



**UNIVERSITY
OF TURKU**

Social Justice and the European Green Deal

Green transition in a well-ordered society

Political Science/Faculty of Social Sciences

Master's thesis

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15.12.2024

Turku

The originality of this thesis has been checked in accordance with the University of Turku quality assurance system using the Turnitin Originality Check service.

Master's thesis

Subject: Political Science, Political Philosophy

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Title: Social Justice and the European Green Deal:
Green transition in a well-ordered society

Supervisor(s): Maija Setälä, Michael Hansen

Number of pages: 93 pages

Date: 15.12.2024

Abstract: The European Union (EU) is an intergovernmental supranational union of 27 member countries located in Europe. The union has claimed global leadership in addressing environmental problems such as greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs), pollution and habitat loss. In late 2019, a key European Union actor, the European Commission, released a new program to tackle both economic and environmental challenges, named the “European Green Deal” (EGD). Although the EGD is mostly an economic program, it contains major implications for both environmental and social justice. The focus of this thesis is to analyse those fields of justice through the theoretical framework proposed by John Rawls, known as “Justice as Fairness” or a Theory of Justice. Special emphasis is put on social justice and policy resilience. Aspects of the Green Deal are also contextualised to their wider context of just green transitions, a subfield of environmental ethics.

There is a special focus on stability and resilience, and the EU is seen analysed in relation to the Rawlsian ideal of a well-ordered society. Policy stability and resilience over the long term are seen as important especially due to the long lifespan of the EGD program (from 2020 -2050). Many of the hallmarks of the Rawlsian theory, mainly its emphasis on securing basic liberties and advancing social equality are also taken into account. The European Union can be regarded on most aspects as a Rawlsian well-ordered society.

Among the key findings of this thesis is that as a mostly economic dossier, many of the aspects of social justice are absorbed in the EGD program. Another reason for absorbing social justice is the institutional structure of the EU: the proposer of the EGD, the European Commission, is not in charge of social policies, as those mostly lay in the power of the EU member states. Social justice is still visible in the EGD, for example, in the stated goal of “not leaving anyone behind”, and instruments such as “Just Transitions Mechanism” and “Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism”. It can be claimed that the social justice implications of the EGD enhance both ecological and social resilience of the program and increase policy stability and success through an appeal to shared values. The Rawlsian theoretical framework, and especially his theory of “justice as fairness” are found to provide a practical analytical basis for a work of political philosophy as the one found in this thesis.

Key words: John Rawls, European Green Deal, political philosophy, just green transition, resilience, ecological justice, social justice, European Union

Table of Contents

1. Approaching Rawlsian Justice	5
1.1 Introduction	5
1.2 References, Thesis Composition and Theoretical Take	6
1.3 Approaching justice	8
1.4 Social justice, first and foremost	10
2. A Theory of Justice	11
2.1 Explaining Justice as Fairness	11
2.1.1. John Rawls: A Theory of Justice	11
2.1.2 Justice and the well-ordered society	14
2.1.3 Just institutions	17
2.1.4 John Rawls and the limits of growth	19
2.2 Europe and Liberalism	21
2.2.1 Liberal basics: the first principle	21
2.2.2 EU and the second principle of justice	24
3. Policy stability and Resilience	28
3.1 John Rawls and policy stability	28
3.2 Resilience as a theoretical concept	29
3.3 Resilience as a theoretical framework	32
3.4 Resilience and social cohesion	35
4. Just transitions: an overarching analysis	38
4.1 The just green transition	38
4.2 Just transition and policy instruments	41
4.3 Pollution and responsibility	44

5. The European Green Deal	46
5.1 The European Union	46
5.2 EGD: Transforming the economy	49
5.3 Issues in policy sectors	53
5.4 EGD: Taking the lead in global environmental policy	55
5.5 European green transition in the post-EGD era	56
6. Green Deal Commentaries	60
6.1 Feasibility of the EGD program	60
6.2 Making the European Green Deal work	63
6.3 EGD and policy-area impacts	65
6.4 Climate change and policy monitoring	68
6.5 EGD and policy turbulence	69
7. EGD Justice analysis	72
7.1 Justice as fairness and the EGD	72
7.2 Social justice as absorbed	75
7.3 EGD - Directions for policies	77
7.4 EGD - An argument from social justice	79
8. Conclusions	81
8.1 Achieving a green future	81
8.2 Social Justice and The EGD	82
References	85

1. Approaching Rawlsian Justice

1.1 Introduction

The focus of this master's thesis is on analysing the social and ecological justice aspects of the European Commission's Green Deal (communication of 2019). The analysis is constructed with a specific framework of social justice in mind, that provided by John Rawls's in his theory "Justice as Fairness". The thesis begins with an introduction to the method of the thesis, followed by a short overview of key notions and concepts on forms of justice. Next are chapters on Rawls Justice as Fairness and policy resilience and stability (with social cohesion included). These are followed by a look at the wider contexts of the just transitions field. After these are chapters on the European Green Deal (henceforth EGD) itself, and some analysis papers reflecting on it. In the main analysis chapter the role of social justice in the EGD is further analysed, followed by a philosophical argument linking many of the key concepts of the thesis. After this, conclusions and references are also included.

Even though the EGD is a tool for environmental policies, the environmental aspects of the program are surprisingly scarce and thin – for the most part the program is economic in its nature and regards nature as an object of human economic exploitation, instead of a true moral and socioeconomic subject. Partly because of this narrow focus on ecological aspects, the focus of this thesis is on the social (instead of ecological) justice aspects of the EGD and the European attempt at executing a successful just green transition. Social justice aspects are more reasonable premises for analysing the EGD. Many key themes of (deeper) environmental ethics, such as animal agency, animal rights and anthropocentrism are not covered in this thesis to their full extent.

The famous political philosopher John Rawls (whose work provides the main theoretical thrust of this thesis), never developed a complete moral theory regarding questions of environmental ethics and justice (Plachciak, A. 2015, 317). This has not stopped various commentators and co-theorists from using his principles and theory to understand and order ecological phenomena and dilemmas. This thesis is based on applying the Rawlsian framework of social justice to the EGD (a primarily ecological/economical policy dossier). Many non-Rawlsian theories of ecological and social justice also exist, but the focus of this thesis is decidedly Rawlsian.

The main research question of this thesis is:

What is the role of social justice in the European Green Deal?

and an auxiliary question,

How can the Rawlsian theory of Justice as Fairness be used to analyse the European Green Deal?

is also provided and executed upon.

the main arguments formulated in this thesis being:

Social justice is not the primary goal of the European Green Deal, and appears in the program mostly in an absorbed form. Social justice is, however, deeply embedded into both the European Union and its policies.

Appealing to social justice increases social cohesion, policy stability and resilience.

Increasing policy resilience is important since crises and disturbances are the largest risk to the European Green Deal program, especially due to its long temporal duration of 2020-2050. A resilient and stable European Union can withstand crises and successfully complete the European just green transition.

1.2 References, Thesis Composition and Theoretical Take

The references and the material of this thesis include: John Rawls's bibliography, with special emphasis on the 1971 *A Theory of Justice* (and the consequent "Justice as Fairness: a Restatement" 2001). A multitude of scientific articles are also utilised on several themes and concepts relating to the EGD and social and environmental policies in general. Key themes for the papers include: policy stability, social cohesion, resilience, just transitions, third party views to the EGD and social justice, and a general emphasis on notions of justice and green policy mechanisms, such for example emissions trading and disaster insurance. Along with Rawls's works the most important piece of material is the 2019 European Commission program itself, the European Green Deal (EGD). As mentioned, several third party analysis papers on the EGD are also featured to bolster the depth and reach of the thesis. The third party papers date from the period of 2019-2024, with other papers originating in a far wider formation, with some articles dating back to the 1990's and beyond. Background research for this thesis also included many research papers on the subject of ecological justice and several textbooks on environmental ethics.

The main aims of this thesis include creation of scientifically high quality knowledge and to create social and individual competence in the fields of social contract theory, theories of justice and applying of contract theory to the study of European climate policies. The materials of this thesis

include all the classic texts (books and papers) of the late John Rawls, (1921-2002) and Rawls's input is crucial, since this thesis focuses on the structures of Rawls's social thought and political philosophy, as applied to the European environmental policies and most notably the 2019 European Green Deal.

As evaluating the viability of the Rawlsian framework in studying and analysing environmental policy and its social justice aspects is among the main goals of this thesis, the findings of the thesis hopefully succeeds as an analysis, and increases our knowledge. This is true not only of the EGD in particular, but in a wider sense as well: a successful utilisation of the Rawlsian principles to the study of environmental and ecological policies can yield generalisable results and enticing vistas for science and philosophy in general. The framework used in this thesis can therefore also be (hopefully) adapted to wider use in the study of social sciences, ecology and political philosophy.

Technically, this thesis consists of eight chapters (nine including references). The introduction includes not only formalities, but also a short introduction to some of the main concepts and notions in theories of justice. Chapter two focuses on understanding the Rawlsian theory of Justice as Fairness. In the third chapter Focus is on stability, resilience and social cohesion. In the fourth chapter the field of just transitions is uncovered. In chapter 5 The European Green Deal is introduced, with a comprehensive illustration in mind, followed by a look at some more recent developments. In Chapter 6 some general analysis of the EGD and social justice is conducted, including third party analyses on the EGD. Chapter 7 includes both the main analysis on the EGD and a philosophical argument for social justice and policy success. Chapter 8 concludes the thesis with the title conclusions.

The method of this master's thesis is based on Anglo-American analytical philosophy. This is due to the fact that Rawls's philosophy is part of the analytical tradition, and Rawls's theory is an integral part of the theoretical basis of this theoretically driven analysis. Several concepts and notions are introduced that venture beyond the original confines of the Rawlsian framework - these key concepts include ones like "resilience", "social cohesion" and "just transitions". Rawls's theory is also expanded upon, especially when analysing policy stability and the Rawlsian concept of the "well-ordered society".

The other major source material, the European Green Deal, is, as are the theoretical studies of Rawls, also fact-based but notably contains some rhetoric components as well. While the EGD is not strictly scientific or peer-reviewed, most of the third-party analysis included in this thesis are. In general, information found in the EGD is reliable. Some of its political goals and ambitions,

however, can be disputed and challenged. It is also notable that Justice as Fairness is a theoretical work, whereas the EGD is a more pragmatic proposition. The two texts have similar goals: a well-ordered society and a “fair and prosperous European Union”. I would argue that whereas Justice as Fairness leaves the actual realisation of the well-ordered society open, the EGD is in fact a concrete plan towards creating and maintaining such a society. Multiple other sources and authors are also used to both corroborate and extend upon these findings.

Using Analytical philosophy as a method is not entirely unproblematic, but since John Rawls is often seen as one of the prime examples of using the analytic method in applied ethics and political theory, using the analytic method fits well with the goals of this thesis. This thesis aims to exemplify the analytical method mainly through the idea that the arguments presented in it aim at logical coherence and an appeal to sound and logical arguments. Contrasted with some of the more semantic schools of philosophical study (such as those of many continental theories) this thesis also aims at clear articulation and sensible use of the English language.

1.3 Approaching Justice

Let us begin by outlining the most important concepts of justice, and environmental ethics in general.

Environmental ethics is a loose field of normative theories addressing both nature, natural entities and human agency. Issues of environmental ethics are inherently moral in their nature. The Just Transitions literature is a subfield of environmental ethics, and as this thesis is about studying the European just green transition (manifest in the EGD) many of the general issues of environmental ethics also affect the entities uncovered in this thesis.

The focus of this thesis is on Rawlsian theory of justice, just transitions and European environmental policy. Not all the phenomena of environmental ethics are related to justice, and consequently not all of the phenomena are included. Just transitions are, however, inherently embedded with components of social and ecological justice (as per the term “just”). The burgeoning field of nature-related justice and its issues are too broad for a thesis (or possibly any study whatsoever) to tackle. Utilising a Rawlsian framework based on justice as fairness on the issues of policy justice and just green transitions however, warrants a good reason for study. This is further aided by a focus on one of the most profound just green transition policy propositions ever adopted, the European Green Deal. In this study the EGD acts in a dual role of case study and material basis for a more theoretical analysis. Few comprehensive academic analyses of John Rawls and green

transitions related justice exist. Using the theory of justice to analyse the EGD is a fresh idea, and allows for fascinating viewpoints and discoveries.

Although Rawlsian focus is on social justice, multiple simultaneous subfields of justice exist. In a paper by Kopnina, H., & Washington, H. (2020) a categorical difference is made between ecological and environmental justice. The main differential appears to be scope; environmental justice takes a more traditional view and focuses on human welfare and human justice, placing social justice issues at the forefront. Ecological justice on the other hand sees justice as a right of all things living (sometimes promoted by a custodian model for animals etc.). In their analysis Kopnina & Washington see ecological justice as non-instrumental and extending justice to non-human beings.

For them, ecological justice is both a more ambitious and a more recommended approach than that of environmental justice. In the wider literature environmental justice is often seen as a more practical approach, many times leading to political actions and movements, whereas ecological justice is more theoretical in its focus. Both views are vital to conserve nature and to develop sound eco-policies. Although on a first look environmental justice would seem more fitting for a policy analysis such as that undertaken in the EGD, the reality is not so simple. The institutional structure and fact-based policymaking of the EGD favors ecological justice.

On another note, theorist Derek Bell also separates ecological justice from environmental justice. According to Bell, ecological justice is an extension of (hypothetical) theories of justice, such as Rawls's justice as fairness. Environmental justice on the other hand is often seen as a normative analysis of justly distributing (the real) natural resources and the responsibilities regarding greenhouse emissions and other forms of pollution. (Bell D. 2016, 276.)

“Advocates of environmental justice merely insist that the instrumental value of the environment to humans should be recognised in a theory of social justice or justice among humans. Ecological justice makes the much more radical claim that justice extends beyond relations among humans so that we can talk about “justice to nature”.

(Bell D. 2006, 208.)

The concepts of ecological and environmental justice are both rather theoretical in nature. In fact to such an extent that one would be hard pressed to find such notions in the EGD paper, nor in the third party papers on the issue either. This does not mean that the EGD would be somehow devoid

of ecological or environmental justice – quite on the contrary. The technical nature of many of the EGD chapters do put greater emphasis on social and economical justices (often seen enmeshed).

1.4 Social justice, first and foremost

Although many forms of justice exist, and ecological issues are at the forefront of the EGD policies, the main focus of the analysis in this thesis is of a more traditional, social, sort of justice. This is the mainstay of Rawlsian theory of justice and keenly interlinked with the main argument of this thesis, namely that appeal to social justice increases policy stability and resilience in the EU policies. In a Rawlsian well-ordered society, a shared conception of social justice and socially just institutions maintain themselves in a balanced state, defined in the Theory of Justice as a “reflective equilibrium.” (TJ, 51.)

One of the most important subfields of the environmental/ecological justice literature regarding the EGD is climate justice. Climate justice addresses global warming as an inherently international issue. The atmosphere and many of the phenomena global warming causes are cross-boundary. This doesn't mean that the perceived justice of individual citizens would not be affected - quite on the contrary. As Farhana Sultana argues:

“In general terms, climate justice scholarship demonstrates how climate change is a moral and justice issue, not just a science, techno-managerial, or finance issue (Gardiner, 2011; Shue, 2014). In other words, climate justice fundamentally is about paying attention to how climate change impacts people differently, unevenly, and disproportionately, as well as redressing the resultant injustices in fair and equitable ways.”

Sultana, F. (2022). Critical climate justice. *The Geographical Journal*, 188(1), 118.

The importance of climate justice is recognised in the EGD as per its principles. Policies regarding the climate are seen as inevitably international and global in their reach. Therefore, the policy actions in the EGD should reflect this reality and aim at cooperation well beyond the EU's outer borders (ironically The EGD effects and further entrenches those very borders through the program's “Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism”). The EU's attempt at climate leadership aims to assess climate justice.

When discussing just transitions, one more definition of justice is offered: that of “energy justice”. The ethical field of energy justice is concerned with equal access to energy, such as electricity. On the other hand, it also addresses the pollution caused by energy production and the distribution of

the related harms. Major inequalities exist in the energy markets and infrastructures, both domestically in many polities and internationally. Even though the European countries are industrialised, widespread energy poverty still exists, especially in the Eastern and Southern parts of Europe. Alleviating energy poverty is one of the main goals of the EGD. In order to live up to its name, a successful just transition (mainly from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources) must find sustainable solutions for increasing energy justice.

2. A Theory of Justice

2.1 Explaining Justice as Fairness

2.1.1. John Rawls: A Theory of Justice

In the beginning of this chapter the single most important theory of John Rawls, “Justice as Fairness” (as presented in the 1971 classic “A Theory of Justice”) is reviewed and to some extent analysed. The theory forms the core of the Rawlsian theoretical enterprise and enables the theoretical analysis of the later points of this thesis. Understanding Rawlsian justice opens up several enticing viewpoints to the elements of social and climate justice as visible in the European climate policy and the just transition literature in general. The Rawlsian focus on liberties and equality are seen as some of the most profound principles guiding Western democracies, and among them the European countries.

In the second half of this chapter, more focus is given on several Rawlsian ideas, such as the ideal of the priority of liberties, stability and the concept of a well-ordered society. In the third chapter, on resilience, we examine the Rawlsian idea of resilience as an equilibrium and some third party analysis that extend the idea of resilience beyond the social, to the realms of the ecological.

John Rawls’s “A Theory of justice” (1971) (henceforth TJ) is an important analysis on philosophy of justice. At the centre of Rawls’s theory are notions such as the original position, the veil of ignorance and reflective equilibrium. Rawls’s argument has two main principles, known as the two principles of justice.

The most famous statement of Rawls’s principles (of his theory of “justice as fairness”) reads:

1. Each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive basic liberty compatible with a similar liberty for others.

And

2. Social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both
 - (a) reasonably expected to be to everyone's advantage, and
 - (b) attached to positions and offices open to all.

(TJ 1971, 60)

In Justice as Fairness (a.k.a. Theory of justice), both formal rights (The first principle) and the enabling social conditions (The second principle) are vital - without their mutual co-existence the society would not be fair. By rights to the basic liberty, Rawls means not only political rights but also rights such as liberty of conscience and religion, and rights to own property. In contrast to largely immaterial rights of liberty, the second principle focuses on the distribution of the material. It is important to remember that the principles are lexically ordered (The first is given priority) and thus give greater priority to liberties. (TJ, 61.)

For Rawls an important determinant of the preferred social order of a society is that all major inequalities (and following incentives) should be formed in a way beneficial to the least well-off. This is more widely known as The "Difference principle". The just distribution of so-called basic goods are of the greatest importance. Basic liberties can only be limited when they contradict each other; thus the phrase "the most extensive basic liberty." (TJ, 62, 64.)

In Rawls's justice as fairness, a central role is given to an original agreement, forged in a very particular initial situation. This situation is known as the original position. In essence, the original position is a hypothetical situation in which the actors (citizens) aiming for an agreement on the basic institutions of society, act impartially - and thus do not act from their own selfish and particular interest. Rawls aims to prove in a logically correct and coherent manner that those aiming for the agreement (the contractors) would choose his two principles of justice in such a situation. The objectivity of the situation is made more important by the well-known arbitrariness of human subjective wills and aims. Eventually a level playing field benefits (at least most) rational actors. According to Rawls, the original position is hypothetical and the initial situation (or original position) amounts to "considered judgements in reflective equilibrium." (TJ, 118 - 121.)

Rawls makes clear early on that his theory is based on the method of social contract theory (of Locke, Rousseau and Kant). By using contract theory, Rawls aims to widen the applicability of his views and to abstract many of the more mundane facts of social organisation and the inner workings of society. Such mundane information might entail, among others, the realities created by the real economy, the strains produced by legislation and jurisprudence and the political ideologies of the day. (TJ, 11.) The downside of this methodological choice is that taken concretely, the theory of justice is purely hypothetical.

In Rawls's theory the original agreement (typical of social contract theory) comprises of principles which free and rational persons would choose under the conditions of equality. Rawls does, however, impose other conditions as well - for example, in his theory, knowledge of class positioning, societal status and natural assets and abilities (such as intelligence) of citizens are unknown. This mechanism of regulating knowledge is known as the veil of ignorance. The most important aspects of the original agreement are executed under the influence of the veil. (TJ, 1, 12.)

The veil of ignorance is a keystone concept in Rawls's justice as fairness. It enhances the reach of procedural justice by reducing the effect of particularist contingencies - in effect this means that many subjective views are ditched in favor of a more objective viewpoint. The veil accomplishes this by making the contracting parties unaware of certain conditions and traits. The contracting parties lack (atleast) knowledge of their place, status, assets, abilities, intelligence and alike. The original position under the veil of ignorance does not aim for representativeness, and prefers random selection instead. (TJ, 136-139.) This can have practical effects when planning for a polity's governance; statistically speaking the veil favors majority rule and interest.

Rawls seems somewhat unclear when he says that under the veil the contracting parties also lack knowledge over many of the conditions of their society. Important to a study of ecological justice, Rawls sees the society's particularities as opposite to (among others) "the appropriate rate of capital saving and of the conservation of natural resources and the environment of nature". How the condition of nature's scarcity differs from other societal particularities is not readily visible.

The ability to give special value to the environment can be viewed from another viewpoint too. Rawls does state that people under the veil know "the general facts about human society". Who is to say that the facts of environmental science could not be included there, among the ones Rawls mentions - sociology, politology, economics and psychology. (TJ, 137.)

The beginnings of justice as fairness lay within the choice of the principles and the conception of justice. Out of this agreement arises the more pragmatic execution of social norms and laws. The rightfulness of the political institutions is determined with their level of compliance to the conceptions of justice as fairness. Rawls's fairness is marked by voluntariness and autonomy. He goes to great lengths in explaining why his own theory, with its two principles, is a better way of reaching reasonable social order than his (main) rival, the principle of utility. In essence, Rawls's principles prevent the sacrifice in happiness or survival of the few to advance the interests of the many. (TJ, 13-15.) This prevention is not achieved by hard coding minority rights into rigid constitutions, but through labeling violations as unreasonable and upholding a strong social minimum.

2.1.2 Justice and the well-ordered society

The idea of the difference principle is a pivotal part of the two principles of justice as fairness, and one of the more criticized parts of the Rawlsian theory. According to the difference principle, differences in the resource distribution should benefit the least well-off the most. (TJ, 78.) The difference principle operates through sorting out the least well-off and then basing its point of view on maximising their benefit (TJ, 91). Many commentators have noted that the Difference principle works well inside societies, but far less well in an international setting. The most vocal critics of the difference principle have come from the libertarian theorists, such as Robert Nozick (1974).

In addition to The Difference principle, another principle is also presented - that of efficiency. In Theory of Justice, the principle of efficiency is displayed as that of pareto-optimality. The pareto method has been borrowed from economics, and describes a situation where no one actor can increase his benefit without lessening that of others - thus the general welfare is "optimal". Real life systems are often pareto-inefficient and contain possibilities for further optimisation. Since Rawls's Justice as Fairness is hypothetical it seems reasonable to at least wish for pareto-optimality - the push for pareto-optimality provides a useful benchmark. (TJ, 66-68.) However, many competing pareto-equilibriums can exist. In a system of natural liberty, differences in natural endowments such as intelligence influence the position of persons in the society. Thus natural liberty seems to reflect natural inequality. (TJ, 72.) For Rawls, the principle of efficiency itself is insufficient for defining a conception of justice. (TJ, 70.)

Liberals like Rawls attach equality of opportunity to their system (model) of liberties. The equalities of opportunities could be seen as an imperative for positive discrimination and other policies that decrease impacts caused by, say, cultural and material differences. (TJ, 73.) In a well-ordered

society the “natural lottery” is replaced with strong egalitarian institutions. This means that endowments acquired at birth (such as health, intelligence etc.) should not be the primary basis for social status and achievement. For the sake of a procedurally efficient society, Rawls maintains that some positions could be excluded from the ideal of “positions open to all”. The most reasonable exclusions are those arising from formal competence, such as those of (academic etc.) degrees. (TJ, 84.) What should be made of this? Although issues like positive discrimination remain a hot topic in the (European) societies of the 2020’s, aid to individuals with disabilities is widely recognised as important and beneficial to a decent and well-off society.

The notion of “Primary goods” is an essential part of Rawls's analysis and useful in the study of ecological justice and just transitions programs such as the EGD. The primary goods in Rawls’s theory are such goods which every rational person seeks to possess. Such goods include “rights and liberties, opportunities and powers and income and wealth” (TJ, 92) plus others, such as self-esteem. Basic physical needs are also to be guaranteed by the primary goods. In essence, primary goods are necessary to execute plans and other ends. For Rawls, to favour the least well-off (in order for them to reach the necessary primary goods) seems intuitive. (TJ, 94.) Primary goods are later (in Rawls) also called basic goods.

For Rawls’s difference principle to remain operative, two social positions are vital: that of the least well-off and that of the equal citizen. Members of the society ranked higher in primary goods have two positions; that of the privileged and that of the equal citizen. (TJ, 96, 97.) Subjective welfare can be diminished in order to benefit the objective interest of the society. A good way to prevent excess meritocracy is to level innate differences of capability by the way of compensation, thus leading to a genuinely equal society. Rawls’s stance is strictly egalitarian as it not only alleviates poverty, but also strictly binds well-off to the organisation of its income (and capital) transfers. Reciprocal mechanisms inherent in his theory, however, should benefit all. Catering to the interest of the poor often enhances the interest of the societal whole as well. (TJ, 100-104.)

That being said, several constraints affect the original position. These limit rational alternatives. The principles chosen in the original position ought to be general, and thus rid of particularities. Principles should also be universal and apply to all moral persons. In Rawls’s thought the term “persons” refers to humans, but some ecologically leaning philosophers have chosen to extend this to wider segments, such as animals and sentient beings in general. What complicates the widening of universality to sentient beings is the requirement of compliance. A further constraint is that of

publicity. Any general and universal principle should also be made visible and even debatable - and animals scarcely understand principles, and certainly cannot partake in debates.

General awareness is especially important when discussing societal justice, as its application is necessarily and by definition, public. The last two constraints are the ordering of conflicting claims and the constraint of finality. Rawls's own way of dealing with the ordering of claims is quite apparently found in the lexical ordering (privileging the first principle over the second) of his moral theory. Lexicality might not solve all ambiguities of moral ordering, and some threats, such as intransitivity, remain. Finality, on the other hand, is important to Rawls's method of choice, contractualism. It states that once the deal (in original position) is reached it cannot be renegotiated. Without finality, individual opportunism and other destabilising factors would make the original agreement redundant and probable to fail. (TJ, 131 - 135.)

As previously modelled, the realisation (and goal) of a society bound by Rawls's scheme of justice, justice as fairness, is the well-ordered society. The well-ordered society is, he states "... one designed to advance the good of its members and effectively regulated by a public conception of justice." (TJ, 453.) Rawls also addresses the stability of such a system. After all, stability is one of the most sought-after attributes of any institutional or moral theory. Rawls claims that his justice as fairness creates outcomes more stable than most earlier theories. (TJ, 456.) Stability can be measured by testing the strength of equilibriums in a system. As we shall later see, the ideas of stability and the well-ordered society are at the very center of the analysis in this thesis, and the hypothesis of justice as fairness as a stabilising arrangement is later strengthened.

In the forefront of Rawls's thinking is the idea of justice as the first virtue of social institutions. As the society is not only a cooperative venture, private interests collide. From these conflicts arises the need for a common understanding of morality and justice, which goes beyond that of formal law. Through a common understanding, a well-ordered society is born. Besides justice, social coordination can entail other goals, such as efficiency and stability. For Rawls, the primary subject of justice is "the basic structure of society" and the society's major institutions. The positions of individuals in relation to these institutions vary, and thus some positions are favoured over others. Rawls outlines a need for ideal theory instead of a more practical approach. In his view, to understand justice we must understand the basics of social cooperation. (TJ, 3-9.) As the EGD presents a major institutional upheaval in the European fields of ecological policies, the program appears as a prime target for Rawlsian analysis and application.

2.1.3 Just institutions

John Rawls's theory of justice finds its best application when planning for just institutions of a constitutional democracy. Rawls thinks that the best way of representing the birth of a just society (one based on his two principles), is to portray it taking place in a sequence. After the two principles have been chosen in the original position, and under the veil of ignorance, the citizens gather to form a constitutional convention. In the convention, the veil is partially lifted, and a good constitution gives rise to effective legislation. After the basics, citizens have to decide on particular righteous legislation and social policies. They also have to agree on constitutional arrangements for solving morally arbitrary situations. Lastly, citizens must establish the grounds of political duties and obligations. Different stages of Rawls's sequence deal with different questions of justice. (TJ, 195-198.)

What Rawls describes as "background institutions" appear in fact to consist of the basic institutional arrangements of a welfare state as we know it. Irrespective of the economic system, redistributive mechanisms (either of public or publicly funded/guaranteed type) include education, health, culture, minimum income and regulations on associations and the private sphere. Rawls also describes the possible distributional taxations of his ideal society; he seems to advocate proportional expenditure taxes (even opposing income taxation) and taxation of inheritances. (TJ, 279.) As the ideal of many environmental tax schemes is on the taxation of consumers and consuming, Rawls and green tax schemes are surprisingly compatible.

Compiling on Rawls's earlier arguments: a society should aim for equality, and most inequalities should be organised to support this goal. The reference for social thought should be that of the least well-off person. To accomplish this Rawls introduces the maximin rule of *maximum minimorum* (note: Rawls maximin is not the only existing maximin rule). In essence the maximum minimorum rule aims to maximise liberties, and minimise inequalities. Rawls' maximin rule is quite conservative; it values achieving the minimum requirements instead of aiming for the highest prizes.

Rawls's theory does not approximate gross utility, but rather uses basic goods. The fulfillment of minimal basic goods works well with the maximin rule. Some opposition to the two principles exists. libertarians, such as Robert Nozick (1974) have claimed that the principles danger the society to forms of serfdom. Others claim that the maximin rule is senseless in that even infinitely small increases for the least well-off can counter huge gains for the wealthy. (TJ, 154-157.) Rawls denies the latter claim by stating that the hypothetical nature of justice as fairness means that actual

results need only approximate the principles. In his choice of method, the contract theory, moral conditions take place in the initial situation. (TJ, 158, 160.) Rawls pits his justice as fairness against the average utility, and shows that on the condition of excluding particularistic information, his justice as fairness prevails (TJ, 164, 165). Some have argued that risks inherent in utilitarianism might be worth taking. Rawls counters this by stating that major social institutions cannot be based on luck. (TJ, 171.)

Rawls describes that individuals might doubt the origins of their moral attitudes from time to time. One might suspect that they have been affected by authorities or are passing psychological fads. Such thoughts might undermine a sense of personal autonomy. The original position though, can counter such propositions by enhancing moral objectivity. The original position helps to avoid collisions of personal autonomies. (TJ, 514-519.) In an important passage on priority of liberty, Rawls argues that in a society with relatively abundant resources, the citizens give their liberty a priority in relation to increasing their material welfare. Moreover, “as the conditions of civilization improve, the marginal significance for our good of further economic and social advantages diminish relative to the interests of liberty.” (TJ, 542.) Once the veil of ignorance is in place, many of the practical material needs are forfeit in favour of the immaterial. Differences in status and resources will nonetheless persist as mediators in the division of labour. (TJ, 542-546.)

Political liberty is a key dimension of Rawlsian justice as fairness. At its heart is the principle of (equal) participation. At its core, the principle of participation aims to guarantee common rights of participation in the process of legislating for all citizens. It should be noted though, that such guarantee can be hypothetical, as in the original position. (TJ, 221.) Building on his anthropocentric and less than inclusive basis Rawls describes that only humans, and only humans who are sane and adult, can partake in politics.

Further discussing moral agency, Rawls states that “Our conduct toward animals is not regulated by these principles [the two principles of justice], or so it is generally believed”. He goes on to wonder, “On what grounds then do we distinguish between mankind and other living things and regard the constraints of justice as holding only in our relations to human persons?” (TJ, 504.) Rawls’s answer goes roughly as follows: the principles of justice require moral agency. He argues that animals lack, among other aspects, a conception of good and sense of justice and are thus devoid of moral thought. Natural differences among men can, however, affect the common sense of justice. Still, individuals missing moral capacities remain an anomaly. (TJ, 504-508.) For Rawls these exclusions do not threaten the principle of participation. He thus moves swiftly forward to describe other

aspects of a proper representative system, such as free and regular elections. Rawls describes that “a lack of unanimity is part of the circumstances of justice.” (TJ, 223.)

2.1.4 John Rawls and the limits of growth

In (TJ, 287-288) Rawls claims that “[O]nce just institutions are firmly established, the net accumulation required falls to zero. At this point a society meets its duty of justice by maintaining just institutions and preserving their material base.” How is the idea of zero accumulation to be understood? One popular idea often articulated in culture and the media is that a zero growth economy might be possible, and even commended - focus of the society would then be exactly the “maintaining of just institutions and preserving their material base”.

Further, in Rawls (TJ, 289) it is also claimed that “The significance of the last stage of society [the stage at which justice is achieved and indefinitely maintained, which is the goal for the sake of which saving was required] should not, however, be misinterpreted.” Here Rawls is cautious and tries to avoid addressing final (utopian) ends to a society, an ideal he has disputed. (in PL, 40.) The ultimate purpose of justice as fairness is, after all, not utopian, but practical. Even if a zero growth society could be created, its premises continue to be challenging. Some critics could argue that a zero growth society remains pragmatically speaking utopian.

Going back to generational issues, Rawls propounds an idea of generational anonymity. This can be interpreted as the view that under the veil of ignorance, the contractors do not know which generation they represent. This view can be problematic. The main reason for critique should be information asymmetry. History has shown that former societies rarely predicted even most vital later developments. Oftentimes, the information simply did not exist. Examples of this are many, including modern developments such as the digital revolution and climate change. Environmental awareness has increased rather recently. Adjusting the future of climate/ecological policies work in tandem with confirming academic studies and public deliberation. Rawls’s cold war era methodology doesn’t seem to reflect this. (TJ, 288-290.)

Rawls states that “[there is] a kind of chronological unfairness, since those who live later profit from the labour of their predecessors without paying the same price.” (TJ, 291.) Rawls’s analysing here seems anachronistic; surely the environmental crisis arises from the acts of the predecessors, and the price latter generations pay (pollution, climate warming, environmental degradation etc.) is actually far higher than that of the past.

Along with the Rawlsian just savings principle, sustainable development is important for upholding justice as fairness in perpetuity; stable institutions of the well-ordered society require ecological stability and the absence of serious or fatal environmental crises. (Langhelle O. 2000, 307.) As stability is important for Rawlsian social justice, sustainability and the just savings of ecological and economic capital is commendable.

Rawls maintains that in order to apply rationality in acts of human planning, particular time preferences should be abolished. This task is made easy due to the hypothetical nature of the original position. Time preference can lead to intense balancing between public populism (spending too much in the present) and technocratic and paternalistic policies (saving too much). (TJ, 294-296.)

It is well known that wealth accumulation is a key feature of capitalism. Accumulation of capital is also often seen as the opposite of distributing said capital. The two-fold approach of Rawls on capital accumulation is interesting. On the one hand he (as most people) sees excessive wealth differences produced through the action of yield and interest as unjust. On the other hand, Rawls sees that capital accumulation can also benefit the least wealthy, at least indirectly. (TJ, 299.) Rawls thinks that the living standards of the many are chain connected in such a way that benefitting certain strata almost inevitably benefits the others. An increase of the general revenue of the society at large also increases tax revenue, thus helping out those living on state subsidies such as income support.

In the Theory of Justice, Rawls does inevitably state that justice should be privileged over efficiency. (TJ, 80.) This is the idea inherent in the difference principle; economic differences should be organised in a way that can benefit all.

Rawls also touches on the issue of innate differences of intelligence. (TJ, 301.) While contested, in many ways the general socioeconomic differences in intelligence remain drastic. The socioeconomic determinants of intelligence (such as training and education) are important enough to render innate differences redundant. Nurture remains more dominating than nature – income and ownership effect intelligence more than vice versa (through access to better education etc.).

Rawls seems to some effect pay homage to the mechanisms of the free market, and the phrase equilibrium, as found in economics, is one of his all-time favourites. (TJ, 305.) One may be tempted to replace justice as fairness with the precept of “each according to his contribution”, an idea in line

with economics. However, this will not suffice. The market valuation of, say, labour is known to be arbitrary. Thus in conditions lacking background justice, righteousness does not prevail. (TJ, 308.)

Important for this analysis regarding not only theories of justice, but themes of environmental sustainability, Rawls gives extra emphasis on intergenerational justice in the 1993 Political Liberalism (PL). Social cooperation and social reciprocity are vital to the proper functioning of any sophisticated society. Reciprocity should however, be separated from the idea of mutual advantage. (PL, 17.) Rawls equates a moral person with a citizen. The freedom of the citizen is guaranteed by his sense of the just and the good and by his capability to reason. (PL, 19.)

2.2 Europe and Liberalism

2.2.1 Liberal basics: the first principle

As we know, the first formulation of the Rawlsian justice as fairness states the following:

“Each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive basic liberty compatible with a similar liberty for others.”

A Theory of Justice 1971, 60.

In the 2001 Justice as Fairness: a Restatement (JFR) the first formulation is restated to the following form:

“Each person has the same indefensible claim to a fully adequate scheme of equal basic liberties, which is compatible with the same liberties for all.”

(JFR, 42.)

This premise marks the Rawlsian theory as a liberal theory at its core.

The European Union (EU) shares this trait with Rawls’s theory. The EU’s founding countries rank among the most fundamental liberal democracies in the world and the central treaties and principles of the Union aim at guaranteeing the liberal rights and values of its citizens. It is safe to

say that as a polity, the EU affirms the first principle of justice as fairness. (Kenealy et al. 2022, 138.)

The EU policies go beyond mere political liberalism, as a liberal market economy is at the heart of the European project. Establishing and withholding the common market and common industrial policies has been pivotal since the union's inception. (Kenealy et al. 2022, 35.) The liberal economic tilt is clearly visible in the European Green Deal program, which is not only a tool of environmental policy but also a liberal “growth strategy”.

Much of the Rawlsian liberalism is atoned towards moral liberties. Most of these are guaranteed at national levels and the EU citizens enjoy some of the widest rights of all in the world. Instead of a tool for moral equality, this thesis is primarily interested in justice as fairness as a tool of social justice.

In the Rawlsian theories, the end goal is what Rawls calls (on several occasions) a “well-ordered society”. The well-ordered society is a society in which the Rawlsian principles have been accepted as the basic principles governing the society's political and socioeconomic structure. In the well-ordered society both of Rawls's principles, the priority of liberties and his ideas of social justice are upheld. The political culture of the society is also guided by a shared conception of the good and reasonability. Considering that the EU and its member countries seem to fulfill both the requirements of the first and the second principle, it is reasonable to ask, is the EU a well-ordered society? One other question is also whether the EU can qualify as a well-ordered society due to the fact that most citizens and organizations of various kinds view themselves as the citizens of their nation states (Spain, France, Finland etc.) and not as European citizens. (Kenealy et al. 2022, 137.) The answer to both questions appears to be yes. The EU's status as a well-ordered society is further confirmed in this thesis. Considering the inhabitants of the EU as especially European citizens and thus affirming them as actors on that level is a bold methodological choice, but also warranted.

In the *Justice as Fairness: a Restatement* (as well as elsewhere) Rawls describes his theory as hypothetical and non-historical. This can be contrasted with the EU, as its treaties are unhypothetical (real) and historical. The EU has no doubt evolved through processes that are historical in their nature. Real events such as the second world war and the cold war have no doubt influenced the Union's rise to prominence. (Kenealy et al. 2022, 32.) On the other hand, the EU and its treaties are non-historical in at least one sense; they have been borne out of a non-coerced and

relatively abstract agreement between free and liberal states. The EU's birth can be compared to other abstract developments, such as the 18th century US Constitution. This method of voluntary agreement is clearly different from most historical (political) and often coerced developments. Many political entities have borne not out of an explicit agreement but by forces such as inheritance, wars, strife, revolutions and colonization. Compared to such instances of realpolitik, the abstract agreement of the EU stands as ahistorical. As a policy entity, however, the EU continues to respond to several historical processes as an executive organism should. Crises have appeared both domestically and abroad. (Kenealy et al. 2022, 45.)

One of the conditions for the Rawlsian justice as fairness is that of finality. When the hypothetical treaty has been agreed upon, it cannot be revised or refuted later on. The EU as an organization does not have the feature of finality. This is clearly visible in the 2016 Brexit debacle, in which the Union had to give in to the British want for an exit from the Union. (Kenealy et al. 2022, 242.) Some political entities have more constitutional finality, such as the irrefutability of the German republic and the impossibility of a states departure from the United States. Finality is also a relation that has significance for many EU sectoral policies. In the case of the EGD finality is a two edged sword: due to its long lifespan, guaranteeing as much finality for the program as possible is preferable, if the program is to succeed. On the other hand, diverging from policy finality can actually speed up the European green transition, if climate ambition is increased. (on finality, see: TJ, 131 - 135.)

There exists an interesting analogy between the idea of an impartial spectator and the European Commission. In justice as fairness the procedure of the veil of ignorance (and of abundant public information) makes every contractor of the original position in effect an impartial spectator. Such an actor is expected to act in common good instead of its own. (TJ, 190.) In the EU the Commission's mandate is to act as impartial in its relation to the member states, thus taking the role of an impartial spectator in some aspects. (Kenealy et al. 2022, 59.)

Disagreement is a pivotal part of politics. All democratic political systems include different political parties and forces with varying agendas. In most cases, however, the disagreements happen within the political systems instead of at more existential levels. Most modern nation states and their constitutions are rather stable, though separatist movements exist even in Europe. In the EU's case policy stability is considerably weaker since the existence and utility of the system itself is sometimes doubted. The legitimacy of the EU is thus often contested. (Kenealy et al. 2022, 140.)

2.2.2 EU and the second principle of justice

In the 1971 *A Theory of Justice* the second principle of justice as fairness states:

“Social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both:

- (a) reasonably expected to be to everyone’s advantage, and
- (b) attached to positions and offices open to all.

(TJ, 60.)

In the 2001 *Justice as Fairness: Restatement* the second principle is restated to the following form:

“Social and economic inequalities are to satisfy two conditions: first, they are to be attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity; and second, they are to be to the greatest benefit of the least-advantaged members of the society (the difference principle).”

(JFR, 42.)

Concerning the principles, the sub-principle of meritocracy (the second sentence in JFR) is quite fully integrated to the EU and its policies. It is the sub principle of the difference principle that is more contested. These findings are in line with the general discussion on Rawls; the first principle and the 2b argument (in TJ) are widely accepted, while 2a are seen as political and thus often arbitrary. Political parties in the European countries and the European parliament have various stances on the issue, with leftist parties siding with Rawls and right-wing parties opposing the 2a principle. The consensus in the European parliament has often been center rightist (The Guardian 2024a). This is visible in the EGD where focus is more on the economic growth and advancement of free markets, instead of social and equality issues. The EGD should be seen as a liberal economic program, not a social program.

The Rawlsian principle 2a (the difference principle in JFR) is especially radical in the fact that it imposes active wealth and income redistribution on citizens. In the European context an idea of a basic level of poverty reduction and minimum income is widely accepted. The level of such services however is contested. Many support forms of prioritarianism and others more active models, such as the difference principle. In general, welfare state policies have been more popular in Europe than in e.g. the USA. (Alesina et al. 2001.)

The main reason for neglecting social justice in the EGD and other EU programs and dossiers is that social policies are seen as a field of national policies. This is in parallel with many forms of regional and local policies in the member countries - for example in Finland the school system belongs to the mandate of municipal governance, whereas health policies are coordinated in the regional levels. The EU certainly cannot exceed its mandate, which currently (2024) does not include social policies. (Kenealy et al. 2022, 112.)

In essence the environmental and socioeconomic policies can be seen as opposites in the EU's charter. Whereas social policies are (usually) strictly national, in environmental and climate policies the EU has been granted major powers and the climate policies of the member states are regulated at the EU level, most notably in the European climate law. Many other issues fall somewhere between the shared jurisdiction of the Union and national member states. Issues relating to the environment and economy are at the heart of the EU's mandate, although some national competences remain. (Kenealy et al. 2022, 112.)

It is visible that the EGD is mainly an economic policy, albeit one with repercussions on the environment and social justice. It manages to evade both many of the most fundamental social issues, but also many of the key ideas in environmental philosophy. In many ways, the program treats nature and the environment as objects of human actions, not as subjects with their own importance. In this way the EGD is anthropocentric.

The environment and human actions do restrict the policy space of the EGD policies. Both create conditions of scarcity. Scarcity itself is an issue also visible in Rawls's theories. (e.g. JFR, 197, TJ, 127.) In a wider sense, scarcity is a prerequisite to theories of justice; without scarcity, there would be no need for social justice, because everyone would be satisfied. Rawls also ties together scarcity and the difference principle. In a situation of limited resources and the difference principle, pareto optimality might attain (and this is preferable).

Comprehensive doctrines, moral or religious, are at the centre of John Rawls's book *Political Liberalism* (1993). A comprehensive doctrine is a reasonable set of rules and customs that citizens can embrace voluntarily. Although such doctrines are important for Rawls's ethical thought, in the context of EU's climate policies and the EGD their significance is limited. The main influence moral doctrines exert on the EU agenda is through political allegiances and leanings on the national

levels of politics, legislation and governance. Many conservative parties in the EU member states have religious bindings. (Kenealy et al. 2022, 67.) Christian democratic parties (for example) often support restricted welfare state and social policies.

In politics several policy issues are often bundled together and this practice can bring about arbitrary results and far reaching policy consequences, often different than the will of the population (in the EU context one good example of arbitrariness could be the 2016 Brexit vote). Bundling moral issues with socio-economic and environmental issues could easily lead to using moral doctrines to discredit EU policies, such as the EGD. The sheer support of the religious-conservative parties (Kenealy et al. 2022, 68) and movements can lend such forces rather free hands in the European arenas, and green policies in general. Both political populists and supporters of many other comprehensive doctrines have often sided against climate and environmental action. This is especially visible in the United States, but in Europe (at least) populist parties have usually been skeptical and negative towards ambitious climate policies and EU policies in general. (Kenealy et al. 2022, 68.)

In the context of Political Liberalism one might ask, is opposing the European Union reasonable? Opposing a state structure of any kind may be seen as unreasonable, since social cooperation (in a modern society) is practically inevitable, and often must be regulated. The Union, however, is not in this sense inevitable, as most legislation on individuals and cooperation already exist on the national levels.

One might claim that the leftist-green political forces also form a powerful cluster in the EU, one with a morally liberal comprehensive doctrine. In spite of few outliers, most leftist political parties have been supporters of European integration and EU policies, among them the EGD. Some leftists have demanded even more drastic measures of social and environmental improvement. Unlike the right-wing parties, the leftist forces do not (usually) threaten the European green transition or deepening European integration (Kenealy et al. 2022, 68), but may advocate for tightening of the policy framework presented in the EGD.

The Rawlsian idea of a liberal overlapping consensus can be viewed in a number of ways in relation to policy programs such as the EGD. Should the environmental policies be included in the reasonable goals of political liberalism, their execution would be far easier and one could even proclaim a moral necessity of completing the program. In the modern political reality (of 2024) the

EGD does not have such a status. The EU is a pluralistic society of multiple languages, cultures, religions and ethnicities. As such the Rawlsian ideas of doctrines, toleration and an overlapping consensus apply to the population of the Union. In the European context no large differences are seen between the liberties of the ancients (political rights) and the liberties of the modern (rights of opinion etc. (JFR, 143)). This is mainly due to both being (ideally) guaranteed at the European and national levels. Giving up such rights may lead to a political slippery slope, as in (2024) Hungary. Both negative and positive freedoms are endorsed by the Union. (Kenealy et al. 2022, 152, 153.) On the subject of basic freedoms, John Rawls distinguishes between constitutional and procedural democracies (JFR, 145). While the EU is not a strictly constitutional regime to an extent like that of the United States, it should be described as constitutional, since without binding documents the EU would not be a Union, but more like a league of sovereign nations. (Kenealy et al. 2022, 44.)

John Rawls implies in multiple passages that the well ordered society could operate with zero economic growth (JFR, 159). This is in direct contrast to the EGD, which aims to achieve a well-ordered society through growth. Growth and capital accumulation are also often seen as opposed to distributive social policies (which the Rawlsian enterprise might entail). In (JFR, 172) Rawls acknowledges that primary (basic) goods can be publicly owned. Furthermore, ownership can be widely dispersed. These facts are of significance for the EGD, since in it many forms of both public and private funding are utilized.

Determining the position of the least-well off is another problematic situation for Rawls (TJ, 98). It is even more so when considering the European Union. Here there are two different possible ways of defining the least-well off; those of national and EU-wide. In many occasions differences of living standards vary far more decisively between the EU member countries than inside the nationstates. Leveling the differences in living standards inside the EU is a major policy goal of the EU and its institutions (and also visible in the EGD). Additional funding is made available to economically poor areas. (Kenealy et al. 2022, 174.) On a national level, major economical distributive mechanisms usually exist between growing central areas and declining peripheries. Since using the difference principle to favor the least well off in the Rawlsian scheme is so important, finding the right polity for each decision is crucial. (TJ, 285.)

3. Policy stability and Resilience

3.1 John Rawls and policy stability

When it comes to politics, and a multitude of other fields as well, notions of stability and resilience are deeply entwined. Stability is a preferred quality for a number of political theories, and the Rawlsian theory of justice as fairness is no different. Unlike resilience, which is dynamic by its nature, stability is a more static quality. To make matters less complicated, we will address stability first.

The idea and aspects of policy stability are already strongly visible in John Rawls's "a Theory of Justice" (1971) and are further expanded upon in the consequent "Political Liberalism" (1993) and "Justice as Fairness, a Restatement" (2001). The appeal to stability is an important part of the argumentation for the theories of justice as fairness and political liberalism. In fact, policy stability can be seen as a compelling reason for choosing the principles of justice as fairness in the first place. (TJ, 17.) Rawls argues that a "reasonably reliable [stable] agreement" is to be preferred (TJ 44.)

The issue of institutional and policy stability is especially remarkable in the Rawlsian theory due to the fact that "The primary subject of the principles of social justice is the basic structure of society, the arrangement of major social institutions into one scheme of cooperation" (TJ, 54). The focus of this thesis is for the most part on the justice of institutions rather than of individuals. Whereas individual action is often commanded by emotions and intuition, institutional action is guided, for the most part, by rational rules. Most remarkable such rules for (European and national) institutions are constitutions and laws of several kinds. Rawls even goes as far as defining institutions as essentially comprising such rules. (TJ, 55.) Clear institutional rules and functions are key components of political stability. These ideas are further corroborated in (TJ, 110) where Rawls reinstates the principality of institutions over citizens.

It also suffices to analyse how Political Liberalism achieves this end. Stability in this context is arrived at through both moral psychology and the logical qualities of the overlapping consensus. (PL, 141.) Rawls seems to think that stability in political liberalism is a matter surpassing in importance that of compliance, and is rather a cultural phenomenon, guiding the sense of justice the citizens of the well-ordered society obtain. (PL, 142.) The idea of an overlapping consensus

amongst the comprehensive doctrines of the given society is the key to social stability and political justice in such a system. (PL, 134.) Rawls argues that stability benefits all and justice as fairness is a way to achieve such stability. Stable institutions are also often harder to build than to destroy. Rawls argues for his theories of choice; according to his view, the priority of liberties, enhanced with the difference principle, produces superior results in stability.

In (TJ, 51) some of the earliest mentions of one of Rawls's theoretical tools, that of Reflective equilibrium, is found. We shall later see that the equilibrium is especially interesting due to its similarity towards the more modern notion of (policy) resilience. In (TJ, 120) Rawls reminds that not all equilibriums are just. In Fact the terms of equilibrium and justice are so disconnected that it is completely plausible to foresee unjust equilibriums maintaining themselves almost indefinitely.

In an important passage (TJ, 138) Rawls reiterates the idea that an efficient conception of justice should "generate its own support". This is an important idea in the sense that it brings to focus a key aspect of Rawls's thought: a stable conception of justice is self-supportive and cannot de facto be upheld with force, such as penalties and coercion. Rawls proceeds to explain that his justice as fairness is indeed a self-supportive and stable system, and that non-self-supporting conceptions can be outright refuted. (TJ, 145.) This does not mean that the states rights to use coercion should be in all instances abolished. The state (in the EU usually individual member states; EU can levy economic sanctions etc.) retains coercive powers. (TJ, 240.) Rawls's idea of self sustaining justice departs from the earlier contract theories that often are far more coercive. Voluntary upholding of covenants is of key importance. (TJ, 346.) One important prerequisite to a public conception of justice is the full publicity and conformance of the laws and legal rules. (TJ, 238.) These not only reaffirm the legal order, but also guarantee equality and thus enhance policy stability.

3.2 Resilience as a theoretical concept

Resilience is one of the key notions in this thesis. Resilience is widely seen as a systemic capacity to withstand shocks, changes and transitions. A resilient system can remain operational when facing turbulence. There is no doubt that some form of resilience is a desired feature of any social or political system and what makes resilience a key notion in the just transition's theory is that there exists both socioeconomic and ecological resilience. A well-ordered society would aim to address both, and indeed, so does the European Green Deal (below). Whilst studying resilience is a

relatively recent development, similar ideas are already visible in the Rawlsian emphasis on stability.

The interlinked nature of the politics of resilience provides both problems and possibilities for the future. An argument made in this thesis is that although often implicit in the EGD, increasing resilience is in fact one of the most important factors for the success of the program. This is especially true for social justice instruments, such as the “Just Transitions Mechanism”. If catering to the needs of the recently disenfranchised succeeds, the EU can gain resilience through social cohesion. On the other hand, the biggest risk to the successful adaptation of the EGD program is to lose its policy resilience and collapse under the weight of different crises and turbulences. This risk is made more dire by the fact that the program has a long time frame of thirty years, 2020-2050.

The EU Commission aims to increase resilience in the EU zone in multiple ways, for example through a “Strategic Foresight Initiative”. This means subjecting all EU policies to an impact assessment. One of the benefits of mapping out concrete emissions reduction targets is that such targets can be revised (to become more ambitious) at a later time. In this way, a common framework can be tightened compared to what was earlier thought possible. This is exactly what has happened at the EU level. (Fetting C. 2020, 11, 12.)

“Resilience, as defined by the European Commission, is “the ability not only to withstand and cope with challenges, but also to undergo transitions in a sustainable, fair, and democratic manner.”

(Fetting C. 2020, 10.)

Emphasis on resilience is a more recent development, and much of the literature has appeared after the times of Rawls's, although he does address policy stability on a number of occasions. The importance of resilience is propounded by its multifaceted role in socially and environmentally sustainable societies. A well-ordered society is a resilient society.

Another aspect of justice as fairness and policy resilience is the “toleration of the intolerant.” (TJ, 219.) Rawls argues that a good (ideally well-ordered) society is one which is so stable that it can resist deviations and remain operational (the definition of resilience) even when facing problems like unreasonable intolerance of people and sects. Rawls similarly believes that enabling deviations such as civil disobedience and conscientious refusal are actually good for a well-ordered society, which should not falter due to such forces and events because of its institutional stability and policy resilience.

Avoiding irreversible (again, reversible falling under resilience) damage many times requires collective decision making. (TJ, 271.) Rawls contests that the best way to “secure the stability of just institutions” is to follow the lexical ordering of his two principles, with liberties taking priority status. Effective sense of justice “tends to stabilize just social arrangements.” (TJ, 336.) According to Rawls, the greatest threats towards policy stability come from problems relating to selfishness and common decision making. Active measures can be taken to increase social trust and thus stability.

At the level of the citizen, the Rawlsian principles of social justice can be equated with being able to execute a rational plan for life. (TJ, 411.) The right for pursuing one's own rational plans is also visible in the EGD.

In (TJ, 436) Rawls again reiterates the role of stability and justice:

“... since the basic structure of such a society is just, and these arrangements are stable with respect to the society’s public conception of justice, its members will in general have the appropriate sense of justice and a desire to see their institutions affirmed.” In chapter VIII of a Theory of Justice, Rawls directs special attention towards stability. (TJ, 453.) Stability is a desired quality in most (if not all) macro level schemes of social cooperation.

As noted before, the Rawlsian concept of equilibrium comes close to the more recent concept of resilience. Rawls explains:

“... an equilibrium is stable whenever departures from it, caused, say by external disturbances, call into play forces within the system that tend to bring it back to this equilibrium state, unless of course, the outside shocks are too great.” (TJ, 457.)

Later in (TJ, 497) Rawls does mention that not all just arrangements are inherently in a state of stable equilibrium. He does argue, however, that well executed, justice as fairness does have the desired trait of equilibrium stability. The (equilibrium) resilience of the EGD is a key to its successful completion, especially due to its long lifespan (of some 30 years to begin with). Appeal to social justice can increase the resilience of the program considerably, especially if the appeal to a public conception of justice can be extended.

In a Theory of Justice Rawls often goes beyond the institutional arrangements of the desirable well-ordered society and addresses issues such as personal psychologies and emotional aspects of a

society bound by strong common views on social justice. In TJ considerable focus is also given to issues such as the family and upbringing of new citizens. (TJ, 490.) These are not assessed here, since the focus of this thesis is on the institutional structures of a well-ordered society and European climate policy in general.

Finally, in chapter IX of TJ, Rawls tries to equate his theory of justice with the idea of rationality in general. Throughout the Theory of Justice Rawls aims to show that choosing justice as fairness is not only tempting but also a rational (perhaps the only rational) choice. The stability and easily reachable equilibrium of justice as fairness plays a large part in this argument. Showing that justice as fairness is congruent with “goodness as rationality” is important to Rawls. (TJ, 513.) Rawls goes on to state: “The greater the lack of congruence, the greater the likelihood, other things equal, of instability...” (TJ, 576). Combining both public and private efforts is important for the realization of the well-ordered society (TJ, 522), and the EGD does reflect this tendency in for example combining both public and private funding. Furthermore, a distinct division of labor is advocated in the EGD as well as in Rawls. (TJ, 529.)

3.3 Resilience as a theoretical framework

Resilience is a term with a multitude of definitions and the terms use far exceeds its use in describing justice and policy issues. Especially in ecological literature, several veins of resilience are described. Let us delve into resilience as a theoretical framework. Building on the idea of social resilience as a theoretical framework, scientists Keck and Sakdapolrak (2013) see social resilience as having three main dimensions: coping capacities, adaptive capacities and transformative capacities, (this same framework is also found in Saja et al. 2018). The Keck and Sakdapolrak analysis is also closely tied to the fields of environmental ethics and ecological justice. Beneficial to this thesis, these are generally the most frequent field of application for social resilience.

“With the notion of resilience, [he] addressed “the persistence of [ecological] systems and their ability to absorb change and disturbance and still maintain the same relationships between populations and state variables” (Holling 1973, 14). This (ecological) resilience was measured by the magnitude of disturbance that a system could tolerate and still persist.”

Keck and Sakdapolrak (2013, 6.)

The current ecological and climate situation is not addressed through political measures enough to prevent and cope with the ecological and environmental crisis: there is also a need for adaptation

and transformation. The ideals of adaptation and transformation work well with both natural disasters and climate issues. Many social resilience studies also focus on the actual process of natural catastrophe management and can thus be directly linked to the field of climate politics. The idea of transformation also works well with the just transitions framework. According to Keck and Sakdapolrak, social resilience is institutionally determined. (Keck & Sakdapolrak 2013, 12.) This is well in line with what we find in Rawls's justice as fairness and the conception of well-ordered society. Social resilience is intimately linked to social equality and justice. Keck and Sakdapolrak argue that in social resilience, the spheres of the social and the ecological cannot be separated from each other.

The contrast between one-sided vulnerability and resilience has been propounded in multiple studies, for example in Benedikter, R., & Fathi, K. study "What is a resilient society?" (2017). In their analysis the focus is on resilient societies and global resilience issues. They also claim that the discourse on resilience is inherently multidisciplinary. Like Keck and Sakdapolrak, Benedikter and Fathi note the potential of transformative resilience and learning from crises.

Saja et al. (2018) use many of the same theoretical heuristics as Keck and Sakdapolrak (2013). They also recognise social resilience as a theoretical framework, but point to multiple shortcomings in the field. Conducting a meta-analysis on existing research papers, Saja et al. find several key factors that enhance and sustain resilience in a society and in political systems. There are remarkable similarities in the Saja et al. factors and the Rawlsian Justice as fairness.

The "sub-dimensions" of the Saja et al. (2018) analysis are: social structure, social capital, social mechanisms, social equity and social beliefs. Several effects are corroborated: citizens with higher incomes and education tend to have higher resilience (when facing crisis), communities with strong common spirit, trust and high levels of social capital overachieve. Important finding for this thesis is the fact that social cohesion correlates positively with high resilience. Many instruments in line with the two Rawlsian principles of justice are also mentioned, such as social safety nets. Social equity is also distinctly mentioned. (Saja et al. 2018, 868-870.)

Buckle (2006) reiterates the relation of resilience and vulnerability. High vulnerability often coincides with low resilience. There is a clear relation between vulnerability and Rawls's second principle. The (economically, socially) worst off are usually also the most vulnerable. Resilience can be improved through determinate policies and actions - this can be described as disaster management. Bolstering social cohesion can also be identified as having a positive impact on social

resilience in the communities and larger entities - along with other Rawlsian basics such as social trust and social capital. (Maguire & Hagan 2007, 17.)

The idea of ecological resilience is simple: in many instances natural habitats can receive certain amounts of disturbance, whilst remaining operational and elastic. Crossing these boundaries turns a healthy environment to endangered, thus changing its system state. According to R. Cretney, notions of adaptive capacity and transformation are of key importance for an analysis concerning resilience. Adaptive capacity here refers to the robustness of the resistance to change. Social and ecological resilience are often equated here, as is seen in both Cretney R. (2014) and Neil Adger (2000). Indeed, an adaptive cycle can help integrate both social and ecological systems. More sudden changes may also erupt, leading to transformations. Socio-environmental resilience is a complex system. (Cretney 2014, 631.) Another thing to note is also that despite their similarities, social and ecological systems remain separate.

Although venturing in some ways past the boundaries of the EGD, resilience concerning biodiversity also deserves attention. The relations of biodiversity and resilience are both complex and important. A basic idea in Garry Peterson's (et al.) 1998 article is that (wide ranging) biodiversity with large quantities of species, visibly increases the biomes ecological resilience. The team divides the biodiversity-resilience discussion into four models: "species richness-diversity", "idiosyncratic", "rivet", and "drivers and passengers" models. Though simplistic, the species richness-diversity model is already visible in Charles Darwin (1859). According to the richness-diversity model the more species there are in the area, the more resilient the area is. The model has been questioned by Adger (2000, 349). The idiosyncratic model states bluntly that the species endemic in the region determine its resilience. The rivet model is a more recent development. According to the Erlich and Erlich (1981) rivet hypothesis the resilience is threatened the more species with similar trophic levels go extinct. Only when all rivets break, is the structure destroyed. The drivers and passengers model (by Walker B. 1992, 1995) places species in two groups: the drivers affect resilience far more than the passengers. The driver species often occupy a higher trophic level than the passengers. A crude synthesis of the models is presented in Peterson G. et al. (1998, 9,10.) The hypothesis that wider biodiversity increases resilience is also backed up (in Peterson G. et al. 1998, 13, 14) by concrete examples and empirical analysis.

The abstract of Neil Adger's 2000 article maps some of the overlap between social and ecological resilience:

“[This article defines] social resilience as the ability of groups or communities to cope with external stresses and disturbances as a result of social, political and environmental change. This definition highlights social resilience in relation to the concept of ecological resilience which is a characteristic of ecosystems to maintain themselves in the face of disturbance. There is a clear link between social and ecological resilience, particularly for social groups or communities that are dependent on ecological and environmental resources for their livelihoods.”

Adger, W. N. (2000). Social and ecological resilience: are they related?. *Progress in human geography*, 24(3), 347-364. 347.

The health of a social community can positively affect its care for the resilience of the surrounding nature. Adger’s definition of social vulnerability is also inherently ecological in its scope; vulnerable communities are threatened by ecological crises they might fail to adapt to. (Adger 2000, 348.) One of the largest differences between social and ecological resilience is that social phenomena are inherently affected by institutions and knowledge, while the natural is in this sense “natural” and free of human intervention. No doubt John Rawls would agree that no natural laws defining institutions exist; questions of justice are moral, not inevitable, in their essence.

Lance H. Gunderson’s article “Ecological resilience - in theory and application” (2000) offers one more take on resilience, aiming to define it in a rather comprehensive way. An idea of resilience as a bouncing back deviation from equilibrium is stated. Gunderson ties the discussion on resilience to a four-stage model of ecosystem change, as presented by Holling CS (1986, 1992). The four-stage model describes the ecological process of succession, a cycle that is quite independent of humans. The resilience of the biome is different in different stages of succession. The disruptive actions of man thus affect the environment differently, depending on the stage of the succession (Gunderson, 2000, 430.) Gunderson himself advocates an approach he calls adaptive management. He concludes that active policies can be adopted to better the resilience of natural habitats. (Gunderson 2000, 434.) With the Gunderson analysis we complete a circle of resilience: resilience is defined as the capacity to deviate from equilibrium (as in the Rawlsian reflective equilibrium) and remain stable. We will return to themes of stability and resilience at the end of chapter 5.

3.4 Resilience and social cohesion

In an excellent article “Defining social cohesion” Burns et al. (2018) argue for the importance of social cohesion. They among many others see social cohesion as a positive force, and an important tool for enhancing both economic and social development. (Burns et al. 2018, 1.) Social cohesion is

entwined with many of the goals and products of appeals to social justice, such as those found in the Rawlsian enterprise of Justice as fairness. The idea of social cohesion permeates many important aspects of social science and can be traced back to early thinkers such as Durkheim and Tönnies.

In the Burns et al. article many positive qualities are attributed to social cohesiveness, the most important ones for this thesis being “Greater inclusiveness and tolerance”, more robust economic growth (important for the EGD as a growth strategy) and importantly, increased stability of the political systems. Downsides of social cohesion can relate to deteriorating positions for minorities of multiple sorts. (Burns et al. 2018, 2, 3.)

The positive relation between social cohesion and economic growth have been corroborated on several occasions, such as in a Sommer C. (2019) paper titled “Social cohesion and economic development: unpacking the relationship”. Social stability and cohesion are further analysed in Madonsela S. (2017). Multiple definitions for social cohesion exist, with many linked to social trust, sense of belonging to communities and feelings of common identity. In the Rawlsian context this comes close to the justice as fairness goal of a common sense of justice and a shared conception of the good, to be enacted in the well-ordered society.

Burns et al. quote an OECD report stating:

‘A cohesive society works towards the well-being of all of its members, minimising disparities and avoiding marginalisation. It entails three major dimensions: fostering cohesion by building networks of relationships, trust and identity between different groups; fighting discrimination, exclusion and excessive inequalities; and enabling upward social mobility’

(OECD 2012, 52-53.)

Other core institutions involved in the social cohesion discussion include the United Nations, World Bank and the Council of Europe. (Burns et al 2018, 5.) Burns and the others make an analogy between physical and policy cohesion; like cohesive physical objects, socially cohesive polities and policies are often less likely to fall apart. On a national level, social cohesion correlates with peace and prosperity. Such cohesion also often includes attributes such as solidarity and non-coerciveness, and in fact, non-coercion is an integral part of the Burns et al. definition of social cohesion, along

with forms of cooperation. (Burns et al. 2018, 10.) Here, the natures of social cohesion and the Rawlsian principles again entwine.

Other definitions of social cohesion also exist; for example C. A. Larsen (2014) sees social cohesion to be analysed strictly as in relation to forms of social trust, and provides statistical methods to uncover such relations. J. Jenson defines social cohesion as social inclusion and a form of social capital (Jenson 2010, 9) and Gluckman et al. (2023) relate social cohesion to political institutions stating in their paper “Addressing the challenges to social cohesion”:

“A society’s resilience to stresses and rapid changes such as those wrought by the climate crisis, technological developments, natural disasters, and pandemics, is not simply a function of the effectiveness of local and central governance. It is also a matter of the psychological, social, and economic well-being of the community...”

(Gluckman et al. 2023, 1.)

Jenson describes that social cohesion has been an important goal of EU policies, dating back until at least the Maastricht agreement of 1992. (Jenson 2010, 4.) Completing the relation of resilience and social cohesion Jenson states:

“Effective [political] institutions are those with ‘room to manoeuvre’, which depends in turn on the level of social cohesion, because politicians will be able to realise their development projects without being undermined by political and other threats from competing elites or the population”.

Jenson 2010, 13.

Here the relations of social cohesion, resilience (room to maneuver) and the policy stability required to successfully complete the European Green Deal program are highlighted. We will return to these themes at the end of chapter 7.

4. Just transitions: an overarching analysis

4.1 The just green transition

The concept of a just green transition is one of the most prominent in this thesis (and the wider environmental and ecological literatures for that matter). But what is a “just green transition”? The term describes a move (a transition) from fossil fuels and polluting industries towards an ecologically sustainable economy and green power production. The addition of the term “just” relates to the idea that widespread reforms in industry and the energy-sector should be conducted in a socially just way, avoiding problems like mass unemployment, unequal burden from pollution and declining access to energy such as electricity. These are at the centre of the action in the EGD. The EGD is, in effect, the world’s largest attempt at achieving the just green transition, within the European Union's borders and beyond. Generally speaking, changing the energy sector is a vast undertaking since it is both a significant employer, but also an immensely capital intensive and a revenue/profit maker for national economies. Different economic instruments should be utilised to both attract capital to more sustainable forms of energy production and to ensure proper social security to those losing their jobs due to the transitions. (Newell & Mulvaney 2013, 134.) The green transition could counter fossil fuel economies adverse effects on land-use and political stability etc.

The environmental sub-science of just transitions has both normative, economical, and other repercussions. The questions of justice centering around the technical transformation from fossil fuels to renewable energy production have also been labelled as questions of “energy justice”. Most of the literature on energy justice focuses on technical issues and are only partly normative. In this chapter of the thesis just transition is seen as a multidisciplinary phenomenon - in addition to the transformation in energy production, many other aspects of transition are taken into consideration, such as adaptation to climate change and practical tools to support the transition, such as carbon taxation and emission trading. All are analysed with social justice in mind.

In their paper, “Energy justice: Conceptual insights and practical applications” (2015) Benjamin K. Sovacool and Michael H. Dworkin present a handy basic analysis on the justice impacts of just transition and energy justice in general. They call fossil fuel-caused climate change “the greatest energy-related externality of all time.” (Sovacool & Dworkin 2015, 436.) The climate is a common pool resource and its pollution is a classic case of the “tragedy of the commons” problem. Holding citizens accountable for emissions is hard and complex. According to Sovacool and Dworkin the

notion of energy justice can be utilised in various forms including: as a conceptual tool, as an analytical tool and as a decision making tool.

Energy justice as an analytical tool helps to determine and observe who in fact bears the brunt when it comes to the energy transition; who benefits and who loses. It is for example clear that jobs will be lost in coal mining communities, the oil extraction industry and several other related fields. The problem is propounded by the fact that the benefits of climate are far more widely dispersed than the very specific negative economic impacts on the fossil fuel industries.

Inclusion of parties such as labour unions into the just transition discourse is also surprisingly logical, as changes in employment and corporate revenues are a vital part of both the transition, and the fairness in a 'just' transition. Different economic instruments should be utilised to both attract capital to more sustainable forms of energy production and to ensure proper social security to those losing their jobs due to the transitions. (Newell & Mulvaney 2013, 134.) Perhaps due to its political power, the citizens also regularly overestimate the coal industry's economic significance. (Evans & Phelan 2016, 332.)

Sovacool and Dworkin argue that in the Rawlsian framework, greatest challenges in energy justice are accessibility and subsistence, to generate "an energy system that gives people an equal shot of getting the energy they need, energy systems that generate income and enrich lives." (Sovacool & Dworkin 2015, 438.) Awareness of the themes of energy justice can bolster righteous policy making and good governance and sustainable policies could follow. Both intra- and intergenerational justice should be considered since intergenerational reasoning is at the heart of many attempts at just transitions (though not necessarily the EGD). Sovacool and Dworkin conclude by stating that the aspects of energy justice are widely synthetic.

Newell and Mulvaney pinpoint that (relatively) cheap energy is the cornerstone of the economies in modern western industrialised countries (such as those of Europe). Similarly, many underdeveloped countries suffer from severe energy poverty. Global trade only widens this gap. (Newell & Mulvaney 2013, 135.) One of the problems is that many ways to alleviate energy poverty lead to growing emissions as well. The green transition could counter fossil fuel economies adverse effects on land-use and political stability among other policy areas.

Newell and Mulvaney conclude:

"The burdens of the transition to a low-carbon economy will be unevenly distributed, particularly if 'clean energy' is pursued without attention to energy justice."

(Newell & Mulvaney 2013, 138.)

In their paper “Just transition: integrating climate, energy and environmental justice” (2018) McCauley and Heffron aim at an overarching analysis to bring together the burgeoning subfields of environmental justice under the framework of the just transition. Their focus is on both procedural and distributive justice. (McCauley & Heffron 2018, 1.) Although they mainly refer to the capabilities approach (of Amartya Sen (1999) and Martha Nussbaum (2013)), John Rawls’s justice as fairness is equally effective as a distributive theory. All of the environmental/ecological justice subfields should be utilised to combat issues such as global warming and fossil fuel dependency. Change on these issues has been painstakingly slow. The European Union has been the best of the major global economic actors at reducing emissions (over 20% during the 1990-2018 period) but this achievement remains far from EGD climate neutrality targets for 2035 and 2050.

McCauley and Heffron define just transition as “a fair and equitable process of moving towards a post-carbon society.” (McCauley & Heffron 2018, 2.) The opportunities and costs of the transition can be seen in terms of both global and local justice. Things such as ethnicity and geographical proximity may matter. The significance of vicinities is however downplayed in their analysis on distributive justice.

In their 2016 paper “Transition to a post-carbon society: Linking environmental justice and just transition discourses” Evans, G., and Phelan, L. describe the current fossil fuel powered energy industry as hegemonic. In order to limit the potentially catastrophic consequences of climate change and environmental pollution the fossil fuel hegemony should, or even must, be challenged by more sustainable alternatives, in this case, green energy. As is visible in the environmental justice movement, large companies and state entities can be criticised from a grassroots perspective. These movements can entail agendas such as post-carbon society and end of coal. (Evans & Phelan 2016, 330.)

Ending coal use is essential since it is the least environmentally efficient form of fuel. The downside is that the coal industry is a large employer and carries a remarkable economic significance (in EU at least regionally). One of the great challenges of just transition related justice is to find ways to shift the workforce from the dated fossil fuel industry towards green energy production and infrastructure. Problematically many of the new jobs created by green industries reside in different regions than the consequent job losses in the fossil fuels industry, and require different expertise. In the EU, particularly Poland has been slow to phase out coal, since coal has a

remarkable importance for the Polish economy. Countries such as Denmark and Sweden on the other hand have benefited from their pioneering role in the various fields of renewability.

Evans and Phelan analyse the very active lobbying and policy-inflicting attempts to affect the fossil fuel industries in their case study on eastern parts of Australia (Australia and New Zealand being remarkable actors in the just transitions scene). Such opposition to policies of just transition include media campaigns against both policies and personnel advocating for the green transition, claims of economic demise and job market turmoil.

Grassroots environmental activism often focuses on opposing specific polluting projects and enterprises, such as gas pipelines, coal mines and polluting facilities such as incinerators. Workers unions represent a certain form of citizen mobilisation as well, but they remain divided - some advocate for green policies, while others protect fossil fuel related jobs. (Evans & Phelan 2016, 334,335.) The Evans & Phelan analysis can be concluded:

“A synergy of environmental justice and just transition campaigns challenges economic, social and political injustices that cause oppression and insecurity, including social and economic inequality based on class, gender, race and other oppressions.”

(Evans & Phelan 2016, 332.)

4.2 Just transition and policy instruments

The discussion on just transitions has far more wide-reaching implications than the theoretical discussion on the several qualities of climate-relating justice and abstract promises of equality. In this section some instruments of transition are uncovered.

Among policy instruments, carbon taxation is widely seen as one of the best tools for enhancing the sustainability and encouraging just transitions of national economies and societies. Carbon taxation rewards more efficient methods of production in the economy and punishes the biggest polluters most. As the levels of revenue from the carbon taxation scheme increase, so does the civic importance of the carbon tax. In the article “Supporting Carbon Taxes: The Role of Fairness” (2022) Sommer et al. analyse the distributional repercussions of carbon taxation, drawing on statistical inference, and the public perception of the taxation in the views of citizens.

There exist many ways to redistribute the income generated by the carbon taxation scheme. This is important for both a Rawlsian and a just transitions analysis since the taxation is in effect an instrument of income transfer - and thus could be expected to fall under the second principle of

Rawlsian justice as fairness. Sommer et al. (2022, 4) present several possible models to allocating the income produced by a carbon tax, the most popular ones being: a lump sum transfer (appealing to equality), targeted transfers to the least well-off (appealing to equity) and thirdly the investing the surplus back to the green economy (appealing to intergenerational transfer).

Which of the alternatives would a Rawlsian analysis prefer? An obvious candidate would be targeting the least well-off, as this is expected by the second principle, and the difference principle in particular (that all economic differences should be in the interest of the least-well off). Rawls claims that his principles of fairness, and thus the second principle in its entirety, should be accepted by the society. This would mean choosing the equity approach to carbon taxation. In the actual case study (carried out in Germany) however, (Sommer et al. 2022, 6) found that among citizens, reinvesting the profits of the carbon tax back into a green economy was the most preferred option. Lump sum was the second most preferred instrument, and the equity scheme finished last in the study.

Another popular tool for limiting greenhouse and other emissions and encouraging more efficient and “greener” energy is the emission trading system: in it polluters can purchase and trade rights for emissions. Emission trading can lead to “emission hotspots” that can place populations (often of minorities and low economic standing) in an unjust situation. (Solomon & Lee 2000, 34.) The problem of local pollution and racial segregation is sparsely mentioned in the EGD. However, a Solomon & Lee paper directs attention to the right places. The main fields of application of modern emission trading schemes are still today (2024) energy utilities and heavy industry. Emission trading is a good way to “internalise externalities”, that is, to give a price to harmful pollution. (Solomon & Lee 2000, 35.) The market mechanism in the trading scheme leaves room for tactics - this is preferable, since the market structure enables better efficiency than, say, quotas.

Types of emissions also vary; many greenhouse-gases, such as carbon dioxide (CO₂), are universally mixed so that their impact is spread widely instead of locally. Pollutants such as CO, SO₂, NO_x on the other hand, disproportionately affect the vicinity of the factories or utilities. (Solomon & Lee 2000, 36.) Rawls’s idea of a society as a closed system might lead to problems here since some pollutants go beyond national boundaries and some forms of pollution affect certain areas unjustly over others. Geographical injustices are not Rawls’s strength.

The impact of emission trading is dependent on establishing an effective price for the emissions. Though Rawls does not mention emission trading in his primary texts, there is no reason to doubt that a Rawlsian well-ordered society, with its difference principle, could not entail emission trading

with strict and severe prices for carbon and other pollutants. Emission trading is also a popular tool for both managing and hastening energy transitions. The revenue from such a scheme could then be used to increase justice and benefit the least-well off, whether they suffer from pollution or poverty.

In the EGD emission trading is referred to as ETS, and reforming and utilising the ETS to its full extent is preferred in the program. ETS is one of the most important tools to realise the just green transition in the EU.

Adaptation to the changing (warming) environmental conditions is also a big part of the just transitions paradigm. Global warming increases the severity and likelihood of natural catastrophes, and insurance programs are a good and necessary dimension of controlling such catastrophes. Indeed, many different forms of insurance exist. In their paper “Natural hazard insurance in Europe: tailored responses to climate change are needed” (2011, 14), Schwarze et al. analyse the hazard insurance policies in a number of (Central) European countries. A common insurance program is in harmony with Rawlsian principles, in that it levels the (random, under the veil) differences in vulnerability and shares liabilities. Tying the payments to ownership of estates and other physical objects at risk places greatest weight on the owners, thus fulfilling the difference principle. Rawls does not define whether the (social) insurance programs of the societies should be publicly or privately owned. Similarly, we can leave the actual questions of the organisation of hazard insurance to the legislators operating within the well-ordered society. Agreement on the importance of a unified insurance program does not have to be met with a specific stance on the political left-right axis.

Here the links of resilience and just transitions are also reinforced. Separating natural and human-induced disasters is a good idea, as not only do climate, environmental and geological crises affect humans, but human action can also cause disasters for nature (think of chemical leaks, overgrazing and species extinction due to habitat-loss). As it seems that some level of global warming is inevitably going to take place (or has already taken place), it is only reasonable that the just transitions paradigm should extend beyond mere energy sector and entail preparations for adaptation to climate change - such as insurance schemes.

Insuring against climate induced catastrophes is also a vital tool to increase resilience in Europe and other regions. Many different disaster insurance policies exist in European countries, but some have called for a unified legislation in the European Union member states. Such concrete legislative effort is not found in the EGD, although the wider issue of climate adaptation and natural disasters is somewhat covered.

In the webpages of the European Commission (under heading European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, 2023) is stated:

“The EU develops policies that focus on prevention and the reduction of disaster risks as these actions will reduce the impact of adverse events. Increasing the resilience of infrastructure, ecosystems, society, and the economy of the EU is an important strand of disaster risk management work.”

4.3 Pollution and responsibility

Another key issue related to the just green transitions paradigm is that of polluter responsibility. The theme has appeared again and again in international climate negotiations, and has often led to stark differences in opinion between developed and less developed economies.

According to some, Rawls’s theory as a nonhistorical one fits best with a nonhistorical theory of responsibility of emissions and adaptation. Such a view is promulgated in Paul Bou-Habib’s article “Climate Justice and Historical Responsibility.” (Bou-Habib P. 2019.) Habib argues that large historical polluters and contributors to global warming (mainly industrialised countries like the European ones) cannot be held accountable, since there was no awareness of wrongdoing during historical times. The historical polluters argument mainly takes two forms:

Unjust enrichment: States acquire historical climate duties if they have been enriched as a result of unjustly excessive emissions undertaken by past actors. (Page 2011, 2012.)

Unjust inheritance: States acquire historical climate duties if they have inherited benefits from past actors who undertook unjustly excessive emissions and who thus originally owed those benefits to others in compensation for their unjustly excessive emissions. (Duus Otterström, 2014.)

One of the greatest problems in the historical stance, in Bou-Habib’s view, is that the historical distribution of resources is socially complex; tracking the just or unjust inheritance of emissions is cumbersome. Rawls himself claims that historical inheritances “must [should] have been properly acquired” and “all must have had fair opportunities to earn income, to learn wanted skills and so on.” (PL, 266.) Due to Rawls’s focus on current fair distribution, Bou-Habib proposes that duties such as cutting greenhouse emissions and mitigating the effects of climate change should be distributed not on historical basis, but in proportion to current wealth. Analysing the ecopolicies of Great Britain, Bou-Habib claims that, anyhow, the responsibilities on emissions (depending on the

strictness of the view) only really begin in 1990 (first IPCC report) or 2008 (the end of term for the Kyoto agreement). (Bou-Habib 2019, 1304.)

Schussler, R. (2011, 276) reaches a similar outcome as Bou-Habib, stating that,

“First world countries [like the European ones] need not accept an obligation to compensate others for an alleged ecological debt which they accumulated during the process of industrialization. The language of debt is highly misleading in the present case because debts usually imply a strong obligation of repayment.”

According to Schussler, strict liability cannot be obtained in the case of historical greenhouse gas emissions. Strict liability extends accountability also to those that have not been found culpable. Such liability is common in business, where faulty products must be withdrawn from the market at the producer's expense. According to Schussler strict liability for climate damage is moral in contrast to legal - no penal system exists for such damage, and even if such did exist, the historical actor cannot be held accountable and liable (Schussler R. 2011, 265). Other critics have accused historical actors of ‘transgenerational free riding’ or misappropriation of common goods (tragedy of commons). In Schussler's view these critiques also fail. (Schussler 2011, 271.)

Basing policies non-historically on the current distribution of wealth might be preferred - and better in line with the hypothetical and nonhistorical nature of Rawlsian philosophy. Aiding less developed economies in achieving just energy transitions can still yield benefits, even if they are not mandated by perceived historical liabilities.

Responsibility between created emissions and pollution inducers exists between countries as in Bou-Habib P. (2019) but also inside countries, between regions, cities, and the countryside. (Schlosberg et al. 2014, 8.) Such responsibilities have wide-reaching Rawlsian characteristics and are key parts in the energy justice and just transitions discourse. Local actors can help alleviate discrepancies in regional and local environmental responsibilities and developments. However, in a Rawlsian note, one might wonder whether one's residency can truly be a variable in the Rawlsian original agreement. Wouldn't the exclusion of the location of the citizens lead to a fair bit of relativism?

5. The European Green Deal

5.1. The European Union

The most important political institution uncovered in this thesis is the European Union (EU). The EU is a complex supranational political organ composed of several sub-institutions, the most important ones being: the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council of the European Union, and the European Commission. Other institutions include among others the European Central Bank (ECB) and the Court of Justice of the European Union (Kenealy et al. 2022, 54-73). There also exist other less significant institutions such as the committees of Permanent Representatives (COREPER). Most of the institutions are physically located in the Benelux region or Strasbourg, with ECB residing in Frankfurt.

The most important EU sub-institution for this thesis is the European Commission (also referred to as “Commission”), since the European Green Deal (EGD) program has been produced and presented by the Commission. The Commission is the sole entity capable of submitting law propositions to be agreed by the European parliament and the European Council. (Kenealy et al. 2022, 55.) The Commission is to have the whole Unions best in mind and should transcend national politics. The Commission's robust role in crafting European climate policies (most notably in the EGD) does inevitably depend on the mandate given to the Commission by the European Council (representing the member countries) and the European Parliament (representing the citizens). (Kenealy et al. 2022, 56.) As it stands, the Commission is the most reasonable institution of analysis for a thesis focused on the EGD. The goal of emissions neutrality is fixed in EU legislation.

The term European Green Deal (referred in this thesis as EGD) commonly refers to the strategic document announced by the European Commission 11.12.2019 in Brussels. The document is addressed to the European parliament, European council, the Council, European economic and social committee and the committee of the regions. (EGD 2019, 1.) In the EGD document, the framework and targets of European climate and environmental policy for the first half of the 21st century are laid out. Important goals are presented for both 2035 and 2050. The EGD report is primarily an economic plan. It falls under the wider category of just transitions literature in the field of climate and environment ethics.

In this thesis, an abridgement is attempted between the Green Deal premises and the philosophical framework of John Rawls, most notably that of “Justice as Fairness” (as advocated in the 1971 “A Theory of Justice” and the 2001 “Justice as Fairness: Restatement”). Outright, the greatest

difference between the texts (EGD and Justice as Fairness) is structural - Justice as fairness is a theoretical and hypothetical construction on the field of social justice. It abstracts, in most parts, from stating the concrete (economical, legal, institutional) steps that would lead to its goal, the birth of the well-ordered society, commanded by a shared sense of justice and a common idea of the good. The Green Deal, on the other hand, is a very real and empirical set of tools and goals, meant to instruct concrete environmental policies. Yet the Green Deal can also be seen as aiming for a well-ordered society.

The different focuses of the two sources can not only tear apart, but also complement each other. The two texts also have in common a particular emphasis: that of scientifically proven premises. In Rawls, there is a logical prowess of analytical philosophy and in the EGD that of scientifically proven insights on the climate, environment, and ecology in general.

The findings of John Rawls in the two principles of his “justice as fairness”, the primacy of liberties, egalitarian social policies and a competitive meritocracy, are all values and institutions deeply embedded to the DNA of modern, liberal (Western), democracies. The European Union (EU) being one of the leading institutions and political actors among Western liberal democracies, the principles of fairness are widely visible in its functioning. (Kenealy et al. 2022, 153.) The EGD is no exception. Though social justice and more procedural implications of justice are explicitly mentioned in the report several times, for the most part, the principles of justice and liberty assume an endogenous role.

In the Western liberal democracies both liberties of the individual and social justice are so well constitutionally and institutionally agreed on, that they become submerged when discussing more mundane aspects of a democratic policies, such as the economy and (in the EGDs case) the environment. This could be described as absorption. If more profoundly analysed, however, the significance of theories of justice in EGD is vast.

During the latter half of the tumultuous 20th century, John Rawls’s formulation of social justice, Justice as Fairness, became a widely respected analytical answer to the debate on justice and distribution. Rawls leaves open whether his ideal society should be achieved by capitalist or socialist economic regimes. During the late 20th century the collapse of the communist (or state capitalist?) regimes of eastern Europe and elsewhere, left the capitalist economic system as the “de facto” only viable economic system in the developed countries. Capitalism is also a central tenet of the international economic infrastructures such as IMF, World Bank and WTO. The European Union through its emphasis on free trade, competitiveness and standardisation remains one of the

most important global communities of capitalist Western democracies (Kenealy et al. 2022, 168). Some observers have named the recent capitalist developments economic “Neoliberalism”. It could be argued that both the EU and the recent EGD report are tools for advancing neoliberalism, as their focus is on economic growth and emphasis is on advancing the current liberal policy framework (EGD 2019, for example p.2) - instead of a radical change. It should be noted though, that the Green Deal is a piece of realpolitik, and thus aims for practical solutions.

What John Rawls envisioned was a strong society, united by not only protection of basic rights and liberties, but also by social policy and income transfer/distribution bridging social gaps. At the apex of this development has been the welfare state, consisting of both public and private sectors. Though models for such a system vary in different societies and nations, all of the (current 2024) countries of the European Union can be described as having a somewhat “mixed economy”. In a mixed economy, the ownership and production of goods and services in the society are owned partly by private and partly by public means. (Investopedia 2024a.) In European countries the public sector (comprising all public entities and their revenues) is usually larger than in most other nations (such as the USA), but public investment is often lower than for example in some East-Asian countries (Such as China, Taiwan, South Korea). Due to its large public sector, public investments are an essential part of making the European Union competitive and economically viable. The need for public investments, either directly through EU programs or through other means (such as private-public partnerships etc.), is an important and recurring theme in the EGD report. (EGD 2019, 2.)

The EGD report should be seen as a part of a wider set of international accords linked to environmental policies. The wider context includes treaties such as the 2015 Paris agreement, UN’s Agenda 2030 and various national legislations and documents. (EGD 2019, 3.) When assessing the justice elements of the report, it is important to note that the EGD report contains elements not only of social (economic) justice, but also of energy, climate and ecological justice.

Geopolitically, the principles visible in the European Green Deal should also be adapted in other regions and parts of the globe. (EGD 2019, 2.) The EU alone produces only approximately 10% of global greenhouse gases and pollution. The climate significance of developing nations is propounded by their rapidly growing populations and economic significance.

5.2. EGD: Transforming the economy

The European strive for sustainability affects all sectors of the EU economies and has numerous knock on effects for social policies and social justice. The most obvious sectors are construction and infrastructure, industry and production and commerce and consumption. One of the key aspects of EGD is the decoupling of resource use and economic growth. This puts further emphasis on digital industries and services, spreading the impact on the economy in general. (EGD 2019, 4.)

The EGD also affects all levels of policy and political decision making. Quoting the report:

“The Green Deal will make consistent use of all policy levers: regulation and standardisation, investment and innovation, national reforms, dialogue with social partners and international cooperation. The European Pillar of Social Rights will guide action in ensuring that no one is left behind”

EGD 2019, 4.

The specifics laid in the EGD have been written into law in the “European climate law” released in June 2021. (Rosamond & Dupont 2021, 350, 351.) The main goal of the legislation is to achieve climate neutrality (zero emissions) by 2050. Remarkable advance is already scheduled to be visible by 2030 - in that year the emissions are already scheduled to be down at least 50% from the 1990 levels. The EU economy has notably already achieved preliminary emissions decoupling from the 1990 levels - from 1990- till 2018, EU emissions decreased 23%, while the economy grew 61%. (EGD 2019, 4.)

Several of the key instruments for cutting emissions already exist, most notably the EU emissions trading system (ETS). Some regulatory tools also exist in the Land-Use, land-use change and forestry (LULUCF) sector - here an essential regulation has been framed in the 2020 European taxonomy. The most significant new policy instrument proposed in the 2019 EGD report is the so-called “Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism”, designed to limit “carbon leakage”.

The logic of the Border Adjustment Mechanism is simple: achieving the emission reductions inside the EU causes additional economic costs for EU companies, sectors and industries. This could result in EU enterprises losing their global competitiveness. Competitors using cheaper fossil based forms of energy production might achieve an edge when compared with their EU counterparts. Even more alarmingly, EU-originated companies might move their production abroad to benefit from the divergence. This avoidance has been termed “carbon leakage.” (EGD 2019, 5.)

With the Border Adjustment Mechanism, a tariff or levy is used to correct the disparity in prices, protecting key EU industries and encouraging exporting economic actors to adopt similar ambitious low carbon policies in energy production and consumption. In the execution of this instrument, there exists a threat of protectionism and trade-wars. Undoubtedly the European Commission (Commission) claims that the adjustment levy is not an implicit tool of protectionism but a policy instrument rewarding environmentally beneficial actions. To achieve legitimacy for the policy, the Commission describes the Border Adjustment Mechanism as compatible with WTO regulations on international trade. (EGD 2019, 5.) The Border Adjustment Mechanism can clearly be seen as having effects on social justice on a global scale.

According to the EGD report, 75% of EU greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions come from the energy production sector. Curbing these emissions is essential in order to secure the European green transition. Energy emissions can be lowered through gains in efficiency and through rapid and large-scale adaptation of green energy production, such as wind, solar and geothermal (and in some contexts nuclear) energy. Coal and petroleum should be phased out and use of gases should transfer from natural gas towards renewable hydrogen. (EGD 2019, 6.)

Seen in the “just green transitions” framework, decarbonising the energy system has many impacts and repercussions for social justice. This can be observed on multiple levels. Starting at the national level, the EU (and the European Commission for that matter) recognizes wide disparities in living standards inside the Union. The differences in living standards, economic and industrial activities, land-use and historical differences (among others) mean that different countries in the EU have different liabilities in fighting GHG emissions and pollution. The more affluent EU countries and their societies are expected to contribute more and contribute faster. This is reflected in differing national energy and climate plans. (EGD 2019, 6.) Less-affluent EU members also get proportionally more benefits from many EU funds and for example the European Investment Bank, rebranded in the EGD report as “European green bank”. Here, the EU’s Cohesion policy, aimed at reducing regional differences in living standards and economic competitiveness, is entwined with its environmental policies. (Kenealy et al. 2022, 174.)

In the EGD energy system decarbonising clause, attention is also given to the role of the citizens. The European just green transition, outlined in the EGD, has two goals for the individuals: in the spirit of its liberal-economic bearings, the Commission envisions competitive pricing and the resulting living standard benefits for the EU's citizens. Equally emphasised however, is the strive to assess energy poverty - a key tenet in relating energy justice literature. Problems such as access to

central heating and affordable transit remain prominent in especially the Eastern states of the Union. (EGD 2019, 6.)

The prospect of a circular economy is also enticing for the Commission. However, the circularity focus of the Commission is on industry, not the consumer markets. Undoubtedly the volumes of industrial waste (raw material for recycling) are larger and more easily accessible than the dispersed consumer consumption. According to the EGD report the largest problem in industrial waste recycling is the longevity of industrial investments, hampering efficient means to control waste. (EGD 2019, 7.) Recycling is labour intensive, having a positive impact on general employment in the economy. The Commission also acknowledges that some energy-intensive industries cannot be outsourced or majorly altered. For these, a policy of “sustainable products” can be adopted. The quality of European products is of vital importance to the Commission, and the repairability and durability of products is seen as essential. Information about different products should be clear and attainable. Business innovations in the circular economy should be encouraged, promoted and financed. (EGD 2019, 8.)

When discussing “green finance”, that is, the ways to finance the European Green Deal, the Commission implicitly refers to the Deal as a plan for “just transitions”. The Commission also proposes in the EGD the formation of a concrete “Just Transition Mechanism”. The EGD just transitions proposal is not unique - similar plans have been presented in for example the United States under the moniker “Green New Deal” (Investopedia 2024b). That said, the EGD excels as a practical solution. The Commission's plan is more executable than most other proposals. Nonetheless, serious financial muscle will have to be utilised to realise the ambitious goals of the EGD. (EGD 2019, 15.)

According to the report an estimated investment of 260 billion euros annually, is required to meet the goals set out in the EGD. Part of this can be funded by diverting existing EU funds towards policies with green implications. These include the EU budget, InvestEU and a Sustainable Europe Investment Plan. Aforementioned plans also exist to transform the European Investment Bank into “Europe’s climate bank.” (EGD 2019, 15, 16.)

In the part of the EGD report addressing just transitions, is stated:

“As part of the Sustainable Europe Investment Plan, the Commission will propose a Just Transition Mechanism, including a Just Transition Fund, to leave no one behind. The transition can only succeed if it is conducted in a fair and inclusive way.”

(EGD 2019, 16.)

Stating “to leave no one behind” has strong normative weight and important implications for social justice. The Commission again acknowledges great disparity of economic resources both at an individual and national levels. Egalitarian instruments, such as the difference principle (and the second formulation of justice as fairness in general) are needed to achieve socially just outcomes for a transition. Those most affected by the transitions (for example those relying on obsolete energy solutions) should get proportionally more resources for their change. According to the EGD program, citizens dependent on employment in the fossil fuels industry should receive retraining and social support. In addition to EU funding, national and private financial resources should be tapped. (EGD 2019, 16.) Financial regulation and products should be viable and encouraged in the Union.

One of the more technical tools for realising the EGD is the emphasis on enhancing national budgets to better reflect the push for a green economy. The budgets should be thoroughly analysed and deliberated upon in order to reach higher functionality. One force impacting the budget process are the EU fiscal rules (such as the GDP related 60% state debt target and deficit target of less than 3% annually) and various regulations to guarantee stability in the financial system. Domestically many subsidies, most importantly those in the fossil fuels sector should be phased out. The Commission also seems interested in harmonising the European Value Added Tax schemes. (EGD 2019, 17.)

In the modern discourse, technological innovations are seen as the best way to increase the size and overall efficiency of an economy. Considering that the EGD report has its focus firmly in the future, it is not surprising that innovations play a pivotal role in it. The EU aims to sponsor innovations through several concrete instruments and programs, such as “Horizon Europe”, “Green Deal Missions” and “The European Innovation Council”. The plans include both more specific areas of innovations, such as: “... research and innovation on transport, including batteries, clean hydrogen, low-carbon steelmaking, circular bio-based sectors and the built environment.” and also more wider sectors such as: “climate change, sustainable energy, food for the future, and smart, environmentally friendly and integrated urban transport”. A special emphasis is also on information technologies, such as: “supercomputers, cloud, ultra-fast networks.” (EGD 2019, 18.)

5.3 Issues in policy sectors

According to the EGD, buildings account for 40% of the emissions in the EU. The construction and maintenance of buildings also consumes vast quantities of natural resources. Renovating buildings can increase both their energy efficiency and proficiency in their purposes. In a bid called “the renovation wave” the EGD advocates for increasing the rate of renovation in the EU member states. This can improve efficiency, address energy justice by alleviating energy poverty, and induce a positive impact on the European economies, as the construction sector is a relatively well-paid and labour-intensive part of national economies. (EGD 2019, 9.) Both the carrot and the stick are used, as the energy efficiency requirements are progressively tightening in the EU.

One of the most ambitious forms of emission reductions planned in the EGD are those related to the European transportation sector. According to the Commission, the emissions for the sector should go down 90% by 2050 and all forms of transport will have to contribute in their own ways. Obvious ways to decrease emissions are to use more energy efficient forms of transportation (especially for freight and cargo), such as water- and railways. (EGD 2019, 10.) These changes can be tricky. Contrary to the general emission trends in the EU, GHG emissions from the transport sector have actually arisen since 1990, and the aviation industry is especially problematic in this regard, due to technical difficulties. Alternative fuels, electric vehicles, smart solutions and maritime ETS are all needed to dampen down the emissions from the transport sector. Moving towards more sustainable transport also enhances air quality and reduces pollution. (EGD 2019, 11.)

The European Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) has traditionally occupied a central position in the functioning of the European Union. Therefore it is not surprising that food related policies are addressed in the EGD report. The plans for sustainable food production are gathered under the sub program of “Farm To Fork”. The EGD report acknowledges that modern agriculture has major impacts for (among others) land-use, soil pollution and biodiversity loss. The Farm to Fork initiative aims to provide a solution to these problems, while also addressing the growing need for food products, resulting from global population growth and changing consumption patterns. (EGD 2019, 11.) Attention is also paid to increase the quality of food products in the EU. Pesticide and fertiliser use should be curbed in favour of more sustainable agriculture. Innovations in fields like fish farming and algae-protein utilising should be further advanced. (EGD 2019, 12.) Reductions in overall food waste and benefits in public health (through better quality nutrition) should also be aimed at.

One of the more important notions in the field of environmental ethics is that of ecosystem services. It is thus good that the idea of such services is also acknowledged by the Commission. Protecting the ecosystem services in the EU not only means protecting key resources such as clean air and fresh water deposits, but can also protect important economical interests, resulting from the value added by a number of natural products. (EGD 2019, 13.) In assessing the justice implications of ecosystem services, it is important to notice the “commons” structure of many of these products. Several solutions have been proposed to give an exact value to common resources (countering free riding and “tragedy of the commons” problems). Whether solved by private market mechanisms or through public regulation, better regarding the value added by ecosystem services can enhance social justice in the EU.

Biodiversity is another staple of the environmental ethics literature, and one of the main notions in the field. Protecting biodiversity is one of the main goals of modern ecological policies, whether considering the EU or many global efforts as well. The question is propounded by the fact that biodiversity is in dire danger both within the EU and beyond its borders globally. Human impact has already caused wide extinctions and endangerments to many forms of living organisms in different parts of the globe. One existing instrument of environmental protection is the EU’s “Natura 2000” program with its protected areas and national parks around the European Union. Extending protected areas and forest coverage also increase carbon sinks, absorbing GHGs. (EGD 2019, 13.) Protecting seas, rivers and lakes also serve many of the same objectives.

Non-GHG pollution can be said to have been in the centre of the environmental movement and justice since rather early on. Reducing excess urban and industrial pollution has been on the political agenda of most Western democracies since at least the 1960's (see e.g. USA Clean Air Act 1970). In the EGD, a “zero pollution” target is proposed, for air, soil and water. In the proposal the Commission also states active attempts to remedy already existing pollution (such as brownfield developments etc.). Dangerous chemicals and heavy industries must also be critically assessed. (EGD 2019, 14.)

The EGD report is surprisingly mute on education, only working out a few paragraphs on the subject. After all, educated children are the future citizens of the EU and its member states. Good quality education is vital in realising a high value economy and continued innovation in key areas, such as sustainable energy. In the EGD report the Commission proposes new funding for school infrastructure such as buildings and materials. In order to realise a just transition, those with

inadequate and obsolete degrees should be helped to acquire a more competent education, even later in life. (EGD 2019, 19.)

The Commission implies a hope to make the European Green Deal process transparent and open to both citizens and various interest groups. This also enhances the legitimacy of the plan and the framework it creates. The EGD aims to “do no harm”. This means that providing a socially just transition is among its main goals. (EGD 2019, 19.) Ensuring the EU and the globe against the calamities of uncontrolled climate change improves chances of achieving a just, well-ordered society.

5.4 EGD: Taking the lead in global environmental policy

As climate change (and many forms of pollution, for that matter) is a global problem, a global response is required to solve it. The EU aims to affect the global policies to tackle climate change through two main means: through concrete deeds and through making an example. The Commission aims to make Europe the “first climate neutral continent” by the mid 21st century. Achieving its own ambitious environmental goals gives the European Union more weight and leverage in international negotiations. Secondly, the Union aims to promote ecological sustainability through active and impactful diplomacy. (EGD 2019, 20.)

The EU aims to operate with full compliance to other global environmental regimes, such as the Paris Agreement (2015, the most recent climate agreement at the time of the drafting of the EGD report) and the United Nations led Agenda 2030. More traditional bilateral negotiations will complement the multilateral attempts. One important field of hoped-for advancement is the extension of the emissions trading system (ETS) to work globally. This might even be practically inevitable, as countries and industries refusing to comply with the ETS (and willing to operate economically inside the EU) will be hit with the EGD Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism. The EU environmental diplomacy efforts will entail both neighbouring countries, as well as those on the other sides of the globe. (EGD 2019, 20.)

Populations and consumption are set to increase rapidly in places such as Africa and the Middle East in the coming decades. Preventing the buildup and investment in fossil fuels in these growing economies is important. The Commission also acknowledges that the pending environmental crises may cause political instability, especially in countries with low resilience and inadequate tools to absorb such crises. The EU sees mutually beneficial trade policy as one of the best ways to enhance the global political system. (EGD 2019, 21.)

The Commission sees potential in the EU to achieve climate leadership. In this the Union can leverage its position as the single largest trading zone in the world, creating both groundbreaking regulation and standards. The EU's public funding should be used to attract private capital from the international capital markets as well. In the EGD report this attempt is labelled "Sustainable Finance." (EGD 2019, 22.)

In the spirit of the times, the Commission embraces instruments of deliberative democracy in its bid to increase political legitimacy. There remains a stark contrast between the centralised nature of European policymaking and the millions of the EU's citizens. Especially disgruntled citizens on the losing side of the just green transition (such as those employed in the fossil fuel industries) are addressed upon. Here there is an appeal to social justice (EGD 2019, 22).

5.5 European green transition in the post-EGD era

In this section the understanding of the relations of social justice, resilience and the European green transition are further strengthened. Several fresh viewpoints on these subjects are introduced.

On the webpages of the Finnish ministry of finance a direct relation is presented between resilience and the green transition. The webpage article only covers national policies in a member state as opposed to the EU level policies. The article is useful however, since it is titled "Green transition – Recovery and Resilience Plan". In the article the Finnish government states "A green transition will support structural adjustment of the economy and help to build a carbon-neutral welfare society". The national commitment to a swift and well-executed green transition is clear and is deliberately seen as a project with both national and supranational qualities.

Like some other EU countries Finland has even more ambitious climate goals than those presented in the EGD (climate neutrality by 2035 as opposed to the EGD 2050). In addition to technical advances focus is given to the more social aspects of the transition: "Growth and new jobs will be created across the country, replacing work being lost as a result of structural change." The structural change in the quality of work has clear implications for social justice. The Recovery and Resilience Plan is part of a document titled "Sustainable Growth Programme for Finland". (Publications of the Finnish Government 2021:69.)

The Finnish effort is part of the EU wide "Recovery and Resilience Facility" (RRF) which is an integral instrument of NextGenerationEU (with the NextGenerationEU being a policy program

initiated to aid in the economic recovery from the Covid-19 debacle). While the NextGenerationEU is a separate program from the EGD it has many of the same goals and even aims to accelerate many of the actions described in the EGD. The RRF coordinates national plans called RRP's (short for Recovery and Resilience Plans). According to the European Council (EC) "measures contained in the RRP's are expected to facilitate and accelerate the green and digital transitions in the Member States, while increasing resilience, cohesion and sustainable growth" (EC 2024a). Elsewhere EC also announces that "Reflecting the European Green Deal as Europe's sustainable growth strategy and the importance to achieve climate neutrality by 2050, the RRF contributes to the mainstreaming of climate action and environmental sustainability. (EC 2024b.)

According to the Finnish authorities, the RRF projects also deploy the 'do no significant harm' principle:

"Projects receiving RRF funding and eligible for priority processing are required to comply with the 'do no significant harm' (DNSH) principle. For example, the projects cannot have negative impacts on climate change mitigation, and they cannot slow down the transition to a circular economy or reduce the protection of biodiversity. The DNSH assessment is carried out on a project-specific basis to ensure that the requirements of the DNSH principle are met."

(Finnish ELY 2024.)

In addition to the usual attire of green transition targets Finnish Ministry of the Environment also propounds action to secure socioeconomic goals such as sustainability of public finances and intergenerational wellbeing. According to the Ministry the green transition will "strengthen comprehensive security", another staple of policy stability and well-ordered societies. Focus is also given to "inclusion, financing and cooperation" of not only institutions but (European and Finnish) citizens as well. (FME "What is the green transition?" 2024.)

As one of the key EU institutions (even if all countries do not belong to the Eurozone), the European Central Bank (ECB) plays its own role in the EU's green transition. The ECB states: "An orderly transition to a green economy would, in the long run, reduce climate-related risks for the entire economy and financial system, as well as for the inflation outlook and the assets on the Eurosystem balance sheet. As a result, it would contribute to long-term price and financial stability." (ECB 2024.) The ECB's proclamation is a fine example of the multifacetedness of environmental stability policies; through the just green transition financial, monetary and ecological stability can all be enhanced simultaneously.

In another article “Three ways policymakers can avoid the political risks of the green transition” (2023), the World Economic Forum (WEF) addresses in a direct and major way the (possible) political pitfalls of an unequal green transition. The main tools to mitigate policy risks covered in the WEF article are “Dispelling the green transition inequality myth”, “Avoiding price spikes” and “Detoxifying politics”. Of these the first is well in line with the Rawlsian difference principle: “... design of a green levy can ensure that poorer households face less of a fiscal burden and/or receive a greater share of the fiscal revenues. Thus, a carbon tax with a targeted redistribution of the ‘carbon dividend’ can fight climate change and inequality without raising the tax burden.” Avoiding price spikes and other radical deviations also enhances policy stability whereas the De-toxifying of politics is well in line with this thesis claim that social cohesion can be a good way to increase policy stability. (Three ways policymakers can avoid the political risks of the green transition Aug 21, 2023, Dominic Rohner, Christian Gollier.)

In a article by (resilience focused think tank/organization) Resilience org, labeled “The Reality of the Green Transition” focus is given directly to the problem of maintaining political policy stability and resilience for pro-climate transition policies such as the EGD:

“However, climate journalists are also warning against the politicization of the energy transition, with the right wing voicing major opposition to renewable energy sources, equating the loss of fossil fuels to a loss of human rights. It’s why critiquing the mythology of renewable energy must be part of a bigger strategy to critique green growth.”

And also:

“An energy transition without a political transformation is like trying to fit a square peg in a round hole with such force the entire structure could come crashing down. It’s why we cannot and must not talk about our political economies without demanding we reflect upon our energy and material needs, and ultimately contracting those needs... Creating political, economic and ecological interdependencies is critical to stability”.

In another useful instance the European Investment Bank (EIB) brings together “just transition” and “just resilience”:

“Two of the most important terms to advance social inclusion as we fight climate change are “just transition” and “just resilience.” Because they acknowledge the uneven distribution of the impacts of the climate emergency on people and places...”

“...Just transition means that we provide new jobs and opportunities to people and communities that are affected most by climate policies such as the closures of coal mines and fossil fuel power plants to decarbonise our societies. Just resilience addresses the need to scale up activities in response to the already inevitable climate change in countries and in support of people that bear the brunt of climate change impacts due to their geographical location or socioeconomic status.”

(EIB 2024.)

In a programme paper titled “What is Resilience?” A non-profit organisation Climate Bonds Initiative gives a multifaceted account of resilience referencing key actors such as IPCC and UN:

“According to the Sixth Assessment Report published by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), approximately 3.3–3.6 billion people live in areas highly vulnerable to climate change, with both ecosystems and individuals increasingly exposed to severe climate hazards. As climate change intensifies, there is a growing imperative to channel financing from capital markets towards bolstering climate resilience. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) estimates that by 2030, the financing needs for physical adaptation and resilience in developing countries could soar to as much as USD 387 billion annually, with global adaptation and resilience finance requirements surpassing these figures significantly.” (Climate bonds 2024.)

Lastly, one of the important notions in EU climate and environmental policy is that of taxonomy. In this case the term refers to a framework for evaluating environmental liabilities of environmental actors, such as private and public enterprises. According to the European Council:

“The EU taxonomy is a cornerstone of the EU’s sustainable finance framework and an important market transparency tool. It helps direct investments to the economic activities most needed for the transition, in line with the European Green Deal objectives. The taxonomy is a classification system that defines criteria for economic activities that are aligned with a net zero trajectory by 2050 and the broader environmental goals other than climate.” (EC 2024c.)

Finnish ministry of the environment also ties together the taxonomy and do no harm principle:

“The EU taxonomy for sustainable financing establishes criteria for what is sustainable in terms of the environment and nature. The taxonomy helps channel financing to sustainable activities, thus promoting the green transition and achievement of the EU’s environmental objectives. The taxonomy includes the Do No Significant Harm (DNSH) principle. This means that e.g. measures to reduce emissions may not cause harm to other environmental objectives.”

(FME “What is the green transition?” 2024.)

6. Green Deal Commentaries

In this chapter (chapter 6) third party analysis on the European Green Deal (and social justice) are presented. Many of the analyses presented aim to enhance the EGD in some, often technical, ways. Including third-party analysis is important since the EGD itself is a political dossier, not a peer reviewed academic text.

6.1 Feasibility of the EGD program

Starting off the array of third-party analysis is the ESDN (The European Sustainable Development Network) report by Constanze Fetting. Fetting begins by relating the green deal to a pressing real political issue of Covid-19 pandemic and the resulting political difficulties. Indeed, having been published in late 2019, the beginning of the post EGD era is temporally closely situated to the events of the Corona-virus induced crises. According to the report, the corona pandemic (in the early 2020’s) has caused temporary reduction to GHG emissions. Fetting sees the crises as providing a unique chance to accelerate emission reductions. (Fetting 2020, 4.) This is also a clear goal for the European Commission, as the Covid recovery plan, NextGenerationEU (NGEU), is stated to “transform our economies” and to create “a greener, more digital and more resilient Europe” (Commission Recovery plan for Europe web). The scale of the NextGenerationEU program is also massive, as it proclaims “We have the vision, we have the plan, and we have agreed to invest together €806.9 billion”.

Solving economic uncertainties through excessive fiscal stimulus is not unheard of in the way Western and European countries deal with their economies. Recovery programs, such as the NextGenerationEU, present a concrete way to bolster the funding of the EGD Program and other projects relating to energy transitions. From a resilience perspective, a strong response to economic

downturns and crises (such as the Covid-19 pandemic) is not only possible, but might be required in order to keep everyone onboard and decrease political turmoil and extremism.

Following these conclusions, it is clear that the focus in the EGD is not only to build and maintain a vibrant and well-functioning economy, but also to achieve a socially just and inclusive (well-ordered) society. These more broad goals are also manifest in the Commission's compliance with the United Nations "2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" program and the Paris Agreement of 2015. The European Parliament has called for further emphasis on the social justice clauses found in the EGD. (Fetting C. 2020, 5.) The NGEU plan also calls for a "reinforcement of the Just Transition Fund".

In the ESDN report attention is paid to the fact that widespread energy poverty still exists in the EU. This also laments the need to discuss energy justice. The most common energy justice issue is lack of residential heating. According to Fetting, 34 million European citizens suffer from this form of energy poverty. This issue is partly addressed in the EGD goal of the "renovation wave." (Fetting C. 2020, 12, 13.) Circular economy is another policy goal in the EGD. The Commission presents recycling and circular economy as a one key way to positively affect the problems related to resource use. At the time of the drafting of the EGD report (2019) only a fraction of EU resources were recycled.

Another way of reducing emissions is the decoupling of the EU economy from resource use. In this attempt, a lot of faith is put in technological advancements, such as the digital economy. Through digitalisation, value can be added to the economy without increasing material consumption. Another sector with vast emissions is the construction and buildings sector. Here the single most important EGD goal is to commence the aforementioned renovation wave initiative. Both older and newer constructions should be made complacent on ambitious energy efficiency targets. (Fetting C. 2020, 13, 14.)

GHG emissions are not the only form of environmental degradation. The EGD also works to counter pollution, as found in heavy industries and the land-use sector. The economic issues of land-use are already central to the EU, as the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) has long been an important aspect of the EU's functioning. In the ESDN report forests and seas are also mentioned as important, and their functioning as keepers of biodiversity can be further enhanced through initiatives aiming at nature preservation, such as national parks and Natura 2000 areas. The issues relating to food production have been gathered under the program of "Farm to Fork", a comprehensive program in its own right. The main focuses are food security and sustainable

agriculture. More renewable forms of transport should be emphasised. This has proven difficult, as the EU transportation emissions have actually increased in the post 1990 era.

Like several other research papers, Siddi M. 2020 “The European Green Deal: Assessing its current state and future implementation” paper assesses the feasibility of the EGD program. Siddi begins by emphasising the pioneer nature of the EU’s climate efforts, starting from the 1990’s. The main argument of his study is that,

“[T]he success of the Green Deal depends on whether it is and will remain a policy priority in both the short and the long run”

Siddi 2020, 4.

By the time of the writing of the Siddi article, the EGD programs had already been succeeded in media coverage by the Covid 19 pandemic, and a while later, the war in Ukraine. The waning media interest will undoubtedly be a test for the EGD, and requires a fair bit of resilience from the related policy actors, as the program now has to compete with other pressing issues such as the pandemic, Ukrainian war and economical hardship. In the long run, the ability to maintain the EGD among policy priorities will make or break the program.

The EGD can be tied to a wider context of the EU’s climate policies. Earlier efforts include EU Climate and Energy Policy Framework, (founded in 2007), the EU ETS and 2018 LULUCF regulation. Many of the climate actions are implemented by national governments but are supervised and monitored by the EU Commission. (Siddi 2020, 5.) It is also visible that the climate policies of the Von der Leyen Commission are remarkably more ambitious than those of earlier Commission configurations. It has been implied that this might be due to both increasing care for the environment, but also due to urgency - if climate change is not tackled soon, it might be impossible to counter it later. The Commission will oversee both the medium term 2030 and the long term 2050 plans and has some tools to enforce its agenda on the EU member states.

In the Siddi analysis, the greatest threat to the execution of the EGD plan is seen to be waning political commitment to its goals. This commitment is the single most important indicator of both the EGD programs, and EU’s systemic resilience and stability. As the plan spans multiple decades, it is threatened both by possible crises seen overriding its importance and populist politics such as climate change denialism and power politics. The idea of (fossil fuel powered) energy security is also often pitted against the benefits of more renewable energy. Siddi also addresses the critique that many of the funds for the green transition are just recycled funds from existing EU programs

and institutions (Siddi 2020, 9) and also states that there exists tensions between the EU Commission and Parliament over the political mandate to execute climate policies. Multilateral international agreements also pose problems, especially due to the differing levels of ambition on climate action globally.

6.2 Making the European Green Deal work

Claeys, et al. call the EGD a “reallocation mechanism”, reallocating economic resources towards a greener environment and economy in general. They propose that the EGD basically has four foundational pillars: “carbon pricing, sustainable investment, industrial policy and a just transition.” (Claeys et al 2019, 2.) They advocate for putting a uniform cost on all forms of emissions. This is different from the pre-EGD proposals, as in them only parts of the EU emissions fall under the ETS-system. The Claeys et al. analysis seems to agree with the general economic theory of unitary costs not only between different emissions sources but also regions and countries. The current EU policies of carbon emissions controls consist of a mixed solution: EU level ETS and national taxation. This two-fold mechanism also leads to several avenues of revenue generation. At the time of the report 2019, most of the revenues of both the taxes and the ETS ended up in state coffers. (Claeys et al. 2019, 4.) Future re-using of these revenues for green investment is backed by the public opinion. Public research and development funding and compensation for the less affluent are also considered good options.

Private investment is also important, and the EGD goals should reflect this. Fine tuning the regulatory environment for such investments is beneficial, especially concerning the capital intensive nature of the green energy sector etc. Bolstering the role of the European Investment Bank can also help to achieve private-public funding and investment schemes. (Clayes et al. 2019, 10, 12.)

The Clayes et al. paper ends up recommending policies that are typical of modern market oriented financial policies; both the scale and the focus of public research and development funding should be enhanced. Equally important is to promote green investments in other regions and globally. (Clayes et al 2019, 15.)

In their view (present in the Claeys et al. paper) the justice impact of the EGD is remarkable, but ultimately boils down to a choice between divergence in current incomes and consumption patterns (think of rising gasoline prices etc.) and avoiding an ecological crisis with a possibly far more drastic impacts on social justice in the future. (Clayes et al. 2019, 15.) Different ways to distribute

gains from green taxes exist. In some polities such gains are distributed back to the citizens through dividends. To ensure just transition, funds should be allocated to coal production focused regions to counter unemployment and social problems created by the move away from the fossil fuel industries. The effort to alleviate regional divergence in economic fortunes is key to increasing resilience in the EU area. If successful, the EU can act as a model for successive policies in other parts of the globe. (Claeys et al 2019, 18,19.)

In another analysis, Wolf et al. (2021) present the idea that broad political and social support is needed (early on) in order to reach the EGD 2030 and 2050 goals. One of the best ways to get such support is to implement more socially just policies. As is evident on multiple sources, the carbon reductions required are massive in scope, and no easy task to achieve. The reductions will have to accelerate, and public funding appears vital here. (Wolf et al 2021, 100.) Expanding emissions cuts are, however, only a part of the Wolf et al formula. Here they propose multiple requirements for a just green transition in Europe.

According to Wolf et al, unemployment and youth unemployment should be drastically reduced, especially in the euro-crisis countries. Convergence between countries, especially those in Western and Eastern Europe should be increased (partly through EU's Cohesion policy). Additionally, economic growth should be accelerated, and inflation be kept in check. These actions are more social and economical, instead of ecological, and they seem to reinforce the hypotheses that actions towards social justice are key to increased policy resilience. On the other hand, achieving the kind of favourable macroeconomic circumstances can be hard, and if failed at, jeopardise the execution of the EGD program. (Wolf et al 2021, 101.)

The main finding of the Skjaereth (2021) analysis is that many different forms of action and institutions are required to execute working EU climate policy. Earlier attempts have often only included singular ways of action, such as the EU Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS). Policy mixes are needed, and Skjaereth proposes both push and pull style policies. New EU policies mix at least three pillars: The ETS, the Effort Sharing Regulation (ESR) (for the non-ETS sectors) and land use, land-use change and forestry (LULUCF) regulation. (Skjaereth 2021, 26, 27, 33.) Based on data, the EU zone did reach a significant resource use decoupling in the 1990-2018 period. This decoupling consisted of about 20% reduction on emissions, and a 60% increase in GDP. Based on models, that rate of decoupling will need to accelerate even more if the EU is to achieve the 2050 goal of zero emissions. Skjaereth mentioned the social justice goal of "leaving no one behind" as

one of the main goals of the EGD program. He also mentions the Paris Agreement as an external factor (positively) affecting the EU's climate policies.

6.3 EGD and policy-area impacts

The European Green Deal, when executed upon, has major geopolitical impacts, both on neighbouring countries and regions but also globally. Decoupling from fossil fuel usage in the EU increases the region's autarky, but may endanger the economical foundations of many oil-exporting countries, especially if such models are also adapted globally. On the other hand, moving towards green energy might cause new dependencies, such as those on minerals and rare-earth elements. Applying EGD policies also poses risks for the EU's international competitiveness. (Leonard et al. 2021, 2.) The EGD also has major impacts on global and regional climate, energy and environmental justices.

The current (early 2020's) EU energy-mix is dominated by fossil fuels, but this is due to change rapidly, if the EGD is successfully adopted. Many of the fossil fuels are imported to the EU from abroad. Short term benefits can also be gained inside the mix, as natural gas exceeds oil and coal. (Leonard et al. 2021, 5.) Future opportunities will also appear in the clean hydrogen market. Even though energy exports are set to decrease, raw material imports to the EU are expected to grow in the future (Leonard et al. 2021, 9).

The Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism is another EU policy with obvious geopolitical implications. Its aim is to extend European soft power towards global partners and also protect European industries from "carbon leakage". The risk of international trade wars over such policies, however, looms large. Leonard et al analyse EU's environmental geopolitics through some case-studies. (Leonard et al. 2021, 10-17.) Many oil-exporting countries appear less ambitious in their climate policies, for obvious reasons. The United States and China, world's two greatest GHG emitters have a more ambiguous role, as they periodically display both climate leadership and denialism. Nonetheless, the USA still appears to be a key partner in eco-policies. Leonard et al. propose a common Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism for both the EU and the USA. (Leonard et al. 2021, 19.) Exporting the concept of the EGD worldwide is also vital.

There is no doubt that the Covid 19- pandemic was the first serious political crisis in the post EGD age. The crisis and the fiscal stimulus following have actually become an opportunity for more green investment in the EU area. The crisis also led to a decline in economic activity, thus lowering emissions both in EU and abroad. (Elkerbout et al 2020, 5.) Knock-down effects from declining

member state GDP's where perceived as problematic, although the recovery proved to be swift. The Covid-19 pandemic also showed that all fiscal constraints, like those the EU imposes on its member states fiscal expenditure, can be lifted. One of the potential downsides, however, is that policies such as the ETS can also be relaxed, leading to a surge in emissions. (Elkerbout et al 2020, 6.) In any case, advancing the goals of the EGD should be among the priorities when considering fiscal stimulus.

The EGD Farm to fork plan aims to extend the EU's agricultural policies to better assess biodiversity protection and toxic-free environment. Many of the Farm to Fork initiatives are aiming at increasing the social and environmental resilience of food production in the EU and promoting among others a more organic agriculture. Reducing food waste is an obvious link between the Farm to Fork strategy and the EGD goal of circular economy. There could even be a link between the EU Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism and biodiversity, as the EU imposes costs on biodiversity losses incurred well beyond its own borders. There is also a clear goal to increase ecosystem resilience (in the EU and all over the world). (Wrzaszcz, W., & Prandecki, K. 2020, 163.) Earlier programs such as the Natura 2000 program are also helpful and can be further extended.

Decarbonising the transportation sector is in many ways at the core of the EGD. Not only is the sector a major polluter and emissions source, but contrary to most other sectors, emissions from transportation have actually increased in the period of 1990-2018. That is one of the reasons that great emissions reductions are to be expected from transportation if the goals of the EGD are to be realised. (Haas & Sander 2020, 1.) The major actors in the transportation emissions reductions are not only the EU and its member states, but also (especially) the powerful European automotive industry. The industry has committed to voluntary action, but is also subject to the major regulatory framework of the EU.

Some have questioned the efficiency of the EU emissions policies, and the rise in transportation GHG emissions is a glaring failure for the Union. Decoupling in the sector has been unsuccessful and economic growth still correlates positively with increases in traffic. The powerful lobbies of the transportation industry have also hampered successful attempts at decarbonisation. (Haas & Sander 2020, 4.)

Regarding lobbying Haas and Sander state that:

“The realm of EU lobbying is dominated by corporate power. Only one-eighth of all lobbyists in Brussels represent the causes of employees, human rights, the environment, etc., while the rest work

for corporate interests. Approximately 500 transnational companies and 1500 corporate associations have offices in Brussels. They are accompanied by numerous law practices, public relations agencies, consultancy firms, and think tanks that also—for the most part—work for commercial concerns [28,30,31]. NGOs also have their offices, political contacts, and lobby and advocacy strategies to make their voices heard, although corporate actors usually have greater resources and more allies within the institutions.”

Haas & Sander 2020, 5.

It could be claimed that in the EGD industrial interests are not always clearly separated from the interest or good of the individual citizens. The problematic power-role of capital-intensive industries and their lobbies is present in the EU system and the program forming power of the Commission.

One could accuse the EGD of many forms of political paternalism, for example on industrial and agricultural policies. In Theory of justice John Rawls states: “paternalistic intervention must be justified by the evident failure or absence of reason and will...” (TJ, 250.) It is reasonable to argue that this definition could be applied to ecological policies, since issues such as climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution do imply such evident failures. In the absence of effective self regulation of industries and actors the EU must step in (or so could be argued, atleast). Such paternalism can be subjected not only on citizens and economic actors but to member states as well. In the EGD a lot of emphasis is put on active industrial policy. In the program both public and private funding are utilized to complete the green transition and protect the environment from adverse effects of economic growth and production. Here the EGD abruptly departs from its economically liberal foundations and embraces a more state driven growth strategy, one that might be equated with economic paternalism.

Certain amount of paternalism (or claim of such) is a then a shared trait of both justice as fairness and the EGD. In the EGD some focuses are for example put on establishing positive path dependencies in pre-planned sectors. The Commission's policies also restrict citizens' choices when it comes to consumption and consumption patterns. European citizens and organizations are often seen as more tolerating towards paternalist policies than their Anglo-American counterparts.

6.4 Climate change and policy monitoring

Monitoring is in many ways at the epicentre of environmental policymaking, and policy turbulence further emphasises need for monitoring. In fact, early attempts at monitoring were among the main motives regarding the creation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in the early 1990's. Similarly, monitoring occupies a key role in the 2015 Paris agreement, UN's Agenda 2030, and the EGD itself (Schoenefeld 2021, 371). The Commission states in the EGD that:

“[there will be founded] a new monitoring mechanism to ensure that Europe remains on track to meet its environmental objectives. The Commission will also launch a dashboard to monitor progress against all of the European Green Deal objectives.”

(European Commission, 2019, 23.)

Monitoring can be done by both public and private actors. In any case, caution about neutrality and (possible) partisanship of the data should be warranted. The European monitoring environment is hierarchical, with the Commission having oversight on member country reporting. Transparency is a vital part of the monitoring enterprise, and allows efficient policy evaluation. Schoenefeld goes on to state:

“One challenge of the EGD and the associated legislation is that they contain long-term targets (e.g., carbon neutrality) and concepts (such as justice and fairness), which require profound change, including far-reaching social change. Aspects such as social justice or resilience are difficult to capture with single indicators to assess progress against targets. A broad range of indicators, combined with qualitative evidence, will likely be necessary for a more comprehensive and continuous assessment over time.”

(Schoenefeld 2021, 375.)

In Europe, outright climate scepticism has seldom been utilised politically and ample data are collected and analysed of environmental effects in the EU annually. Creating good quality data is important to execute and forecast environmental policies, and this is considered in the EGD. Data includes issues such as emissions levels, several LULUCF metrics, list of endangered species and projections of environmental effect of several policies.

Utilising the gathered EU policy data, Tutak et al. (2020) go on to argue that the energy sector has a pivotal role in the economy and climate politics in the EU. The transition of the energy sector is the

single most profound goal of the European Green Deal. The energy sector accounts for 80% of the emissions in the EU zone. (Tutak et al 2021, 1.) Tutak et al. go on to bundle together “energy and climate protection”. Information on such fields is based not only on EU efforts but also the UN Agenda 2030 program. The Agenda 2030 is important since, unlike its predecessor (the Millennium goals) it has integrated climate goals. For Tutak et al, different EU countries should be seen in relation to their peers, not the EU as a whole.

In the period of 2009-2018 the climate related performances of the different EU member countries varied remarkably. For example, in Greece, per capita energy consumption decreased by 21% whereas in Estonia it increased by 32%. Shares of green energy production and fossil fuel imports also varied wildly between countries. In a multivariable analysis Sweden was most successful, whereas Bulgaria finished last. (Tutak et al. 2021, 15.) Other good performers included Denmark, Austria and France, while Poland was a high polluter. This reflects a difference of climate ambition between older Western European member countries and the new ones in the East. The same divide exists in energy poverty. (Tutak et al. 2021, 21.) The lowest energy poverty was registered in Sweden (1,8%) and highest in Bulgaria (44%). The timescale of 2009-2018 makes sense since the previous goals for 2020 were adopted in 2009. The EGD is a continuum of the previous Europe 2020 strategy. Based on 14 indicators, and the Tutak et al. (2021) analysis shows significant progress in EU emissions reductions. Different countries, however, might need differing paths and timetables in reducing emissions.

6.5 EGD and policy turbulence

In their analysis “Driving the European Green Deal in Turbulent Times” (2021) Dobbs, Gravy and Petetin show how the EGD should be operated when facing a tumultuous era of political and ecological upheaval. This is important, as there seems to be no shortage of such crises (as witnessed in late 2024).

Dobbs et al. quote the Commission's report as having:

“... seven substantive themes: climate ambition; clean, affordable, and secure energy; industrial strategy for a clean and circular economy; sustainable and smart mobility; greening the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)/“Farm to Fork”; preserving and protecting biodiversity; and moving towards a zero-pollution ambition for a toxic free environment. To achieve this, the EGD promotes three procedural themes: mainstreaming sustainability in all EU policies, pushing for the EU to be a

global leader and working together across levels, and policy areas for a European Climate Pact. Alongside its environmental ambition, it has a clear focus on “just transition...”

(Dobbs, Gravy, Petetin 2021, 316.)

Turbulence is found when parameters shift, intercurrency occur, and temporal complexity increases. In order for the EGD to work, it must operate within these conditions, not against them. Several different classifications (of the forms of) policy turbulence exist. When encountering turbulence policy durability and robustness are of key importance. (Dobbs et al 2021, 317, 319.) In essence, the turbulence requires resilience, both social and ecological. The imperative nature of assuring the EGD’s multifaceted resilience when facing policy turbulence is one of the overarching themes and claims in this thesis.

One problem resulting from turbulence are so-called “tragic choices” a term also found in ecological justice literature. In these situations, a solution is needed but no objectively good choices exist - one must choose the lesser evil. Under these conditions, prioritisation is often needed. As the EU is a profoundly political entity, real-political struggles inevitably effect, and even threaten the execution of the EGD program. Dobbs et al. refer to this as “organisational turbulence.” (Dobbs et al 2021, 320.) Increasing social and environmental resilience lowers the chance of organisational turbulence, and in a resilient system turbulence is effectively mitigated.

The existence of tragic choices is a topic also addressed in John Rawls’s justice as fairness; the lexical ordering of his principles is to be used when the execution of the principles conflict each other (as in the case of tragic choices). The lexical ordering means that bad options containing liberty are to be preferred to bad options with more favourable socio economic outcomes. In the case of basic liberties conflicting with each other, the violation of liberty perceived as the lesser evil is to be preferred.

Writing in 2022 Paleari makes an important note that the EGD (the focus of this thesis) has already been succeeded by a body of literature known as the EGDSF:

“About 20 strategic documents have been adopted (hereinafter referred to as European Green Deal Strategic Framework (EGDSF), which, consisting of hundreds of pages, establish ambitious objectives and schedule an impressive number of initiatives to achieve them.”

(Paleari 2022, 197.)

The EGD itself was preceded by the 2000 Lisbon Strategy and the 2010 “EU 2020 Strategy”. Like the earlier plans, the EGD aims to connect economic growth and environmental goals. The EGD is however more ambitious in the scale of its just transition than the earlier attempts. In Paleari (2022) the former and current policies are compared. At the core of the EGDSF analysis are environmental objectives and planned legislative initiatives. Like many other EGD studies, Paleari uses the eight basic categories of environmental policies readily available in the EGD. The focus on the initiatives is mostly temporal. The EGDSF extends the reach of the EGD goals. A total of 68,80% of which are now due to be achieved already in 2030. (Paleari 2022, 199.)

The post EGD environmental goals have increased their ambitions remarkably from the pre-EGD levels. This is especially visible in targets for energy production, transportation and biodiversity protection. Some areas, such as air pollution reductions, have remained practically unchanged. The overall trend in the EU environmental policies has been an increase in ambition. Many environmental directives and laws are amended, the EU ETS will be extended to new industries (particularly transportation) and the CAP is revised. (Paleari 2022, 208, 210.)

The EGD was by many accounts the most crucial policy of the early Von der Leyen Commission. Some have questioned the role of big business and an emphasis on economic growth (and rising consumption of products) in the EGD and the European green transition in general. They claim that the EGD is practically a neoliberal program, a conclusion that could be reached even without a leftist ideological tilt. The EGD focus on liberal economics is apparent. This is also a finding Samper et al. (2021) present in their analysis on the EGD. The presence of liberal economics and policies is further inculcated by a “facade of depoliticisation”. Samper et al. note that the EGD is only one of the models of Green New Deals (GND’s), and other GND’s, such as the US House Resolution 10, or the “GND without growth” models put far higher emphasis on social justice than the EGD. (Samper et al 2021, 9-12.) Inevitably the liberal tilt of the EGD dates back to the popular majority power of center-liberal parties and political forces in the European institutions and polities.

To conclude, a major aim in the EGD is to decouple growth from resource use, while at the same time creating a resilient and socially just Europe. Such a society is to be reached through growth, not despite it. At least economically speaking, the increase of climate ambition in the 2020-2050 period represents a clear bifurcation compared to earlier policies. Addressing environmental and climate problems not only improves, but effectively safeguards the European well-ordered society.

7. EGD Justice analysis

“The transition must be just and inclusive. It must put people first, and pay attention to the regions, industries and workers who will face the greatest challenges.”

(EGD, 2019, 2.)

In this chapter an overarching analysis is conducted on the other setpieces, including John Rawls’s justice as fairness, stability, resilience, cohesion, just transitions and the EGD. In the EGD a major focus is also given to the commentaries, as the chapter on the EGD itself is to a great extent explanatory.

7.1 Justice as fairness and the EGD

One of the key findings in the analysis presented in this thesis is that values and issues of social justice appear in an “absorbed” form in the EGD and the European climate policy in general. Oftentimes this means that social justice is present, but not articulated. It can be argued that the explicit mentionings of social justice in the EGD are just a “tip of an iceberg”. A closer look at the institutions and values behind and within the program uncovers that social justice actually plays a tremendous role in the EGD and EU’s environmental policies in general. Although the EGD is primarily an economic and ecological policy tool, social justice permeates the program at all its levels. Although issues such as economic growth and preserving ecological diversity take the forefront, one could argue that the true goal of policies such as the EGD is to assure the stability and continuance of the European well-ordered society, with its righteous and resilient institutions.

In this thesis, the Rawlsian theory of “Justice as Fairness” is deliberately contrasted with a relatively concrete policy program, the EGD. Moving from theories closer to realities (of politics and policies) the EGD can be seen as a concrete plan to realise a well-ordered society in the Europe of the 2020’s till 2050’s and beyond. If we take John Rawls’s justice as fairness to be a valid theory of social justice, and assume that the EU institutions aim for just policies, then the EU institutions (at this point especially the Commission) and policies like the EGD should prove valid when subjected to Rawlsian setpieces. The theoretical tools like the two principles of justice, or even the original agreement and veil of ignorance should find their application in the political realities of the 21st century European Union, and in many cases this appears to be the case. Many of the institutions and policies of the European green transition adhere fully or at least partly with the premises of the Rawlsian theory of justice as fairness.

The first principle of justice as fairness, (that of guaranteeing the most extensive liberties) is widely seen as preferred in Western liberal democracies, such as the European states (and the EU). These liberties and rights are deeply embedded into democratic national constitutions. In the EU and in its policies, the liberties guaranteed by the first principle are well institutionalised and provide the basis of the organisation of European political societies (this has, however, not prevented certain EU member countries from backsliding on issues of (especially) civil liberties and the quality of democracy).

It is the application of the second principle of justice as fairness where most contradictions arise. Wide redistributive mechanisms, such as those required under the Rawlsian difference principle, remain conflicting issues in many EU polities, and also inside key EU institutions such as the European parliament and Commission.

If we were to apply the Rawlsian veil of ignorance to the EU, the Commission, and its EGD policy we would immediately notice that the social positions of the EU citizens vary remarkably. Though a contested issue, it would be reasonable that under the Rawlsian veil of ignorance, an EU citizen would not know his nationality and geographic position inside the EU. This exercise would also be complicated, and seemingly dysfunctional since the laws and social policies of EU countries vary considerably. Disparities like these are not discussed in Rawls, since his Justice as Fairness is designed to apply to a single state and nation (albeit one could argue a federal state, with the United States as a model). Contrasted to these socio-economic and jurisprudence-related difficulties, cultural differences such as those of language, religion and ethnicity could more easily be excluded (in a Rawlsian model).

Another important part of the Rawlsian theory is a “shared conception” of justice. One could argue that the Commission's EGD aims to present itself as powered by a shared, public conception of justice. As the EGD is, however, a policy program, it inevitably includes some normative leanings. One of these is a liberal emphasis on economic growth, sometimes questioned by actors of the political left. As the EGD is in many ways an economic plan, emphasis has been put up on ensuring financing to achieve the policies goals. According to ESDN, one trillion Euros of funds are needed in the period of 2020-2030. This comprises both public and private funding. National budgets will also have to be amended - for example, EU member countries subsidies and value added taxes are under the Commission's scrutiny. (Fetting C. 2020, 8.)

In the EU's political system, the difference principle is applied to both national and individual levels. Institutions such as the European Investment Bank (EIB) and various EU financial programs

favour the less developed economies of the Union to alleviate differences. This is known as Cohesion policy. (Kenealy et al. 2022, 174.) Meanwhile, various social benefits, income transfers and meritocratic institutions exist on the national levels to decrease poverty and foster growth. In the EGD the difference principle is present in its most visible form in the “Just Transitions Mechanism”, designed to help those on the losing end of the European green transition.

Most of the implications of social justice and justice as fairness remain absorbed in the EGD. Still there remain a few times when instruments with social justice elements are explicitly mentioned, the most important ones being “the Just Transitions Mechanism” (JTM) and “the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism” (CBAM). The JTM is a financial instrument that directs monetary funds to sectors negatively affected by the green transition. The Commission acknowledges that different regions face differing difficulties in reducing their dependency from fossil fuel production and consumption. The JTM is the Commission's main tool to “leave no one behind”. It includes both re-education and financial support for those on the (economically) losing side of the just transition. The JTM also aims to enhance political legitimacy and resilience through socioeconomic cohesion. This is vital to the EU, often already seen as having some deficit in its legitimacy due to its complex and multilevel structure. (Fetting C. 2020, 9.)

Some commentators would claim that deep structural changes should be implemented instead of simple income transfers. Thus direct support to say, coal mine workers losing their income and jobs, should be ditched in favour of wider policies, such as green job growth and re-education. The JTM mechanism has been criticised for curing the symptoms of the EU just transition but not solving the underlying problems. The JTM is thus seen as more of an income transfer than an investment.

That said, in the EGD, JTM has already been allotted a 100 billion euros endowment, that also aims to improve popular support for the EU's green transition. (Siddi 2020, 8.) I would however argue that the JTM is not as important as one is led to believe by its name. Though it notionally stands at the apex of the just transition paradigm, in the EU framework the financial extent of the JTM is relatively minor. Many other aspects of the just green transition have received far larger financial endowments, especially in the longer timeframe. Some additional funding has been allotted to JTM in the NextGenerationEU (stimulus) package.

The CBAM on the other hand can be seen as a global or international mechanism of justice, as it affects global justice through international trade. The CBAM aims at both protecting EU's industries but also to encouraging (at least in theory) other economies, among them the developing economies, to participate in the climate effort. On the other hand, the mechanism might distort

global markets and create adverse effects on social justice. The CBAM mechanism can for example prevent developing economies from benefiting from their cheaper labourpool, and disadvantage economies that don't have resources to invest in costly new machinery and infrastructure required to advance the just green transition.

Both the EGD and the NGEU programs are mostly paid by accumulating state and public debt to finance the spending. Rapidly expanding state spending and debt can be seen as a question of intergenerational justice. The EGD goal of economic growth is a vital part of this theme, since increasing the size of the national economy is seen as one of the best ways to do away with excess debt. This being said, many of the European countries have already surpassed the Commissions target of less than 60% public debt per Gross Domestic Production (GDP), and are among the most indebted in the world.

7.2 Social justice as absorbed

One of the main findings in this thesis is that the EGD is mainly an economic program and most of the time does not explicitly address social justice (except in a few places like the JTM). On the other hand, the basic ideas behind many of the EGD goals do have implicit in them some social values and elements. Justice as Fairness comes close to describing many of the underlying values of the EU and its programs. One of the main elements of European social justice is the European Pillar of Social Rights. In the pillars netpages is said:

“The 20 principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights are the beacon guiding us towards a strong social Europe that is fair, inclusive and full of opportunity.”

(EC 2024d.)

In the Pillar special importance is given to issues like child and elderly care, minimum income, health care and housing. These are widely the same institutions proposed in John Rawls's Theory of Justice to enable basic goods for all citizens. An appeal for fair access to opportunities also complies with the second principle of justice as fairness, and especially the JFR version. (JFR, 42.) The European Pillar of Social Rights has its own “Action Plan” with targets for 2030, and the plan is also connected to the UN's Agenda 2030 goals.

One can ask then, if the social justice aspect of the Union is already covered in the Pillar of Social Rights, is there a need to address social justice in the EGD? Although the Commission does label the EGD as a “growth strategy” there is a need to ascertain the relation of the economy to the social

system of the European Union, a feat that the EGD fails to explicitly achieve. Separating the social, the economic and the environmental is also a rhetorical choice and more focus could have been given to social justice and social stability in the EGD.

Securing both the material and immaterial basic goods for EU citizens is an important goal of the EGD. Many of the environmental problems that we face in the age of the anthropocene result from the dilemmas of combining both welfare through consumption, (material basic goods) and on the other hand, conservation of ecosystems and the climate. Some have argued that since the needs for basic goods have been met in Western societies (such as the European member states) excess consumption should be curtailed. It is important to note that the EGD makes no such claims, as it aims at transforming consumption patterns through growth, not curtailment. The aim for growth shows the liberal-economic tendencies of the EGD, and is in line with the operation of modern economies and free capital markets. It is important to notice however that in the EU various different national tax schemes exist, which limit the details of the EGD program and taxation.

Rawls's focus in justice as fairness is on the (social) background institutions. In the EU issues such as the organisation of the welfare states with their strong social institutions are left to the member states to figure out. Several different models of welfare states coexist within the European Union countries. Similarly, tax schemes vary considerably from state to state, and the EU doesn't (at least at the moment 2024) have an independent right to tax its member states. The funds used to sustain the Union itself and many of its programs do however usually come from taxation, conducted by the member states in the manner they best see fit. The most important influence of the EU on public finances comes through the European single market, as it forbids tax-like instruments such as tariffs from affecting intra-EU trade.

As the EGD is, even in the statements of the Commission, a "growth strategy", the issue of limits of economic growth (and the resulting discussion) is important to consider. In the Commission's EGD program, an important aspect is to increase both wealth, growth and welfare, while at the same time phasing out fossil fuel and excess resource consumption. This idea is called "decoupling", and the Commission notes that important milestones for EU decoupling have already been achieved, as in the 1990-2018 period emissions were down some 20%, while the economy grew some 60%.

Why isn't zero growth compatible with the EGD? Why aim for growth with such vigour? The answer might have to do with political and economic realities. Firstly, as long as the economy grows, most people (usually) benefit from the growth. If on the other hand growth would change to de-growth, politically painful decisions would have to be made, often hitting the poorest hardest.

Economically, the capital markets (and capitalism for that matter) rely on interest and yield, and if those would dry up (as they probably would in a de-growth scenario) the result might be a difficult to manage deflation and recession. The growth emphasis of the EGD then, aims to achieve best of both worlds.

When considering political stability, a strong emphasis can be put on both social and environmental resilience. Resilience remains an important quality for the policies of the EU and the EGD alike. Tumultuous times require robust policy resilience, as evident in (among others) the Mary Dobbs et al. 2021 article “Driving the European Green Deal in turbulent times”. In the post EGD era (2019-2024) European policy resilience has already been tested by crises such as the Covid-19 pandemic and the Ukrainian war (with its inflation shock). Here policy resilience takes two main forms: one is the resilience of the program itself and other is the resilience of the underlying society. The two levels are interlinked and affect each other mutually. When combined with ecological resilience the multifaceted nature of resilience in politics is reconfirmed.

One could then claim that to execute the EGD with its decade-spanning targets requires a high level of stability and policy resilience. In an unresilient society, shocks to stability could derail the entire effort. The idea of a link between resilience and biodiversity is also visible in the EGD, with the most important examples being in the land-use (LULUCF) sector, reforming the common agriculture policy (CAP), ecosystem restoration and the food related “Farm to Fork” initiative. The goal to preserve biodiversity outside the EU boundaries is also clearly stated in the EGD. While greenhouse gas emissions themselves do not endanger species, industrial and agricultural pollution and the changes in living environments do. It is important not to turn resilient ecosystems over to the bifurcation point of over-exhaustion, and the same worry exists for political bifurcations as well.

7.3 EGD - Directions for policies

In the EGD the dispersed nature of the costs of emissions is not addressed in length, but it can be seen as an implicit ideal in the program. While some citizens are poised to lose, the green transition also proposes great economic opportunities for citizens and officials alike. The capital aspect of the EGD affects not only industries and the energy sector, but also financial markets and public funding. A just “green” transition without the emphasis on energy justice is just a transition. In the EGD the Commission proposes both a carrot (funding) and a stick (the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism) to get other parts of the world to contribute to the climate effort.

Building up new greener and more efficient energy producing facilities is important to combat carbon lock-in. Capital invested in the old fossil technology can still affect society after a long time, since investments are often expected to be in action for decades on end. Issues such as carbon lock-in and energy lifecycles are amply covered in the EGD. The EGD emphasis on quick and ambitious reforms fully acknowledges the risk of lock-in. If Europe is to reach its emissions targets for 2030 and 2050, acts to make industries low or zero emission must be executed quickly. This is propounded by the fact that industrial investments made now, will remain operational potentially for several decades (the definition of carbon lock-in).

As in the case of industrial investments, many (or even most) ecologically sustainable living spaces, workspaces and infrastructure projects have a lifetime expectancy of tens (or historically speaking, hundreds) of years. Thus a rapid cultural and practical change should be initiated in order to bolster just green transition in the living and cultural spaces. In the EGD this could mean taking advantage of the “renovation wave” initiative. The EGD seems to be in line with the most popular view of reinvesting the funds to further advance the green economy and transition. As the Commission's EGD is an attempt to create a popularly supported program with the best of both (or all) worlds, this is probably not a coincidence. In the EU, the largest geographical injustices relate to the economic differences between the wealthier Western and poorer Eastern countries in the Union.

The EU Emissions Trading System (ETS) is the worlds leading emission trading scheme and abides to the theoretical structure mentioned above. As the European Union doesn't have the right to tax its member states, the possible carbon taxations must take place on the national level. Different levels of climate ambition and many particularities mean that member states carbon taxation varies. Taxes on the (fossil fuel) gasoline of the transportation sector are an example of carbon taxation that is applied in all EU countries to some extent (the 2024 EU requires a minimum tax of 0,36e/litre).

For some the EU and the Commission represent a bureaucratic apparatus with high policy inertia and power distances, and in many ways that view can be argued and even corroborated. Grassroot organisations may gain significance in the Brussels institutions, but this demands major funding and reach. In many ways, the EGD laments the top-down nature of European climate policies - this does extend the relevance of the European Union in a global context, but may reduce the reach of local and grassroots actors.

The EGD does not base blame on any generation. In fact, intergenerational issues are hardly even mentioned in the EGD. The only real intergenerational issue is the climate and emissions themselves, as no-one can deny their existence. Perhaps havocking generational confrontations just

isn't a politically valid or fruitful tactic. Since both the elderly and younger cohorts are all strong in the European Union, a common answer to climate challenges is to be preferred. Strict intergenerational responsibility for past emissions is not implied in the EGD. Here, the Commission seems to be in line with the philosophical arguments of the likes of Bou-Habib and Schussler. The political implication of such admission would shake the foundation of the global economy and political order. Ignoring historical responsibilities is more in line with the (often status quo) policies of the EU and Commission.

On the other hand, some responsibilities about the current disparity of resources between rich countries (such as those in the EU) and developing countries are considered in the EGD. It states that the EU should help these countries to execute their just green transitions. This is important for global climate efforts, as the EU's share of global emissions is only 10% and shrinking (Eurostat 1).

7.4 EGD - An argument from social justice

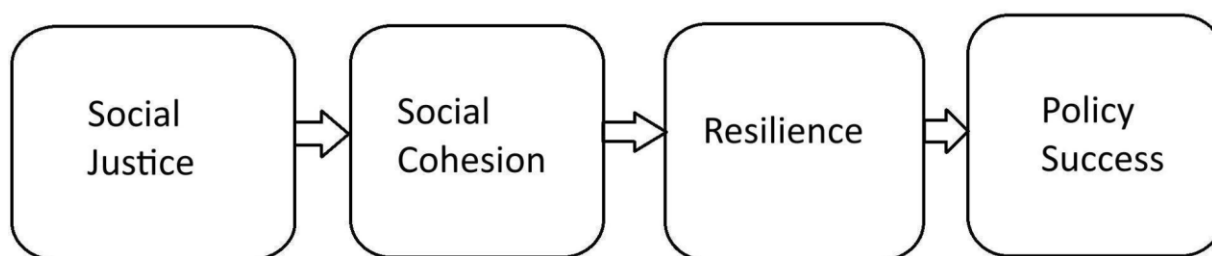


Figure 1. Relations of social justice

As a final tool of analysis in this thesis, we can try to weave together some of the aspects addressed in the thesis to formulate a philosophical argument. Linking social justice, social cohesion, resilience and policy success into a unifying argument seems both possible and preferable. This being said, such an argument is to be a theoretical one. Claiming an empirical correlation and succession between the aforementioned concepts would require much practical, empirical study, outside of the scope and focus of this thesis. For that reason we can define this “argument from social justice” as an analytical argument.

The first two blocks of figure 1 come from the Rawlsian framework; realising the well-ordered society, governed by the two principles and a shared sense of justice and a common conception of

good, enhances both social justice and social cohesion. In the Rawlsian context of justice as fairness, at least the most glaring deficits in social justice are addressed and just and equal social institutions are erected. Rawlsian instruments, most notably that of the difference principle, alleviate differences in income, wealth and living standards, leading to a more cohesive society with smaller social and political cleavages. Although many cultural differences persist, the social cohesion of the society is increased through the shared values and commonly accepted institutions of both justice as fairness and political liberalism. More empirical research should be conducted on these subjects, but it appears safe to say that if the Rawlsian theories are to be realised to their full extent, both social justice and social cohesion will be improved.

The last two blocks of figure 1 are provided by this thesis. Both the analysis presented in this thesis, and many of the views propounded in other studies and EU dossiers seem to clearly implicate that high resilience correlates with policy success, especially over the long term. Resilient systems remain operational even when facing turbulence, and resilience is a desired feature of many political institutions and policies alike.

The boldest claim in figure 1 then seems to be that social justice and social cohesion increase system resilience. Assuming such connection is not far fetched, since cohesion is known to increase stability, (e.g. Jenson 2010, 4) and stability and resilience are closely related. The idea described in this argument is simple: addressing social justice - in this context through applying the Rawlsian principle and striving for a well-ordered society - positively affects several realms of social institutions. Although variable definitions of social cohesion exist, it seems viable (and is corroborated by some studies) that socially more equal societies (closer to the Rawlsian ideal) also contain more social cohesion. For the most part, social cohesion is seen as a positive attribute for a society. In a worst case scenario cohesion can lead to repression of minorities outside the cohesive core, but then, upholding the Rawlsian priority of liberties for the most part refutes this scenario.

Social cohesion is found correlating with increased policy stability and other attributes such as economic development, and in some situations both resilience and social cohesion are found to have similar qualities. Social cohesion can increase resilience most dramatically in times of trouble and policy turbulence. Cohesive structures, social and other, are less likely to fall apart when facing crises. Thus a cohesive society can withstand greater deviations to normal circumstances - and this comes close to the very definition of resilience.

A policy program with such radical importance and long lifespan as the EGD requires a fair bit of stability and resilience to succeed. Historically crises have always rocked societies as time passes. Some crises can be foreseen, others cannot. As total static stability cannot be achieved, a more dynamic model, such as that of resilience, will inevitably play a central role in completing the European green transition.

We can then put together the analytical argument from social justice: social equality leads to cohesion, cohesion to resilience and resilience to policy success. The concepts are transitive in the sense that both equality and cohesion add to the achievement of policy success, even if e.g. resilience is disregarded. Thus we may come to at least one answer to the main research question of this thesis, (that being) “what is the role of social justice in the European Green Deal?”. To a great extent that role is the one described in this argument; inevitably the role of appeals to social justice in the EGD are made to increase social cohesion, resilience and policy success of the program.

8. Conclusions

8.1 Achieving a green future

Outlined in the analytical argument from social justice (chapter 7.4) are the most significant findings of this thesis. Can they be used as policy recommendations, guiding policies? That remains to be seen. What seems apparent is that increasing factors such as cohesion and resilience would make policy success of the EGD better attainable, if conducted in accordance with the Rawlsian theoretical framework and a general European and ecological interest in mind. This outlook might be one of the reasons research on resilience, both ecological and socioeconomical, has been on the rise, and the term resilience has made a strong appearance in the post-EGD environmental policy context (as apparent in Chapter 5.5).

Although only the future may know, one could envision social justice in general taking a stronger role in future EU policies - inside ecological programs and beyond. European integration itself might increase, giving EU institutions such as the Commission wider jurisdiction on issues of social policy and social justice. The EU could take a similar leadership role in social policies that it now has in climate policies. Increasing financial cooperation and integrating taxation throughout the Union would inevitably result in a steeper focus on integrating social policy institutions. It is still

too early to speculate on what forms an EU wide social policy regime would take, especially due to the great institutional differences currently visible in the national social policies. Coordinating social policy could increase both social and ecological resilience and help guarantee basic goods to citizens in a world of environmental opportunities.

In the 2010's and early 2020's a major advance to European integration has been the introduction of common European debt, first due to the Euro-crisis and later during the COVID-19 crisis (through the NextGenerationEU stimulus package). Imagining an EU with taxatory rights at the moment might seem as unlikely as common debt was once seen to be. Funding projects regarding both ecological, climate and social justice could gain important impetus from a wider European mandate of integration. If funding and spending on climate programs, such as the EGD, seems vast in scope, public and private spending on social policies such as social security, health and education is even more gargantuan in its extent - in 2022 public spending in the EU stood at 8 trillion Euros annually, with social protection alone reaching over 3 trillion Euros - while the total EU Gross national product stood at 17 trillion euros (annually). (Statista 1, Statista 2.) Issues and institutions of social justice are not only the focus of Rawlsian interest but hugely important for the European citizens and corporate and governmental entities alike.

Reaching a greener, pollution and emissions free future for Europe is one of the most crucial policy goals (and hopefully achievements) for the EU in the first half of the 21st century. While more traditional theories of social justice, such as John Rawls's Justice as fairness, can be used successfully in analysing such issues (as seen in this thesis) new additions can be made to make the framework more enticing. In this thesis those additions have taken the form of presenting several strains of justice and putting emphasis on multi-faceted resilience and the just transitions paradigm.

8.2 Social Justice and The EGD

John Rawls's work "A Theory of justice" is a seminal part of the western canon of political philosophy and the ethics of justice. Despite its stature as the prominent theory of justice and contractualism of the second half of the 20th century, Rawls's theoretical works remain surprisingly silent on the then nascent environmental problems, bound to develop into perhaps the greatest challenge humanity faces in the 21st century. Still his theory, Justice as Fairness, can help us better understand the social and ecological justice behind modern ecological and environmental issues. In this thesis Justice as Fairness is pitted against an empirical counterpart, the European Green Deal

(EGD). The EGD is the European Commission's "growth strategy" and aims for a climate neutral EU in 2050. The EGD is also analysed in its wider context, the just transitions paradigm.

Whereas Rawls was silent on ecological issues, the EGD as an ecological and economic program is (mostly) silent on issues of social justice. One of the main findings is that social justice, of which Rawls's Justice as Fairness was primarily concerned, is often presented as implicit and absorbed in the EGD. Still, both have the same goal, the creation and maintenance of a well-ordered society. Whereas justice as fairness is hypothetical, the EGD aims to present a practical path to realise a just and sustainable society in the EU and beyond.

As the EGD is essentially a version of the "just green transitions" genre, it has clear implications for realising not a green transition, but a just green transition. Some of the EGD instruments have clear implications for forms of justice, such as "the Just Transition Mechanism", "the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism" and the imperative to "leave no one behind". In this thesis an idea is propounded that if not proprietarily, the addressing of social justice has other reasons than just charity. The EGD is not an equality program and has a strong commitment to liberal economics (and the inherent inequality of such a system). Social justice matters, because addressing social justice and increasing social cohesion can improve European societies' (multi-faceted) resilience.

The EGD is a program that covers several decades and has ambitious targets for structural change in energy production, emissions reduction and biodiversity protection among others. First targets are to be reached in 2030 and the target for 2050 is net-neutrality of emissions. Such a decades spanning program needs high levels of political capital and commitment. This is the reason why social and ecological resilience are key to achieving its goals. As we have seen in the post-EGD era (2019-2024), political turbulence has been increasing. The Covid-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine and high inflation and interest rates are all shocks to the EU and Europe at large. Maintaining steadfast progress in turbulent times is hard, but must prevail, if the EGD is to be executed in its full extent. This is the reason why resilience matters. In times of turbulence, weak institutions may fail. In the EGD, the biggest risks come from its long timeframe (2020-2050). Because of the timeframe, long and stable political commitment is required from the European political system.

Because resilience is vital to keep the EGD on track, emphasis should be put on cohesive social policies especially regarding those on the losing side of the European transition. Higher social cohesion (usually) reduces popular support for political extremism and shortsighted populist policies, while increasing policy stability (Jenson 2010, 4). Resilience increases both policy success and the legitimacy of the European political system. On the other hand, even if all turbulence cannot

be countered, crises can in best instances speed up the European green transition – this is exactly what happened with the Covid-19 stimulus measures, such as the NextGenerationEU package.

Issues of ecological justice and just green transition can greatly benefit from taking in account the theories of John Rawls. This is due to the generality and general applicability of Rawls's theories. Where great injustices exist, a need for normative theories inevitably arises. There is no doubt that just green transitions will greatly change the economies, environments, and welfare both in the EU and beyond. The far-reaching changes will both create new fortunes and diminish others. Similarly, the general welfare of some citizens will fall as others' welfare rises.

These changes can, however, be mitigated through distributive mechanisms, targeted subsidies and ambitious social policy. This is what makes the idea of just transitions “just”. John Rawls's justice as fairness, with its difference principle, basic goods and veil of ignorance is one of the best models for approaching a just society - a well-ordered society - since it can produce standards and pathways to achieve a future society which is both more ecologically sustainable (in its power production, land-use, wildlife conservation etc.) but also socially, economically and institutionally sustainable and resilient.

John Rawls's theories of justice mostly address issues not of ecological, but of social justice. The EGD, similarly, is in its core an economic program. It aims at combining economic growth with a transition to green energy and zero-emission economy. Even the Commission refers to the program as a “growth strategy”. As a pragmatic solution the EGD also leaves many of the key questions in the environmental ethics field unanswered. The EGD is a political pact, which aims to get the “best of both worlds” when it comes to economic, social and environmental issues.

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