the circular economy and reusing resources (European Commission, 2020c) but still growing. All in all, the policy strategies, especially the Biodiversity Strategy which one would assume to deal with the green part first and foremost, all evolve the economy. Ecology is strongly correlated with the economy, as proposed in Argument One (European Commission, 2020b). The economy is a constant that runs through the policy documents and statements that are evolving around the EGD like a red thread. People understand this economic leaden focus of economic growth as it is the focus that is put in policies since the existence of the prevailing capitalist society but it won’t lead to fewer emissions (Hickel, 2020).

Factfulness and promises to reconcile green and growth

Second, as the new growth strategy is not an effective solution when aiming at becoming climate neutral by 2050 ,as the EC admits itself, and as the scholars from the Theory chapter suggest not reconcilable, the EC has to overcome this in their strategy presentation. Commission President Von der Leyen and Executive Vice President Timmermans state that there is no contradiction and that ecology and economy can be reconciled (European Commission, 2020b; Von der Leyen 2019a, Timmermans, 2021). Von der Leyen claims “our goal is to reconcile the economy with our planet, to reconcile the way we produce and the way we consume with our planet and to make it work for our people” (Von der Leyen, 2019a).

Saying that there is no contradiction between green and growth is one way to persuade that there is none. It is stated as a matter of fact. There are phrases that are constantly repeated in different policy documents and speeches. For example that the EGD with its new growth strategy “gives back to nature more than it takes away” (European Commission, 2020b, p.1). Despite the Biodiversity Strategy it is mentioned in the Circular Economy Action Plan, other policy documents, and speeches, in total in seven of the selected 18 data pieces (European Commission, 2018, 2019b, 2020a, 2020c; Von der Leyen, 2019a, 2021). But how the EC will achieve this ‘giving back more’ to nature than taking while growing the economy, and not slowing down production, is not proven. The EC will use the tool of recycling material, so not as much new material as before will be used. But, as the EC claims, not for everything is recycling an option (European Commission, 2018). It is proposed that technology should help with recycling and circularity (European Commission, 2020c). But to what extent can technology help to solve the problem entirely? The experts, e.g. Hickel (2020), state that there will be a growth in material extraction. So, another contradiction regarding green and growth within the EGD strategy communication becomes visible here. Only repeating that the new growth model will actually give back to nature, does not make it realistic. It is necessary that those actions and changes happen, but if the policy strategy does not follow that lead to fulfill this remark, it is confusing to state that. It could give the impressions that steps are taken to reach this goal when in reality the steps taken are not sufficient enough to meet the policy objective. The sheer focus on the technology of recycling and an as closed as possible circular economy won’t be sufficient enough when growth is focused on and presented as the solution to the green crisis. But this way of using the rhetoric of repeating what the growth model will do (despite counterarguments), namely that the growth model is doing good to nature while maintaining the economic model with a slightly deferred resource method, tries to convince that it will be good to nature. Timmermans talks about “sustainable growth, not the traditional growth” (Timmermans, 2021). This is the same method the EC is using to convince of the functioning of the new growth model like when it is stated that in general there is no contradiction between growth and green (Timmermans, 2022a; Von der Leyen, 2019a).

Presenting green growth as the solution

Taking the insights from the section before, a narrative pattern that is frequently used by the EC can be distinguished. Facts about the climate crisis or biodiversity loss are given and described and mentioned how devastating those are (e.g. European Commission, 2020a). The goal to change the status quo and reduce emissions according to the Paris Agreement is the following in regard to how things 'should be' and what 'should change'. Then the methods that the EC proposes to help prevent more natural destruction, mainly technical and financial ones, are given. That does not mean that the suggested improvements and necessities mentioned before (how things should be ideally) are matching with what the EC proposes in regard to the effectiveness of the solution steps to achieve that ideal. Meanwhile, the importance of realising those ideas in an inclusive way is spread (European Commission, 2020b). The observed pattern is added up by the belief in the EC's new growth strategy that will make Europe a competitive economic leader in the sustainable field and will be inclusive and just, meanwhile contributing to saving the world and the next generation's life in it. So the strategy with the economic and technological solution tools, mainly by de-coupling economic growth from resource extraction while leaving no population group behind is a win-win-win situation for the economy, the people, and the planet (European Commission, 2020c). In Timmermans speech at the EU Bioeconomy Conference opening he pleads for the bioeconomy as crucial for the sustainable transition, he denies technological solutionism and refers to behaviour change. He also refers to the economic possibilities the bio-economy has to offer. In that speech, green growth seems very much reconcilable, as well as positive and inclusive for the economy and for the planet (Timmermans, 2022b). However, despite Timmerman's statements, the EC shifts the focus highly on technology and digitisation as critical enabling steps to gain more sustainability (European Commission 2019a). That is odd, as what is said by the politician is done in policy action the opposite way. It seems as if technology is the middleman of green and growth, and through innovation, that contradictory gap is being closed. Although Timmermans states that technological solutionism won't be the ultimate problem solver, what is being said, points in the opposite direction. This shows that what is being said is in contradiction to what is proposed as part of the solution.

Words decorating the strategy

Thirdly, to underline and strengthen the narrative pattern explained, the EC ‘decorates’ their strategy with phrases that are underlining the sensitivity of the EGD strategy towards nature.). Statements like “regenerative growth model that gives back to the planet more than it takes” (European Commission, 2020c, p.2) do sound reassuring and are given as there would not be a contradiction between emitting less while growing and giving back more than to take is suitable. Having the arguments of the scholars from the theory part in mind, this is not as easily possible as stated by the EC with the high emission reduction targets by 2030 and ultimately by mid-century. But this way of presenting the new growth strategy leaves one not questioning the chances of this economic/technological method as an adequate solution. In the speeches in which the EC promotes the EGD’s strategy of new growth via e.g. the bio-economy, the EC’s argumentation sounds very reasonable. Facts are stated on how bad deforestation is, that new job creations are important for a just and inclusive sustainable transition, that the switch to renewables has to happen quickly, and that climate action and policies that are also socially just like the ambition of the EC with the EGD are the right way to act politically now. All those statements sound reasonable but they are just generally given. They are empty in meaning when it comes to actions that are sufficient enough to fight climate change in time. Stegemann and Ossewarde recognise “empty signifiers like ‘sustainability’” as well as “discursive meaninglessness of ‘sustainability’” (Stegemann & Ossewarde, 2018, p.31) that are “empty in meaning, floating, subject to contestation, and typically functions as a discursive myth” (Stegemann & Ossewarde, 2018, p.26). Immediately afterwards, the new growth strategy and the economic potential with new sustainable industries, innovations, and technologies are presented (Von der Leyen, 2019a, 2020; Timmermans 2021, 2022b). With this structure, further policy documents like the Circular Economy strategy are designed. Facts and numbers about how devastating the climate crisis is and will be, are stated followed by growth ideas for example through the circular economy. These facts and information (e.g. European Commission, 2020b) distract from the insufficient proposed solutions. Also, with this structure, meaning general facts and then general solution ideas, the solution is directly set into context with the problem that is articulated scientifically with facts and figures. On that ‘scientific notion’ and ‘factfulness’, the following political

language refers to emotions, for example to the next generation and the vulnerable population (e.g. the ones that are economically disadvantaged) who are those that will suffer most from the climate crisis which makes it even more urgent to act now (Von der Leyen, 2019c). Statements like “it is our generational duty to deliver for them” (Von der Leyen, 2019b, p.5) underline the sensitive issue. Also, the reference to the “green oath to ‘do no harm’” (European Commission, 2020b) that is made in several policy action plans and speeches hints at the moral and emotional side. When someone is doing an oath as the EC does here, the oath should be faithful. Referring to this oath is another discursive way to give the impression that no harm is being done to nature, especially not with the EC’s growth strategy. It is a way of persuasion appealing to emotion.

Disconnected truths about sufficiency

Fourthly, to summarise this pattern of stating facts about all the downsides and future scenarios of climate crisis, as well as what behaviour needs to stop, and afterwards connecting this structurally to the new growth strategy, one could name this strategy stating half-truths. The EC (or in this case, the EU institutions in general) gives half-truths in that regard as a way to justify the insufficient EGD strategy. Timmermans (2022a) for example states that a contradiction between economic growth and ecological prioritisation does not exist because the EU has proven that combined both are possible. More proof like this is given, e.g. “It is possible to decouple economic growth from greenhouse gas emissions. For example, Union greenhouse gas emissions were reduced by 24 % between 1990 and 2019, while the economy grew by 60 % over the same period” (European Parliament and The Council of the European Union, 2021, p.2). When the EC states that de-coupling has worked before and that is proof of the functioning of the strategy and with it the reconciliation between green and growth (European Commission, 2020a) it is only partly true. What is not being said is that the extent of growth in percentage to the necessity of GHG emission saving and protection of environmental degradation is not proven to work (but on the contrary) when considering the EU’S climate targets for 2030 and 2050. The policy objective won’t be met with these measures and stating facts that de-coupling is a functioning method lead astray considering that the amount of emission reduction is important and not only a lower percentage of reduction. Thereby, the EC, or in this case rather the EU in general, is misleading in regard

to the functioning of the selected new growth strategy but still uses these numbers and facts to justify the use of the growth strategy by the method of de-coupling, or the Emission Trading System (ETS) (European Commission, 2020a). To rely on those methods, that are denied by leading scholars to work effectively to reach net-zero in time, is odd, when promoting the EGD strategy as new and as abandoning old structures when in reality it is not. Again, this shows a paradox between what is being said and suggested by the EC as solution and what is really necessary climate action.

4.4. By habit: Growth overrules Green

For reaching the climate targets a real structural change has to happen regarding the power structures of big industries and polluters and that is not happening with the EGD (Samper, Schockling & Islar, 2021; Palahí & Hetemäki, 2020; Eckert & Kovalevska, 2021). Also, the economically prevailing thinking in environmental policy has not changes, just the narrative of presenting it (Mastini, Kallis & Hickel, 2021; Ossewaarde & Ossewaarde-Lowtoo, 2020). This argumentation is connected to Argument Four of the Theory. But it is told that change is happening through the EC's new growth strategy and that old structures Timmermans (2021) ensures that industry should not be allowed to continue to emit too much CO_{2e} and that everyone, including businesses, should contribute their part to the clean energy transition. This sounds like a change as well as a deconstruction of old brown-growth power structures. But a contradiction lies in there which is being further discussed in the second sub-research question that examines the rhetoric in its signification.

Prosperity as the EU's rooted thinking

To start with, The EU's economic origin is rooted in brown growth going back to the European Coal and Steel Community and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). This shows when the EC refers to the market and competitiveness of European markets. The EGD focuses sternly on those as well when mentioning new sustainable market opportunities that arise within the environmental protection process. Still, the economy seems to be emphasised before the green and social side as in parts of the EU's ambitious climate action, the economy is listed first followed by the environment and the people, e.g. "economic, environmental and social objectives" (Commission, 2019a,

p.4). This rootedness in old growth is strongly connected to Argument One and Two which has not been abandoned in the EGD strategy yet (Ossewaarde & Ossewaarde-Lowtoo, 2020). The EC states in several documents and occasions that the aim of the response to climate change is to “transform the EU into a fair and prosperous society, with a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy” (European Commission, 2019a, p.2, 2020a, p.1, 2022, p.15) and the focus on prosperity is several times repeated (European Parliament and The Council of the European Union, 2021). Hickel (2020) describes this narrative of referring to prosperity that is caused by growth as a justification for using the growth models in policy-making no matter what other cost. Exactly this narrative can be detected when analysing the narrative of the EGD. Hickel further distinguishes the possible outdatedness of this growth-focused behaviour and that, at least for the EU, society is beyond the step that growth fosters prosperity. The economic connection prevails and is mentioned in a high amount throughout the sustainability strategy. Financial matters like carbon pricing and emission trading are seen as solutions to the problem of emitting too many emissions (Timmermans 2021) as well as the circular economy (European Commission, 2020c) which enables society to consume increasingly.

What financial and technological solutions hide

Instead of a behaviour change, renewed solutions for economic growth are proposed (Argument Four). The intentions of words aim at mediating that real change is happening and that everything that can be done in Europe to reduce emissions drastically is worked towards. It is stated that “despite EU and international efforts [the crises] continue at an alarming rate” (European Commission, 2022, p1). This should actually show that the policy measures taken do not seem to be sufficient but it is rather positively formulated by the EC in this case by the term ‘efforts’. This puts the EC and the policy actions in a better light. The EC is well aware that the efforts of the policy measures are not enough but formulates them as if they were higher. Stating necessities, like what needs to stop, what needs to change, and alike, does not necessarily say in the outcome that everything is done to achieve this change (Von der Leyen, 2021; European Commission 2019b). Goals and necessary actions rhetorically presented, are not followed by the right policies and policy actions needed. It appears odd that the state of the environment in crisis and the loss of nature, wildlife, as well as human life and space to live in, is acknowledged

(European Commission, 2020b) when still the EC sticks to the growth model as the problem solver. With the current strategy net zero by 2050 will not be achieved although it is necessary to avoid a higher temperature rise that leads to all these risks mentioned.

Moreover, a difference in the use of the words 'will' and 'should' can be detected when the EC is referring to action and change needed. The EGD states that "fossil-fuel subsidies should end" (European Commission, 2019, p.10) as if the power of that ending does not lie entirely in their hands. It is the big fossil-fuel firms that are one of the main polluters and they play a big role in the sustainable transformation. In Box's (2011) discussion on Herbert Marcuse's proclaimed one-dimensionality which refers to the characteristics of a capitalist society, consumption is the dominant force in which light other things are forgotten or sidelined by society and the prevailing power structures do not change but rule consistently. This way, no real change is happening. "People no longer perceive a contradiction between how things are and how they might be, with a resulting 'flattening out of the contrast (or conflict) between the given and the possible'" (Box, 2011, p.170). This thinking, positioning of society, and the way language is used to convince of that paradigm, can be also examined in the EC's strategy. Although Marcuse's one-dimensionality is set in a different historical context, the notion of the capitalist society remains and the perception of contradiction. Fossil fuel companies remain powerful and the old growth power structures, too. This is in line with what Ossewaarde and Ossewaarde-Lowtoo (2020) (Argument Two) argued, that green growth is still inhabited by old brown growth structures. This again leads to a missing real transformation (Argument Four) in those structures which prevents reaching the climate targets with effective policy. Those main polluters are being sidelined and not addressed directly to the extent that is needed (Eckert & Kovalevska, 2021). This argumentation in favour of the new growth strategy shows that the EC is entrapped in old growth power structures, as mentioned in the theoretical expectation, also according to Ossewaarde and Ossewaarde-Lowtoo (2020) which feeds the need for the EC to narrate its way out make the new growth strategy sound successful and promising. Here, the factor that the trait of innovative character and newness as stated in 'new growth' comes into play to hide the old structures said new strategy is build upon.

Putting policy measures in better light

The EC reassures that the old economy is not built back and that the dependency on fossil fuels has to stop in the future (Timmermans, 2021). Also, inclusivity is highly promoted. In every selected speech it plays an important role (e.g. Von der Leyen, 2021; Timmermans, 2021). Timmermans gives his “pledge that [the EC] will pursue an inclusive Green Deal, as it’s the only way to have a Green Deal” (Timmermans, 2021, p.1). This statement of having an inclusive transition or none at all is made several times (e.g. Von der Leyen, 2019d). When statements in relation to what is being done by the EC (or in general by the EU) regarding climate change (i.e. “some who will say we should go slower, we should go lower, we should do less” (Von der Leyen, 2021)) it is anticipated that the EC is doing already all it can with its strategy. That is paradoxical when considering the statement by the EC itself that the measures will fail to meet the policy objective (European Commission, 2019). Timmermans as well as Von der Leyen both state that “the European Green Deal is going to be just, or there is just not going to be a European Green Deal” (Timmermans 2021) in several contexts. Hence, the assumption is made, that if the EC does not manage to include everyone (that could mean including the main polluters as well as the many jobs that they offer) the strategy as the EC aspires to solve the climate crisis has failed. Nevertheless, via language, the frequent use of related keywords, and prioritisation in the policy measures which was found with the coding scheme, the economy is put first and foremost. Ambitious climate action is showcased, when in reality growth still overrules ecology even while in crisis, with the policy objective set in law and with an oath that was made (European Commission, 2019, 2020b).

4.5. Concluding Remarks

Antal and Van den Bergh (2014) clarify that when using green growth as the EC is doing as its main policy strategy, it shall carefully be explained how green growth will be accomplished. Considering the counter-arguments of the leading scholar field pointed out in the theory chapter, this is not sufficiently done by the EC. Von der Leyen states that “we know that we have to move on to a new model – one that is powered by innovation, that has clean energy, that is moving towards a circular economy” (Von der Leyen 2021). With the Climate Law, she also states, that for that reason the EGD and aspiration of reduction targets is not only a political strategy but even set into law. This strengthens the belief in the

new strategy. However, the EC and its policy actions are bound to old growth structures can be seen in the statements that ‘still more needs to be done’ to achieve the climate targets but that it is under the current economic system and power structures not possible. How else could be explained that even with the high necessity and strong emotional connection that the EC acknowledges to this ‘defining task’ (Von der Leyen, 2021) in fighting for the next generation and for the most vulnerable, still not enough is being done despite the urgency and the ambition set into law? A myth of the green growth strategy proposed in a ‘new’ way by the EC is being created and tried to be sold to the ‘audience’. Confirming what Ossewaarde and Stegemann (2018) have also found, this leads up to a myth that covers the contradiction between green and growth. The paradoxical relationship between the EC’s narrative and the concrete and sufficient policy action underlines that the EC tries to argue its way out of the chosen policy strategy that won’t serve the policy objective.

5. Conclusion

The general results of this research are summarised and the main research question *In what discursive ways does the European Commission draw the connection between the contradictory paradigms of green and growth in their strategy of green growth in the European Green Deal?* Will be answered. A discussion revolving around the filling of the research gap and recommendations for further research are given.

5.1. Towards answering the research question

To continue and put forward growth-thinking and growth-oriented policymaking, the EC tries to reconcile green and growth. It uses a language that evolves mainly around the economy. Green is strongly correlated with growth although it needs to be treated as priority when aiming at drastic emission reductions. That opposite and paradoxical behavior serves the tried reconciliation of green growth. Green and growth might be reconcilable to some extent. But the EC exaggerates that ability. The EC has claimed that economic growth with meanwhile emission reductions has been achieved in the past. But it is not sufficient as a new strategy for the climate crisis to fulfill the policy objective of becoming net-zero EU by 2050. The EC states that the actions in place will not lead to that goal yet (European Commission, 2019a). Anyways, the EC tries rhetorically to convince of the functioning of the new growth strategy by underlining that this method of de-coupling has worked before. Clearly what is done is not enough, which suggests a lack of meaning in the words and an emptiness in the EC's solution. However, by saying that measures like emission trading are effective, then stating facts that make it sound as if the measures are scientifically undermined, and adding this up by stating that all this needs to happen in a fair and inclusive way, make it sound so right albeit it's missing to reach the goal entirely. To further convince that there is no contradiction and that the new growth strategy is working, the politicians simply state that this is the case. Repetitions help underline this. For that, they use a language of conviction, meaning the belief in the new growth strategy, repetition of what should and can be achieved, and avoiding confronting the experts' counter-arguments that growth as the prevailing method is not sufficient enough. These are only half-truths. They are not entirely wrong, but considering the

arguments from the theory, they are not to that extent sufficient that they lead to fulfilling the policy objective. Because the EC sticks to the outdated growth model, it entraps itself in old power structures and has to argue its way out. Therefore, characteristics like newness and innovation help support that 'breaking free' with which the EC tries to reconcile green and growth in which green – which's necessity of prioritisation is so high – is sidelined because of the growth objective.

5.2. Discussion

The way the EC tries to justify the reconciliation of green and growth in the new growth strategy despite the counter-arguments has been researched to a certain extent in this thesis via content analysis. Do dig in further, more policy documents and speeches could be analysed in future research. This research, however, gives a first impression of the paradox between what the EC states it aims to do with the climate targets and what it really does. The connection to the arguments of the scholars like Hickel and Kallis (2019) shows that the strategy of new growth of the EC is not sufficient climate action when wanting to prevent a temperature rise above 2 C°. Moreover, the narrative of reconciling green and growth, an outdated strategy, just named differently here ('new growth') with the add on of proclaimed inclusivity is hiding the old power and hence growth structures (Eckert & Kovalevska, 2021; Ossewaarde & Ossewaarde-Lowtoo, 2020) that are deeply connected to the economic thinking that prevents real climate action. This research has added to the analysis of the EC's narrative that is based on unconnected half-truths about efficient policy measures in the fight against climate heating. I would agree with the scholars that 'rephrasing' (Eckert & Kovalevska, 2021) does not lead to rearranging power structures and ultimately to policy transformation (Samper, Schockling & Islar, 2021; Palahí & Hetemäkli, 2020).

As the ambition of policy measures have to improve, further research in the development of the EC's strategy would be interesting, and to monitor to what extent the legal binding climate targets are achieved. If in this context a change in the rhetoric is visible would be relevant follow-up research to be able to have more of an impact on the research and make the EC accountable for what they are preaching versus doing. For this, possibly a mixed-method approach, could support strengthening the research design.

5.3. Practical Implications for EU policy and governance

The new growth strategy is not so new as claimed by the EC. A strong belief in the strategy is articulated. Von der Leyen says: “I am convinced that the old growth model that is based on fossil fuels and pollution is out of date, [...]. The European Green Deal is our new growth strategy – it is a strategy for growth that gives more back than it takes away“ (Von der Leyen, 2019a). This gives the impression of innovative change in the growth model. However, the new growth strategy is still based on growing the economy, on prevailing capitalist structures, and those are still based on old growth structures that lead to GHGs. The mainly economic-based solutions by the EC is just generally described and not made very concrete (e.g. European Commission, 2020a). It can be said that the EC’s new growth strategy is somewhat ‘same same but different’ from previous policy action. The measures taken are not enough and the capitalist thinking still prevails. Although climate action is being tackled to a high extent, the focus still needs to shift from growth to green. Von der Leyen (2021) reassures that the investments of around €500 billion have an effect on the private sector to invest in greener businesses. But when the EC is so certain about its measurements to reduce the emissions how is it still possible that the reduction targets are going to be just 60% by 2050, only 5% more than what the EC tackles as a goal until 2030? Accordingly, there must be a high discrepancy between what is being said and how the measures really work. To change that and reach the climate targets, a shift from thinking mainly economically and competitively to focus the ecology and environmental protection must occur. A suggestion for climate governance that has a real sustainable effect would be that growth shall be sidelined and green prioritised. So far, the EC seems too insufficient in its policy measures as it sticks to old habits. Being aware of that, it uses a rhetorically constructed narrative of newness, that aims at being just and including everyone while trying to reconcile green and growth with those factors paired with technological solutionism. But when the EC wants to deliver effective climate policy, stick to the Paris Agreement and fulfill its duty for the next generation, it should be true to itself and either put forward more ambitious climate action or at least stop claiming to be ambitious in that manner when they are not ambitious enough to fulfill their self-set policy goal and deadline to become net-zero by 2050.

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