The socio-economic climate crisis

A discourse analysis of Eurosceptic right-wing MEPs in Green Deal plenary debates

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Abstract

Climate change policies have never occupied a larger role in European politics than today, however, there are disagreements about the framing of the discourse on the evolving matter. Right-wing Euroscepticism has progressed within recent years. Similarly, has the debate on climate change climbed up the international political agenda and now occupies a significant position in EU politics. Current research shows that right-wing Euroscepticism has been connected to populism and hostility towards climate change policies. Research also shows that populism has been found to arise in times of crisis, especially to be utilised for political gain. As climate change has been described as a crisis by scientists, and as it grows in salience within European politics, an analysis of the interrelation between populist crisis performance, climate change discourse and the Eurosceptic right-wing is warranted. This thesis investigates if and how Members of the European Parliament, who belong to the Eurosceptic right-wing, utilise populist speech in their framing of the discourse on climate change as a crisis. In this thesis, the linkages between the Eurosceptic right-wing, the discourse on climate change in the European Parliament, and populist crisis performance are analysed. Based on these observations, we seek to answer how right-wing Eurosceptic MEPs frame the climate change crisis discourse through populist speech. To answer this research question, a critical discourse analysis of the right-wing Eurosceptic MEPs' statements in plenary debates related to the European Green Deal, inspired by Norman Fairclough's method, is conducted. The analysis relies on Benjamin Moffitt's theoretical framework on populist crisis performance, assisted by Paul Taggart's theory on populist themes. The results show that rather than performing climate change as a crisis, the Members of the European Parliament tone down the urgency of climate change. Instead, they identify and elevate another issue to a crisis, namely the social and economic effects of the European Green Deal. Based on the analytical framework, the statements analysed are found to be characterised as populist. These findings contribute to the literature on populist actors and highlight the relevance of framing discourses in international politics.

List of abbreviations

CDA   Critical discourse analysis

EC   European Commission

ECR   European Conservatives and Reformists

EP   European Parliament

ERW   Eurosceptic right-wing

EU   European Union

FTA   Free trade agreement

ID   Identity and Democracy

JTF   Just Transition Fund

MEP   Member of the European Parliament

MS   Member State(s)

RWP   Right-wing populism

SMEs Small- and middle-sized enterprises

1. Introduction

[I]t appears that we are well and truly living in the age of crisis—the Global Financial Crisis, the Eurozone crisis, environmental crisis, various humanitarian crises—the list goes on. (...) In such a situation, it would seem that the stage has been set for populists to sweep in, appeal to 'the people' and enjoy great success by capitalising on a general loss of faith and disaffection with their representatives, 'the elite' and politics in general. Crisis breeds populism, doesn't it?
(Moffitt 2016, 113).

Benjamin Moffitt's question to whether crisis generates populism is a foundational aspect of this master's thesis that focuses on the interrelation between populism, crisis and discourse. Moffitt outlines an inherent connection between crisis and populism, and we will study if this connection is also evident in discourse framing, more specifically the framing of climate change discourse.

Within recent years, the issue of climate change has grown in salience and has become an important topic on the international political agenda. The debate on the reality of climate change has left the realm of hypothesis and entered that of fact, and at some point, 'climate change' has become 'climate crisis' (Crist 2007, 29, 36). Not only scientists but also the Secretary-General of the United Nations have described it as such, while the large British newspaper, The Guardian, announced its change of language using 'climate crisis' rather than 'climate change' (UN 2018; Carrington 2019). Scholars argue that the framing of crises is pivotal in the perception of them and how they should be managed. From this point of view, the framing of international as well as national problems in our political institutions becomes important in relation to democracy and political decision-making (Millar & Heath 2003, 6). As solutions for climate change problems are mostly sought on a transnational level, international institutions are often the arena to determine climate action (Hajer & Versteeg 2005, 182; Delbeke & Vis 2016, 4). Such an arena could be the European Union where the issue has climbed up the ladder of priorities within recent years (Delbeke & Vis 2016, 2). The Eurosceptic right-wing has also progressed in this arena, more specifically in the European Parliament within the last decade, which led to a scholarly concern whether populism was spreading across Europe (Sørensen 2020, 162). This concern originates from the fact that this group has been connected to populist politics and rhetoric. Furthermore, it is often sceptical of climate change policies originating from the EU (Lockwood 2018, 714; Brack 2018, 97). Climate change's abstract and complex nature allows populists to diminish it, but in the context of the European institutions, climate change has never been higher on the agenda. Thus, the right-wing's participation is inevitable in the debate since the left-wing, as well as the centre party groups of the EP, have moved

towards more pro-environmental opinions (Lockwood 2018 722; Henley 2019; European Commission 2020).

According to Moffitt, populist actors often seek to perform and utilise crises to forward their political agenda and gain popularity (2015, 210). From this point of view, the climate change issue would be an obvious crisis to utilise by ERWs, but the transboundary nature of climate change policies is inherently in conflict with their Eurosceptic stance. It is then puzzling that on the one hand, right-wing Eurosceptic MEPs can be expected to remain critical towards environmentally friendly policies, and on the other hand, the climate change issue can be an ideal crisis for them to engage in to gain popularity.

Since Euroscepticism has been connected to populism and the issue of climate change is gaining importance in European politics, the interrelation between populism, climate change seen as a crisis, and the ERW politicians in the EP make up an interesting trinity. Returning to Moffitt's question of crises leading to populism, this thesis will study the connection between the climate crisis and populism. More specifically, we will study the framing of the issue by members of the EP who belong to the Eurosceptic right-wing by answering the following question:

How are right-wing Eurosceptic MEPs framing the climate change crisis discourse through populist speech?

In the following two sections the societal context and scholarly background that make up the basis for our curiosity and justification of the research will be presented.

1.1 Climate change policies in the context of the European Parliament

The issue of climate change has been on the European Union's agenda over the last 25 years where development and implementation of policies have established the EU as a regional frontrunner on the transnational issue (Delbeke & Vis 2016, 1-2). During this time, the EU has developed comprehensive legislation concerning climate change and the environment based on the qualified majority voting of Member States along with the European Parliament (ibid., 8-9). Climate change has within recent years become a high salience issue that 93% of respondents to a Eurobarometer survey from April 2019 see as a serious problem and to which 60% have taken personal action (European Commission 2019, 3, 36). According to a different Eurobarometer survey from October 2019, the environment should be the priority of the EP pointing to climate change as the most

urgent issue. This is the first time that climate change is at the top of a Eurobarometer priority list (European Parliament 2019a).

The increased focus is also reflected in the latest European Commission, led by President Ursula von der Leyen where the flagship policy package, European Green Deal, is among the six political guidelines set out for her 5-year presidency (Leyen 2019). The EP has historically been described as the advocate of climate and environment in comparison with the two other large EU institutions – counting the Council and the EC (Burns 2012, 87). But the climate change focus is not only present in the European institutions. At the EP elections in 2019, the MS populations also voted for the environmentally oriented parties to an extent that caused landslide elections in several countries and gave the EP party group European Greens their strongest position ever in the parliament, rising from 50 to 74 parliamentary seats (European Parliament 2019b; Henley 2019). However, some progress was also enjoyed by right-wing Eurosceptics, who have been described by a political analyst as "a force that isn't going away soon" (Smith 2019; Conley 2019). As the traditional centre-left (S&D) and centre-right (EPP) lost 39 and 36 seats respectively, a more polarised parliament remained after the 2019 elections. Furthermore, several parties gave increased prominence to environmental matters in their manifestos as well (Smith 2019).

Thus, we have established that climate change plays an important role in EU politics and for the European people. But the way we talk about it and what meaning is attributed to the subject is also important. Previous research carried out in the field of public discourse has shown that meaning in climate change discourse is socially constructed and that values and ideologies tend to have a large influence on policies made (Grundmann & Krishnamurthy 2010, 128). The public discourse about climate change has not only increased over the last two decades – with a steep rise since 2004 – the urgency with which it is presented has similarly risen (ibid., 143).

1.2 Literature review

The following section is a critical review of the literature from which our thesis takes its departure and to which we aim to contribute. The goal of this section is to present the most relevant and recent literature in this area and to explain how our perspective will contribute. As our thesis focuses on populist crisis rhetoric among MEPs, it is relevant to look at the scholarly literature that covers and might combine the following topics: populism, crises, discourse, rhetoric, right-wing and Eurosceptic MEPs, and climate change.

Beginning with the literature on crisis, 't Hart and Tindall have edited and contributed to an anthology focusing on the framing of crisis and its importance in the success or failure of political leaders. It is an analysis of leaders' rhetoric and media responses to this during the escalation of the 2008 financial crisis ('t Hart & Tindall 2009, 23). In studying how political leaders from different countries tried to shape, frame, and manage the debate, the triggering effect of disruptive crises and the political management of it is analysed. 't Hart and Tindall analyse crises as a window of opportunity to utilise for political purposes and gains, a concept they describe as crisis exploitation; utilising crisis-type rhetoric to change levels of political support for both serving public office-holders, existing public policies and their alternatives (ibid., 22-23). Furthermore, they emphasise rhetoric as a powerful shaping factor for not only the success but also failure of political leaders and their agendas (ibid., 32).

The empirical focus of the anthology is the financial downturn in 2008, which tenably has been more widely defined as a crisis than the issue of climate change. In the book it is concluded, among other things, that "leaders always strive for political and policy success, and rhetoric is one of the tools they employ to achieve it" (ibid., 344). It is demonstrated that rhetoric is a powerful tool in "naming, framing and taming" an issue and that leaders can present themselves convincingly as vital managers of a crisis if they elevate the problem from an issue of routine politics to a threat to the core value and interests of the people (ibid., 345-346). From this conclusion, we believe that it could be interesting to study how populist speech plays a role in this framing contest concerning climate change, especially with the theoretical framework of Moffitt employed in this thesis focusing on crisis as an inherent part of populism.

Another scholarly work focused on crisis is Cas Mudde's scientific article *The 2019 EU Elections: Moving The Center* (2019), explaining how European politics have moved to the right. He argues that right-wing populist politicians and the media sought to frame the increased number of immigrants to Europe in 2015 and 2016 as a crisis. Attaching the label of crisis to a political issue is a powerful way to shape public perceptions and therefore the matter will to some extent dominate the political agenda until it is either "solved" or is no longer described as a crisis (Mudde 2019, 25). Throughout Mudde's article, it is emphasised that it was a political choice to consciously frame the increased number of asylum seekers as a crisis (ibid., 21, 25). This crisis, he contends, brought populist radical-right politics into the heart of Europe at the European Parliament election in 2019, which has led to a normalisation of authoritarian and populist discourses and a general

move towards the right in several ways (ibid., 25, 32). Mudde's focus on how an event can be blown up to a highly pertinent political issue through populist and radical-right rhetoric is interesting in relation to our thesis because we are also studying the power of language rather than political actions.

Another characteristic of right-wing populists, is that they typically favour certain elements of the climate change debate associated with national identity and their home countries, but they are also often unreceptive towards the policies and science about how to handle the issue (Hilson 2019, 395). Populist leaders speak on behalf of the 'real people' rather than for democratically elected elites whom they believe only serve their interests. They demand action and change, and speak up for the people against the elites accused for not acting fast or good enough (ibid., 396). Right-wing populists engage in emotional, pathos-saturated ways of approaching their listeners and have been described as drawing on emotions such as hate, love, disgust, and hope (Moffitt 2020, 92).

As the issue of climate change is widely known it is, however, not a popular topic with right-wing populists, who globally tend to be hostile to climate action (Lockwood 2018, 712). There is a large group of voters who sees green policies as something that the wealthy elite imposes on them from their "cosmopolitan lifestyles" far from smaller towns and villages where low-income earners live. An example is the *gilets jaunes* in France, which initially demonstrated against higher fuel taxes (Stephens 2020). Moreover, the Eurosceptic right-wing within European politics has been connected to populism by other scholars (Sørensen 2020, 162). Matthew Lockwood focuses on right-wing populism and more specifically how it is linked to the climate change agenda. The rise of RWP is a challenge to the climate change agenda because supporters and leaders of RWP are often hostile to climate change policies. Based on this proposition he investigates the reasons why (Lockwood 2018, 712). He finds that ideologically populism is against the "corrupt and illegitimate liberal, cosmopolitan elite" that have left 'the people' behind. Thus, the rise of populism is attributed to globalisation and the structural changes that have led to 'the people' being left behind. This implies that populists' hostility to climate policies are related to these structural changes that also have been the breeding ground for RWP (Lockwood 2018, 726). However, James McCarthy finds in a comparative study of right-wing populist governments and parties that they sometimes do support a few aspects of climate change and the environment. These aspects are associated with identity and nationalism such as the landscape and national conservation (McCarthy 2019, 301;

Lockwood 2018, 717). While their populist rhetoric demonstrates a fierce willingness to act, they lack ideological consistency and coherence (McCarthy 2019, 303). The two scholarly perspectives point in opposite directions concerning RWP and climate change, which makes it all the more relevant to study how right-wing politicians go about the subject within the EP.

A different angle on the EP is found in Nathalie Brack's book *Opposing Europe in the European Parliament* (2018). She has found that it is possible to divide Eurosceptic MEPs into four categories depending on their way of using their mandate in the EP. The first is called 'The Absentee', and MEPs in this group are "characterised by two main indicators: a comparatively low involvement in the assembly and a concentration of their activities at the national level and in their constituencies" (Brack 2018, 85). The second group is called 'The Public Orator'. This type of MEP prioritise speaking in public as well as researching and outlining negative information on European integration. They have in common with 'The Absentee' that they do not want to engage in negotiations or developing EU reforms, but they are more present and visible in the daily work than the former group, as they want to use their mandate to denounce the system and delegitimise the institution through speeches in plenary debates e.g. (ibid., 89, 112). The third group is 'The Pragmatist'. These MEPs have a somewhat dual interest, as they work to achieve political results while not wanting to compromise their Eurosceptic beliefs. They are more invested in the daily work of the EP, as they make an effort to change the system in specific areas (ibid., 96). The fourth and last group is 'The Participant'. These MEPs respect the system and appear as any other politician in the EP. Their main objective is to influence the legislative process in the EU. They formulate initiatives and are willing to negotiate to a much larger extent than the other three groups (ibid., 103-104).

Looking towards another perspective is the left-wing populism in 'climate campaigners' and litigation in the area of environmental justice. Chris Hilson describes the tension between climate campaigners calling for more action and the slow movement by the democratically elected governments (Hilson 2019, 396). Populism on the right and left side of the political spectrum do have some similarities in referring to a certain people, but the community involved is however not the same (ibid., 398). He contends that there are typical populist characteristics in left-wing actors' approach to climate change issues, however, we will contribute with a study of the political right-wing, which is not nearly as thoroughly studied in relation to climate change (ibid., 396).

The work of the above-mentioned scholars each touches upon climate change and populism in different ways, however, they all focus predominantly on populist politicians or politics rather than speech and discourse, which is the focus of this thesis. Still, they function as an important foundation for our research and we hope to contribute to the study of populism in climate change discourse.

A study that looks closer at the constructive power of words vis-á-vis climate change perceptions, in line with our research, is Reiner Grundmann's article *Climate change and knowledge politics* from 2007. In a comparative study of the news media and politics in Germany and the United States, he finds that the media relies on different sources of scientific knowledge in their reporting on global warming and that the governments in a similar way justify and base their policies on diverging sources (Grundmann 2007, 414). Moreover, he uncovers that the interpretation of policy-relevant suggestions from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is filtered through the political agenda of the government. He argues that this is why some countries have different or even diverging climate change policies (ibid., 427).

Departing from Grundmann's study we have seen that political agendas influence how we discuss specific issues as well as how we solve them. Therefore, it is relevant to investigate how the climate change issue is addressed and constructed discursively in the EP, particularly because of its major role in how the issue is managed on the EU level. Moreover, in a study of Australian politician Pauline Hanson's populist style of rhetorics, Kurt Sengul finds that in-depth critical discourse analysis is useful in analyses of political communication and can be a valuable resource in line with traditional social scientific techniques such as content analysis and surveys (2019 381, 389).

Through this section, we have presented some of the current literature relating to our object of study. We have shown that some work has been done on populism and climate change as well as populism and crisis performance. It has also been done in a European and Eurosceptic perspective. However, as we have also demonstrated, there is a gap in the work connecting climate change and right-wing populism. The two have very rarely been connected in research, nor has it ever been associated with the European institutions, despite their significant role in the global fight against rising temperatures. We will seek to contribute to filling this scholarly gap with this thesis. In the subsequent section, our wondering fundamental for our research question will be presented.

1.3 Puzzle and research question

As the issue of climate change is widely known it is, however, not a popular topic with the far right-wing, who globally tend to be hostile to climate action (Lockwood 2018, 712). Generally, the Eurosceptic right-wing have been connected to populism through its ideological features (Sørensen 2020, 162). We have seen this pattern on numerous occasions, including the refugee crisis and the financial crisis. Therefore, we would expect this group to frame climate change as a crisis as well as the matter having been called "climate crisis" internationally. On the contrary, as right-wing Eurosceptics ideologically call for less European cooperation and more national sovereignty, we could, expect them to diminish or discount the issue as there is broad consensus about the solutions needing to be found on an international level. Either way, the ERW politicians are part of the debate on the issue because of its high salience. Therefore, we find it interesting to discover if and in what ways the Eurosceptic right-wing in the EP contributes to the discourse on climate change and if they seek to perform a populist crisis when debating the issue. Do they neglect the crisis or emphasise it? Do they use emotional or science-based argumentation? Do they engage in populist performance of crisis? This leads us to the following research question:

> *How are right-wing Eurosceptic MEPs framing the climate change crisis discourse*
> *through populist speech?*

To answer the question we will draw upon the theoretical framework by Benjamin Moffitt about populist crisis performance. His theory will help us analyse if and how crisis is a part of the discourse and from this, if and how it can be argued to be populist. It gives us concrete analytical points to analyse the empirical data that will make it possible for us to assess the extent of populism in the discourse presented by the MEPs. To make our analysis more elaborate and comprehensive, we will support our main theory by including one theme from Paul Taggart's widely acknowledged theory on populism. Methodologically, this will be done by utilising critical discourse analysis as outlined by Norman Fairclough. CDA is useful in this matter because of its great focus on written and spoken language as well as its emphasis on the constructive power of discourse and framing, both of which are pivotal parts of this thesis. Hence, our analysis of discourses in the European Parliament seeks to uncover populist traits in the debate statements by MEPs belonging to Eurosceptic right-wing parties relating to climate change. We do so by analysing their contributions to plenary debates on proposals relating to the European Green Deal. The EGD is the latest and largest legislative framework on climate change in the EU and it is to set the course for

comprehensive environmental legislation that will transform the Union (European Commission 2020).

2. Theory

This chapter provides an overview of the theoretical framework and the considerations behind it. First, the choice of theory is briefly explained followed by an account of the most widespread current theoretical approaches to populism. This narrows down to a section on the role of crisis in populism, an important concept in this thesis. Subsequently the theory of populist crisis performance by Benjamin Moffitt is then outlined, including our reason for omitting one out of six steps in our analytical procedure. Afterwards, the supplementary theory by Taggart is introduced followed by a section that clarifies selected, relevant terms. Ultimately, a delimitations section will specify the demarcations of this thesis and make clear what we do not intend to include.

2.1 Theoretical approaches to populism

This thesis will employ the discursive approach to populism that defines populism as a measurable aspect of political speech. To study how populist rhetoric is present in Eurosceptic MEPs communication on climate change Benjamin Moffitt's framework for studying populism and crisis is useful because it combines the aspect of crisis in the analysis of populist characteristics. Furthermore, we will draw on a part of Paul Taggart's theory on populism to include an important analytical aspect; the idealised heartland. The theoretical aspects of Moffitt and Taggart will be accounted for in this chapter, but first, we will turn to an overview of other theories in the field of populism.

Over the last decades, studies of populism have expanded in the number of publications and its qualitative scope, today including 'web populism', 'media populism' and other forms of populism that have risen within new forms of political spaces, new communication systems, and an increasingly globalised world (Anselmi 2017, 3, 40). Populism has been approached from a myriad of theoretical perspectives, but it is possible to distinguish between three main conceptual approaches to populism: the ideational, the strategic, and the discursive, which differ in their level of analysis (Gidron & Bonikowski 2013, 5; Moffitt 2020, 24; Bonikowski & Gidron 2016, 7). The three approaches have similarities and differences although populist scholars agree on the juxtaposition between 'the people' and 'the elite', emphasising the discursive strategy in

constructing an 'us' versus 'them' and illuminating the process of social polarisation typical in populist politics (Anselmi 2018, 42-43; Moffitt 2020, 23). One of the ideational scholars, Cas Mudde, has defined populism as:

> *a thin-centered ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic groups, "the pure people" versus "the corrupt elite," and which argues that politics should be an expression of the volonté générale (general will) of the people* (Mudde 2004, 543).

But reducing it to an ideology has been criticised by those who consider populism as a discursive style, partly because of the ambiguity of Mudde's definition, partly because of the methodological difficulties that arise from the empirical application of it (Anselmi 2018, 43). Paul Taggart, on the other hand, has surveyed the state of the art on populism and found that populism is a fractured, ubiquitous concept, that is often a reflection of the context in which it is studied (2000, 6, 22). Taggart admits that populism is a widely used term because of this ubiquity in modern politics, but outlines three defining features: populism as opposed to representative politics. Secondly, it always draws on some form of implicit or explicit heartland – an imagined and romanticised version of the past that is more simple, unified, earnest, and ordinary. Finally, it has a Manichean tendency, meaning that the world is divided between good and evil and between 'us' and 'them' (Taggart 2012). The three approaches are not mutually exclusive, but they have different foci of analysis leading back to their different perceptions of what populism is and how it is defined (Anselmi 2018, 9).

This thesis will employ the discursive approach that considers populism as a gradational rather than a binary phenomenon as the ideational approach does (Moffitt 2020, 35-36). This will allow us to study populism as something political actors can employ more or less with regards to frequency and intensity rather than a binary yes or no categorisation of the political actor analysed, which in this case is Eurosceptic right-wing MEPs. Furthermore, the discursive approach has a focus on populism as a practice, as something that is done through speech acts but cannot be attributed to the speaker. These characteristics will make it possible for us to study the performative style in the debates (Bonikowski & Gidron 2016, 9). The ideational approach sees populism as an attribute, not a practice or something actors can "do" as discursive and strategic does (ibid.). Finally, the discursive approach considers a wider array of actors (such as movements, parties, politicians) as being able to make populist performances while the strategic approach has a narrower focus on the leader. Therefore, the discursive style will permit us to study the Eurosceptic

MEPs' rhetorical style rather than only the style of the president or a leader of a political group (Moffitt 2020, 23).

Considering populism as a discursive style is the most widespread approach and it has its roots in Ernesto Laclau's work, combining the structuralist and psychoanalytic linguistic paradigm in political theory (Anselmi 2018, 43; Moffitt 2020, 20). According to Gidron and Bonikowski's comparison of the three approaches, the definition of populism in the discursive approach is the least hindered by necessary conditions such as a particular mobilisation style in the strategic approach or ideological stability in the ideational approach which qualifies the discursive approach as the most precise and simple that can be used to study populism regardless of the ideological orientation and geographic focus of the populist claims in question (Bonikowski & Gidron 2016, 9-10). Based on the methodological considerations presented in the next chapter (chapter 3) and as this thesis seeks to analyse populist rhetoric rather than a populist strategy or ideology, we rely on this approach.

There are different variations of this theoretical approach, but they all consider populism as a rhetorical tool, a communicative strategy that creates a political subjectivity, awareness, action, and the identity of the people (Anselmi 2018, 43). Moffitt places himself within this theoretical branch, arguing that populism should be understood as a political style and should be studied as symbolically mediated performances used to navigate in and create fields of power within the political sphere (Moffitt 2020, 20; Moffitt 2016, 38).

Moffitt and Taggart's theories encompass several traits of populism that can be operationalised in relation to the chosen method of critical discourse analysis. As Moffitt sees the concepts of crisis and populism as something inherently connected and as the topic of this thesis is ERW MEPs' framing of the climate change discourse, we believe that it will function as a useful theoretical background. Based on the literature reviewed it is the most suitable theory to use in this thesis because it encompasses both the topic of populism, crisis and applies to the empirical data and the preliminary observations we have made of it.

2.2 Crisis in populism

In the literature on populism, it is debated if and to what extent crisis is an internal part of populism. Scholars can be placed on a spectrum regarding the question, with few having the opinion that there is no connection at all, others seeing a clear connection (Laclau, Stavrakakis, Roberts, Weyland,

Levitsky & Loxton), and some in between (Mudde, Kaltwasser, Taggart) (Moffitt 2015, 192-194). The general point of agreement is that crisis is an external variable to populism, a position that Moffitt does not agree with because of two reasons; firstly, crisis lacks clear boundaries and therefore the relationship between crisis and populism cannot be explained by causal explanations. Crisis is in itself a product of complex causality and the different variables we associate with crisis. Secondly, crisis is a concept entrenched in the words used to describe it meaning that it cannot be described objectively because we cannot separate crisis from the way we describe it. Therefore, it is more productive to analyse how a systemic failure is elevated to crisis through mediation and performance, Moffitt argues, and in this conception, crisis is seen as internal to populism rather than an external cause or catalyst. From this point of view, populist actors are not seen as reacting to an external crisis, but that they actively perform and perpetuate it. It is therefore regarded as a phenomenon that is experienced socially and culturally. As outlined by Taggart, the question is not whether or not there is a crisis, but to see if and how populist actors mediate, perform and induce a sense of crisis because it is seen as an integral part of populist behaviour (Moffitt 2015, 194-196; Taggart 2004, 275). This point of view will be applied to the analysis of the MEPs framing of the climate change discourse to analyse how crisis is performed.

2.3 Moffitt's theoretical framework

To analyse how MEPs perform populist crisis more specifically, we will employ the analytical framework outlined by Moffitt. It contains six key steps that populist actors use to elevate a failure to the level of crisis, to separate 'the people' from a 'dangerous other' held responsible for the crisis, to present simple solutions and show strong leadership abilities to legitimise their taking charge (Moffitt 2015, 198). These steps are developed based on an examination of the literature on populist leaders. It showed that scholars might disagree on what populism is, but not on who the populists are. Thus, the six steps are based on uncontroversially accepted examples of populism and populists in the literature (ibid., 198). Of course, they are not comprehensive examples that all populists will use, nor are all the strategies guaranteed to give results. The strategies can be adapted to different audiences and environments, as they will be more or less receptive to the different types of performances (ibid., 208). The six strategies are as follows:

1. Identify failure;
2. Elevate to the level of crisis by linking into a wider framework and adding a temporal dimension;
3. Frame 'the people' vs. those responsible for the crisis;
4. Use media to propagate performance;
5. Present simple solutions and strong leadership;
6. Continue to propagate crisis.

These, as well as the assisting theory by Taggart, will be elaborated individually in the following, to which an operationalisation of the theory and methods will follow. In chapter 4, the Operationalisation, we will in detail explain how the theory is operational in the analysis.

2.3.1 Identify failure

The first step is to choose a particular failure present in society and heighten the attention and urgency surrounding it. The issue can be of different natures but is likely to be more successful if the chosen failure already has gained some political salience. Among Moffitt's examples is the failure of immigration heightened to the level of crisis or in challenging economic times, the failure of bankers to protect the people financially. This does not entail that populist actors only focus on one issue, but that they often use a specific failure to catch attention and create a sense of crisis (Moffitt 2015, 198-199).

2.3.2 Elevate to the level of crisis by linking into a wider framework and adding a temporal dimension

By linking the chosen failure to other failures, the populist actor embeds it within a larger moral and structural framework. This makes it seem like the failure is symptomatic of a wider problem which in turn will promote the failure to a level of crisis. Knitting the failure into a larger framework can also make the chain of problematic issues so long, that the connection to the initial issue becomes confusingly hard to see, nevertheless they are connected to the initial crisis which will stand as the general symbol of several problems. The populist actor makes this equivalent chain of failures through mediated performances (such as interviews, speeches, written material, et cetera) trying to connect different issues as being a symptom of, or is connected to, the initial crisis, which then functions as a signifier, signifying a chain of problematic issues (Moffitt 2015, 199).

Another characteristic of populist actors' presentation of a crisis is the addition of a temporal dimension. Not only do they create a sense of urgency by elevating the failure to a crisis, as seen in step one, but they also call for short timelines, without which horrible events will unfold and the chain of problems tied to the crisis will be impossible to solve. The temporal dimension is added by presenting the situation as if a crisis must be dealt with immediately by decisive political action to stop the crisis rather than considering different options (ibid., 200-201).

2.3.3 Frame 'the people' vs. those responsible for the crisis

After framing the failure as a crisis and within a larger framework, the populist actor is more easily able to identify those responsible for the crisis, and those who have been treated unjustly, identified as 'the people'. Both parties are often rather vaguely defined, the people are those negatively affected by the crisis, who can be united against a common culprit who, on the other hand, are described as creating situations that hurt 'the people' and are blamed for taking political power and using it for their benefit exclusively. The vagueness is useful for the populist actor as it can more easily include anyone in 'the people' and the 'dangerous other'. For the populist speaker, the construction of a common enemy is also a crucial part of making an identity of the unclearly defined 'people', as the dichotomy towards some 'other' can strengthen the internal group identification (Moffitt 2015, 201; Jenkins 1997, 54). This gives them not only internal cohesion but also something the populist leader can unite them against (Moffitt 2015, 201-202). Secondly, the performance of crisis offers populist actors the ability to classify a group of people as the 'dangerous other' without discriminating against them directly. For instance, by framing immigration as a crisis, the blame is put upon the immigrants and by linking this to a wider framework of problems that might be unrelated, immigrants are given the blame for all the problems (ibid.).

2.3.4 Use media to propagate performance

Media attention does not come easily, and the populist actor is reliant on the media to help spread the knowledge about a given crisis. To attain and maintain public media interest populist actors perform a sense of crisis through media events designed to attract wide attention, identify the enemies of 'the people', and obtain salience for the particular failure. Other strategies can be to take part in gatherings, demonstrations, marches, or other performative rituals, that might appear

unmediated and originating from 'the people', thereby legitimising the cause as driven by 'the people', but being orchestrated by the populist actors who are the central drivers. Additionally, some populist speakers utilise their own media channels to perform crises (Moffitt 2015, 203-204). However, as our research question focuses primarily on the rhetoric in parliamentary debates and the chosen data therefore is the debates, we are not able to analyse this aspect of crisis performance. This choice is elaborated in section 2.6.

2.3.5 Present simple solutions and strong leadership

The fifth step for the populist actor is to appear as having a solution to the crisis and as a strong leader able to lead the way out of it. One important strategy is to present other leaders as less competent and less concerned with the crisis at hand. This will in turn make the populist speaker seem more direct and solution-oriented (Moffitt 2015, 204). Another important way is to offer simple solutions to the crisis, skipping political nuances and acting abruptly to stop the crisis and solve the problems with a snap of their fingers. In this process, the earlier chain of problems and the 'dangerous other' are important instruments because the populist actor will need to place the responsibility, and point to a single issue that must be eradicated which will magically solve the crisis. This emphasises the unwillingness of the populist speaker to accept a multitude of reasons for a problem and their content with simplistic rhetoric. Generally, populist speakers rely on one-sided descriptions of the crisis as well as the solution (ibid., 205-206).

2.3.6 Continue to propagate crisis

The final step entails sustaining the sense of crisis to uphold political relevance and popularity of the actor. However, this can be quite difficult, if the chosen issue becomes less salient to voters or media. To extend the crisis can be to "switch" focus of the crisis, reuse other crises or connect new crises to the existing one – these strategies are rarely successful. Populist actors may also attempt to build up the crisis in a linear, gradual fashion, for instance to a larger global scale (Moffitt 2015, 207). If effective the performance of crisis can be moved from an extraordinary to an ordinary one, which eventually will place populist actors in a more sovereign position as the authority of 'the people' (ibid., 208).

2.4 Assisting theory: Taggart's theme of the populist heartland

To assist our chosen theoretical framework, we have looked to Paul Taggart and his theory of populism. Just like Benjamin Moffitt's, his framework consists of six themes to identify populism. As Taggart mentions in his book *Populism*, his six themes are designed to be independent, and this is why we allow ourselves to use just a part of his framework (2000, 2). One of his themes seems to be able to contribute to our research and therefore we have chosen to use it as support for our main theory by Moffitt. This theme is named: "Populists identifying themselves with an idealized heartland within the community they favour" (ibid.). With our chosen data in mind, we believe that this theme in combination with our main theory will help us in answering our research question because it can be used to shed light on how ERW MEPs talk about the places of habitation both in literal and figurative ways which our main theory cannot. This focus is interesting in relation to a discourse on climate change because both climate change and habitation concern nature, environment and climate. They both cover and affect questions of where 'the people' live. The search for and analysis of phrases relating to a heartland may therefore be able to strengthen our conclusion.

Taggart explains that populist actors identify themselves with an imagined ideal world, typically a romanticised construction from the past (Taggart 2004, 274). This ideal world, which is named *heartland* by Taggart, is populated by 'the people' (Taggart 2000, 3). Following the general understanding of populism's distinguishment between 'the people' and 'the elite' or 'the other', populists do not know exactly who 'the people' in their heartland are, but they are very certain as to who are excluded from it (ibid., 94). This relates well to Moffitt's third point on populist speakers having vague descriptions of both 'the people' and 'the responsible other'. A heartland is a place of 'the good old days' before the corrupt elite changed it to the reality of today (Taggart 2004, 274). As different populists have different views on what this means, the heartland is a blurry entity, as it is more of a feeling than a real obtainable goal (Taggart 2000, 98). The heartland is invoked at times of difficulty and it reflects the territory, the life, and the qualities that the speaker believes are worth defending (ibid., 95). This makes this theme relevant to our analysis, as crisis is a focal point of this thesis. We expect that the analysis of how the Eurosceptic right-wing MEPs frame the heartland, will tell us something about their opinion on climate change and if it is something they see as important (for the heartland), or if they frame nature and people differently. This section of the analysis (section 5.6) will also illuminate what constitutes the heartland for the MEPs, whether it is

a common European one or a smaller national one. As references to the heartland are widely acknowledged as a populist trait in the literature, it will also offer a way to determine if the statements contain populist speech (Moffitt 2016, 41; Taggart 2004, 274).

The reason that we have not applied all six of Taggart's themes is that we focus our research on populism in relation to the crisis aspect of climate change discourse. Taggart's theory is more generally applicable to populist politics, actors and speech. In comparison, Moffitt's theory is more narrow and will render more specific findings, and we believe that most of Taggart's theory would not help us in answering our research question as we are studying populist speakers specifically concerning crises. Furthermore, several themes in Taggart's framework would be difficult if not impossible to study with the empirical data chosen, these are for example 'populism as an ideology lacking core values' (Taggart 2000, 2). For us to study the core values of an MEP or a political group in the EP, we would need different material than plenary debates in the EP as they only let us know what he or she thinks about the specific topic at hand – climate change in this case – and is limited in illustrating the full ideological position of the different MEPs. We will elaborate on our choice of empirical data in section 3.2.

2.5 Clarification and definitions

We will in this section clarify a few important terms used in the thesis. In line with our main theoretical framework, we derive our understanding of crisis from Moffitt, who sees it as an integrated part of populism (Moffitt 2015, 195). An issue only becomes a crisis when perceived as one in the wider political, cultural or ideological spheres and it "marks the spectacularization of failure – the elevation of failure to crisis, in which the crisis becomes the foci for a historical decision and action." (ibid., 197). It is therefore highly reliant on the social construction and verbalisation of the crisis. This is in line with our theoretical and scientific approach that acknowledges the constitutive power of language and discourse (see section 3.1).

The term Euroscepticism is widely used and in this thesis, we rely on Taggart's perception of it as expressing "the idea of contingent or qualified opposition, as well as incorporating outright and unqualified opposition to the process of European integration." (Taggart 1998, 366). Thus it encompasses a variety of opinions towards European integration including those who oppose the very idea of a European Union and those who are sceptical towards some aspects of the integration that the EU engages in (ibid., 365-366). Eurosceptics do not constitute a homogeneous group with

the same preferences. Like all other MEPs, they have diverging attitudes and standpoints toward the EU and European integration in general. Within Euroscepticism, MEPs are ranging from hard Eurosceptics in one end to soft Eurosceptics in the other (Brack 2018, 149). In section 1.3, we touched upon four different groups of Eurosceptic MEPs relating to how they conduct their work in Parliament. It is worth noting in that regard, that the two groups 'The Absentee' and 'The Public Orator' are where the hard Eurosceptics are found, while the soft Eurosceptics mostly are present in 'The Pragmatist' and 'The Participant' (ibid., 153). This thesis encompasses a wide spectrum as our empirical data consists of statements from groups that are known to belong to the Eurosceptic right-wing (Brack 2018, 67; Baume 2020).

2.6 Delimitations

As explained in chapter 1 and 2, this thesis will concern the language used by Eurosceptic right-wing MEPs in plenary debates related to the European Green Deal. With the limited time available for a project like this we need to delimit our field of research.

We are conducting a discourse analysis, but we will only study our empirical data which is the ERW MEPs statements in debates. Thus, we will not be able to say anything about how the MEPs speak in public situations such as in public speeches or news media. This focus on the statements also means that we cannot say anything about their impact on the public. This is a delimitation in our analysis of Fairclough's third aspect of critical discourse analysis – social practice (explained in section 3.3) as we will not touch upon the wider societal consequences of the MEPs framing attempts. This is also a delimitation in relation to Moffitt's fourth step, using media to propagate populist crisis performance, which we have chosen to omit from the analysis. The ERW MEPs' use of media will not be analysed, as our empirical focus is on plenary debates.

Our focus is also narrowed to how the MEPs try to frame the discourse on the EGD, but we do not compare their attempt to other MEPs, or seek to find out if they succeed in doing so, or what their attempt means for the public debate on the topic as well as the political outcome. As our data is of a written character, physical or auditive elements in each speaker's delivery, like the tone of voice or body language, will not be included in our analysis.

Additionally, the empirical focus on debates relating to the EGD means that we cannot conclude whether or not any of the MEPs are populists. We will only be able to see if they use populist speech to frame the climate change discourse under scrutiny. Our focus on the EGD also

means that there might be debates related to climate change that we do not cover. We chose to focus solely on the EGD in order to have an externally defined boundary to our data. Another aspect of delimitation concerning our empirical data, is that we will only be able to study the language of the MEPs that participate in plenary debates on the EGD. This is important to keep in mind because particularly among Eurosceptic MEPs, some are hesitant in taking part in the debates due to their Eurosceptic position (Brack 2018, 175). Therefore, we will not aim to say anything about how the abstaining MEPs contribute to the framing of the climate change discourse. This issue will be further discussed in section 6.1.

3. Methodology

This chapter will cover our theory of science, which is based on a social-constructivist point of view. Subsequently, an account of the empirical data follows, including empirical considerations as well as a brief description of each debate being analysed. It also presents and provides some context on the group of parliamentarians as well as The European Green Deal. Finally, this chapter holds a presentation of our method of choice, which is Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis, as well as our methodological reflections.

3.1 Theory of science

This paper departs from a social-constructivist point of view in relation to theory of science. Concerning our ontological stance, the world is seen as made up of social structures that affect each other and are produced and reproduced by the inhabitants of the world (Moffitt 2020, 22). The discourse analysis approach is most often placed in the social-constructivist tradition in the social sciences (Hajer & Versteeg 2005, 179). From this point of view, knowledge and representations of the world are not seen as objectively true, rather they are results of our ways of understanding the world through categories and discourses (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002, 5). However, this does not entail that everything is in flux, it simply emphasises the active role of discourse, among other things, in constructing the social world (ibid., 6-7). According to Fairclough, text, language, and social interaction is seen as mutually constitutive including the establishment and maintenance of social structures, hegemony, and power relations (ibid., 63). Text is thus seen as a part of the social practice that is mediated and created through specific and culturally shaped discursive practices (Fairclough 1992, 4). From this viewpoint, the object of study is how concepts such as 'the people'

or an imagined heartland are constructed. The way we will study and seek to answer these questions reflects our epistemological stance. With a discursive approach to populism, it is seen as a special type of language and political style, which is why we will study exactly that: the speech of MEPs.

3.2 Empirical data

In the following section, we will present the empirical data employed in this thesis and the rationale behind the selection.

This thesis is an analysis of the language used by members of the ERW political groups in the European Parliament plenary debates when addressing climate action. These groups are the Identity and Democracy and European Conservatives and Reformists, and therefore the MEPs who belong to these groups will be central in our analysis. Furthermore, we will include contributions to the debates from independent MEPs who belong to parties that are identified as Eurosceptic in their home country. The EP is one of the three legislative bodies of the EU, the others being the European Commission and the Council, and it is the only one with directly elected members. This makes it interesting to study in relation to our research concerning populism in one of the European institutions. As publicly elected politicians are dependent on re-election and the good favour of the electorate to a higher extent than representatives in non-directly elected institutions, they can be more prone to populist rhetoric and politics in general (Klüver 2013, 18). Moreover, a study by James Dennison shows that high salience has a large, positive effect for the populist right, at least on issues like the economy and immigration – but also on the EU as a political issue (Dennison 2020). Exactly the topic of our thesis, climate change, has become more and more salient over recent years with high degrees of media coverage and great impact on elections throughout Europe (Henley 2019; Smith 2019). The European Commission has reacted to this salience and made a European Green Deal, a flagship project, and made it one of only six key priorities for the 2019-2024 term. We have observed during the last couple of years that the rhetoric surrounding climate change seems to have changed from a somewhat serious issue to an actual crisis. We have therefore chosen to analyse ERW MEPs' contributions to debates on issues related to the EGD in the EP. The contributions to the debates are especially constructive for this thesis because of their ability to express the direct opinion of the MEPs, reflecting their political standpoints and how they choose to express themselves, which is exactly what we are seeking to analyse.

In the debates, we will focus on members of the right-wing political groups and non-attached right-wing MEPs to see, if and how their rhetoric on the subject is populist. Concretely, we want to analyse every relevant debate in the plenary sessions of the EP, starting from its first debate on the EGD on 11 December 2019. This makes the time frame for our analysis somewhat short, as this thesis is written in the autumn and winter of 2020. The reason for the specific timeframe is that it captures the full current legislative period since the EGD was proposed by the EC. This amounts to 38,5 pages of statements by ID, ECR and independent MEPs derived from nine different debates. By analysing all relevant debates through almost the first year of this legislature, we will give ourselves the best possible opportunity for studying right-wing MEPs' speech and framing of the climate change discourse, and ultimately for answering our research question. Thus, we aim to give deep insights into a limited period demarcated by the EGD.

The debates have all taken place in Brussels, Strasbourg, or by video, and there are transcripts available for all of them on the website of the European Parliament. In the case of EP debates, the data under scrutiny is first spoken, translated simultaneously, and transcribed. Furthermore, it is saved and posted online available for anyone to see, which reflects ideas of transparency and democracy of the European Parliament. Often the statements are prepared in advance for the specific debate and audience. Unfortunately, a lot of the MEPs speak in their own language. In these cases, we will watch the specific part of the debates with English simultaneous interpretation and make our own transcripts when necessary. We are aware that the interpretations may contain mistakes, as they are made simultaneously with the debate, and the safest data is always the revised transcripts. Therefore, we will be careful when using the interpretations and double-check them by comparing them to online translation tools. In this way, we believe that it is safe to use it as empirical data. By using transcripts of the debates, we can only analyse the spoken word and not body language, emphasis, pronunciation, et cetera. Furthermore, we cannot see and analyse reactions such as applause or booing from the other MEPs. However, this is not the focus of the research question and as such we do not expect it to have any implications for our results. The limitation of using only the statements of MEPs in parliamentary debates is the lack of information on public opinion and the reception of their rhetoric in the public. However, our object of study concerns the rhetorics within the realm of the EP.

We are aware that debates in the European Parliament are rarely anticipated or followed very closely by the broader public, and it is not unrealistic to think that some MEPs may diminish

their ways of speaking when only a few voters will ever hear what has been said – or rather, that some MEPs may exaggerate their rhetoric if they know that a greater number of voters will follow the debate. The difference is that we cannot know whether the language we see and read is how the MEPs speak about the subject normally or if the setting makes any divergence in each MEPs rhetoric. However, we believe that analysing the debates is our only and best available media to study the speech of MEPs on this specific issue in a satisfactory manner.

3.2.1 The nine debates

As written above, all the chosen debates are on legislative proposals, part of the larger European Green Deal framework as set out by the Commission. In the following, we will present briefly what each debate concerns to offer some context.

Chronologically, the first debate in our analysis (App. 1) was held in connection to the Commission's first presentation of the European Green Deal on 11 December 2019. It is a broad debate, which revolves around the introduction speech by Ursula von der Leyen. Therefore, it only touched upon the headlines of the Green Deal as no legislative proposals have been put forward at this point. The second debate from 14 January 2020 (App. 2) is then the first debate on concrete legislative proposals under the EGD. Specifically, it is about green investments – a just transition from fossil fuels to sustainable solutions and how to secure social rights for workers i.e. minimum wages, unemployment insurance among other things. The third debate from 15 January (App. 3) concerns a European biodiversity strategy as well as a preparation for the COP15 summit (which should have taken place in October 2020 but have been postponed until May 2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic). The fourth debate from 13 February (App. 4) is about the Commission's Farm to Fork-strategy focusing on agriculture, including farmers' contribution to climate action, sustainability, the Common Agricultural Policy, and competitiveness. The fifth debate from 9 July (App. 5) – and therefore during the pandemic – is about a strategy for the production and use of chemicals in a sustainable way. The sixth debate from 6 October (App. 6) is on a European Climate Law intending to tie all future legislation to climate action so that it will not counteract or interfere with the cause. The seventh (App. 7) and eighth (App. 8) debates are both about forests. The first of them from 6 October is revolving around how to sustainably use forestry in the EU, while the second from 21 October is about the avoidance of deforestation in Europe and globally. The ninth and last speech under scrutiny in this thesis is from 23 November (App. 9) and concerns an

industrial strategy for the EU, which primarily includes how to make European industries more sustainable and move towards climate neutrality.

3.3 Critical discourse analysis as a method

This paper employs critical discourse analysis as its analytical method as described by Norman Fairclough, who since the 1980s has been one of the most prominent scholars in the area (Baker & Ellece 2011, 167). The purpose of utilising the critical discourse method is that it offers a concrete analytical framework for textual analysis. His concept of discourse refers to text, speech, and other semiological systems such as fashion and body language in social interaction (Phillips & Jørgensen 2002, 18-19; Fairclough 2010, 381). However, Fairclough emphasises that CDA is not to be viewed as a tool exclusively, but a framework with different forms of linguistic analysis that can be used to gain wider theoretical insights on the particular data and context (2010, 436).

It distinguishes itself from other approaches such as discursive psychology and the discourse theory developed by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe. The latter does not conduct systematic empirical studies of language, and discursive psychology does not look at linguistics but it does study rhetorical language use. With regards to the role of discourse in the making up of the world, Laclau and Mouffe regard discourse as constitutive of the world, whereas CDA sees discourse as being just one aspect of the world that is created in a dialectic relationship with other dimensions of social practice (Phillips & Jørgensen 2002, 18-21, 63). Both approaches could have been interesting, but for our narrow focus on speech acts, we find it necessary to include the linguistic level of analysis. Furthermore, Rovira Kaltwasser and Cas Mudde have described Laclau's work on populism as being 'extremely abstract' asserting that 'it has serious problems when it comes to analysing populism in more concrete terms' (2012, 6-7).

Fairclough's framework can be categorised as social constructivist, which like other social constructivist approaches draws on Foucault's concept of power, meaning that neither power nor discourse is controlled by someone specific. Rather it is negotiable in different social settings and is part of every social relation. Moreover, power is seen as a productive force that produces discourses, knowledge, and subjectivities (Foucault 1982: 786, 788; Phillips 2010, 301). Our thesis will also follow this understanding in analysing the framing competition on climate change discourse.

From a CDA point of view, regarding discourses and the world as mutually constitutive, it is interesting to study how climate and nature have been framed discursively. Donna Haraway describes our relation to nature as a cultural artefact we invent and reinvent, it has thereby essentially become a negotiable concept (Haraway 1991, 3, 10). Therefore, studying rhetoric about climate change politics from a CDA point of view is interesting because we expect, based on the literature surveyed, that the relation to climate and nature is also something policy-makers frame differently according to their agenda. Discourses rest on ideas, judgments and perceptions. It contributes to the definition of how something is experienced and thus the perceived possibilities to manage issues related to the specific discourses (Hajer & Versteeg 2005, 178-180). The value of discourse analysis in this thesis is to illuminate how actors connect issues to and affect the discourse on climate change in performing crises, and how they seek to influence the perception and solution of a societal problem. Discourses can be seen as playing an important role in national and international politics because determining a discourse also implies determining problems and solutions. Therefore, there is a powerful aspect in determining these discourses (ibid., 182). Thus, this thesis employs the critical discursive framework by Fairclough as its analytical method to the rhetoric of ERW MEPs. However, as Fairclough's work on CDA is very comprehensive, we will utilise only selected aspects of his framework relevant in answering our research question as the application and selection of the tools depend on our research question and the scope of our thesis (Phillips & Jørgensen 2002: 76).

Fairclough uses a three-dimensional framework covering *text* – the linguistic traits of the spoken or written language produced in a discursive event, *discursive practice* – the production and interpretation of text, and finally *social practice* – the context surrounding, such as the institutional, societal or situational context and where the communicative event belongs. A *discursive event* refers to the instance of language use that is then analysed in the three dimensions covering text, discursive practice, and social practice (Fairclough 2010, 94-95). Fairclough himself does not sociologically examine how texts are decoded, rather he identifies *interdiscursivity* describing what discourses texts draw on and how discourses are created through a combination of elements of other discourses (Fairclough 1992, 118), while *intertextuality* refers to how texts openly draw on other texts (Phillips & Jørgensen 2002, 82; Fairclough 1992, 84, 115). Both concepts point to the productive force in texts, to their ability to transform prior texts and reconstruct existing customs

and discourses to generate new ones. According to Fairclough, this is not an ability that everyone has, rather it depends on power relations within the social context (Fairclough 1992, 102-103).

Discursive practice focuses on how the discourse is produced in and reproduces society depending on its context and power relations (ibid., 66). It looks at how discourses are consumed vis-á-vis other texts and discourses – which discourses do they address, seek to change, or emphasise? What new discourses are created? Fairclough describes that a high amount of interdiscursivity is associated with transformation whilst a lower level signifies a reproduction of the established, traditional order (Phillips & Jørgensen 2002, 82). We then intend to illuminate power struggles by analysing how Eurosceptic MEPs frame climate change because how they talk about it is part of a power struggle on the framing of the discourse on climate change. Do they agree in the framing of climate change as a critical, crisis-induced issue, do they neglect it, or completely ignore it? On the textual level, Fairclough proposes different tools to analyse the formal features used in constructing discourse, reality, social identities and relations of which we will focus on wording, vocabulary, metaphors, and grammar (ibid., 69, 83). What words are used and what kind of tone do they create? Which metaphors? How does the sender construct themselves and the receivers of the text respectively? Finally, the social practice aspect focuses on which network of discourses the discursive practice belongs to. In other words, it describes the greater context that the climate change discourse is a part of which in our case will be EU politics, rising right-wing populism, the Covid-19 pandemic et cetera. Thus, this aspect explains why climate change is presented the way it is, and how other social conditions that are not directly tied to the issue are involved. What aspects of the social practice do the ERW MEPs draw into their framing of the discourse? What consequences come from the discursive practice in relation to the greater social practice i.e. context? Thereby either contributing to the social change or maintenance of the status quo (ibid., 86-87).

Social practice and text are connected by discursive practices because it is through the discursive practice – the way people employ and consume language – that text can move from text or speech to shaping social practice as well as being shaped by it (Phillips & Jørgensen 2002, 69). According to Fairclough, discourse analysis is not able to study wider social practice in itself because it contains both non-discursive and discursive aspects. Therefore, it is necessary to employ cultural and social theory in addition to encapsulate this aspect (ibid.). Due to the above point, as well as the limited timeframe and extent of this thesis, it will refrain from analysing how the

discourse framing moves into the wider society. In this thesis, we focus mainly on the first two aspects, text and discursive practice, while social practice functions as a backdrop to understand the discursive practice. This three-dimensional framework will be operationalised in relation to Moffitt's theory on crisis performance and the one analytical theme derived from Taggart's theoretical framework in chapter 4 to study the framing of climate change discourse.

4. Operationalisation

The operationalisation will provide a thorough explanation of how theory and method are understood and how they will be used in analysing Eurosceptic right-wing MEPs' contribution to the framing of climate change discourse.

The main theory used is Moffitt's theory of populist crisis performance to which a part of Taggart's theoretical framework on populism will assist. As presented in the theory section, Moffitt has six steps of populism of which we will use the five applicable to our empirical data. Hence, the analysis will be structured following these as well as the selected theme outlined by Taggart. Thus, the analysis is divided into six parts, each analysing different populist traits throughout the empirical dataset. Each analytical section will be ended with a sub-conclusion in which the findings will be summarised and discussed in relation to the according part of the theory.

We will do this in a deductive manner relative to the populist characteristics outlined in the theoretical section and they will thus function as tools for *a priori* coding of the data into categories. This means that our categories at least to some extent are established beforehand because they are based on the theoretical framework used in the thesis (Stemler 2000, 2). To remain unbiased, we will be open to the fact that the MEPs might talk into other discourses not related to climate change. Therefore we will also employ emergent coding, which means that we will look for categories that do not already match the established framework while examining our data (ibid.). However, our theoretical framework on populist crisis performance will function as our guideline and our "glasses", with which we first and foremost approach the empirical data.

The analytical framework is based on Fairclough's critical discourse analysisand to explain how we utilise CDA, it is beneficial to present the use of its three dimensions individually: The way we will analyse *text* with the selected theory about populism is on a word-level. This implies looking at vocabulary (looking at the choice of some words instead of others, creating a certain tone, and if some subjects are more articulated than others), recurring words and metaphors (as an

expression of how the speaker perceives and constructs reality). On the *discursive practice* level, we will study if the rhetoric of the MEPs interdiscursively or intertextually draws on any of the populist characteristics outlined by Moffitt and Taggart and how they participate and contribute in the power struggle to the discursive framing of climate change as a crisis, as described in section 3.3. Finally, *social practice* functions as a contextual background. As it refers to the context surrounding the text and discursive practice, it has an influence on how reality is understood, described and constructed by MEPs, which is why it is something we will be aware of in order to understand intertextual and interdiscursive references. However, the social practice aspect remains at this level. As mentioned in the previous chapter, this thesis will not investigate the consequences of any changes in the framing of the climate change discourse for society as it would require additional social and cultural theories (Phillips & Jørgensen 2002, 69).

The theories described and the CDA method will be combined to answer the research question. The analysis will be divided into six sections, each analysing the empirical data. Since the steps can be applied differently, the following will offer an account of how they will be operationalised in our analysis:

The first step concerns the populist speakers' identification of a failure. Therefore the analysis aims to find out if and how MEPs verbalise a failure and heightens it to a level of crisis. This could for example be by emphasising the graveness of the situation to an extreme and blaming other actors or presenting their actions as wrong.

The second step revolves around raising the identified failure to a crisis and then adding a temporal dimension. This analytical section aims to find out if the speakers link the identified failure to a broader frame of failures and if they connect it to a discourse of urgency and limited timeframes. This can for instance be done with metaphors of pathology, contagion or natural disaster. Overall it concerns invoking a sense of haste, shared vulnerability and fear of a common threat (Moffitt 2015, 200-201).

The third part of the analysis analyses how 'the people' are framed vis-à-vis those who are responsible and how the two groups are defined individually. This entails answering several questions such as: are there any discourses about 'the people'? Are there any discourses about someone responsible, and are they presented as being responsible? Are 'the people' discursively presented as being unjustly treated by someone else?

The fourth step is, like the second, twofold. It concerns presenting simple solutions and calling for simplification in general. This can for instance be seen in the demand for a simplification of the political institutions because they are seen as a hindrance for direct action and problem solution. This section of the analysis aims to study if unelected parts of the democratic system are blamed for being illegitimate and how anyone standing in opposition to the MEP is presented. According to Moffitt, any opponent is expected to be presented in very negative terms (ibid., 206). Secondly, we will aim to find out if the ERW MEPs seek to present themselves as strong leaders discursively and if they compare themselves to others to appear more reasonable and capable.

The fifth step concerns whether the speakers seek to continue to create a sense of crisis over time. Therefore, we will study how MEPs build up the crisis via other existing or new crises, for instance to a global level. Concretely, do they attempt to switch the focus of the identified crisis? How do they amplify it interdiscursively and intertextually? Do we see an attempt to move the crisis from the extraordinary to a common issue? As our empirical timeframe is relatively short, we will focus on studying the "tools" MEPs can use to extend the crisis rather than analysing how they contribute to the discourse over several years.

Finally, the sixth step aims to find if and how a heartland is discursively and textually constructed. The heartland and the people who belong there are unclear concepts, which is why they can be presented quite differently. What we are looking for is romanticised vocabulary, nostalgic longing for the past or a simpler future as well as strong connections between the heartland and its inhabitants. It can also be descriptions of who or what is seen as unwelcome in the imagined or physical heartland.

Additionally, if other relevant categories are found they will be presented throughout the analysis. This operationalisation of theory and method will lead us to the analysis of the data in the subsequent chapter.

Each of the analytical sections will be finished with a brief concluding sub-section. The function of these sub-conclusions is to summarise and briefly discuss the findings relating to the populist step outlined by either Moffitt or Taggart. In these sub-sections it will be discussed if the findings rendered by the analysis can be deemed to be populist according to the theory and in what way. Finally the findings from these sub-conclusions will be assembled in section 5.7 accounting for the findings throughout the analysis.

4.1 Trustworthiness

As mentioned in chapter 3, this thesis derives from a social constructivist ontology, which includes there is no universal truth and objective answer, and therefore we cannot avoid some degree of subjectivity in our findings. This ontology also means that we cannot find any ultimate truth. Instead, our conclusions will represent a world view derived from our theoretical framework. This also demands a certain academic responsibility in our research design. Differing from quantitative studies which appeal to a more realist and structured approach, qualitative studies, working with people and social life, often give room for a different kind of interpretation. That is why some authors argue that these have to be evaluated in a different way than quantitative ones – namely by focusing on trustworthiness (Bryman 2012, 390). In this section, we will focus on trustworthiness with an evaluation framework by Guba and Lincoln, presented in Alan Bryman's *Social Research Methods* (ibid.). This way of evaluating emphasises the possibility of several truths depending on the researcher's ingenuity and world view. They use terms like *credibility,* which concerns the research being carried out according to good practice. We believe that we have secured this by always diversifying our sources of information as well as using a respected and well-tested theoretical framework and method. Another aspect is *transparency* which is especially important in qualitative research because of its interpretative nature, as mentioned above. We have secured this by making thorough instructions in the operationalisation. Here, we explain in detail our course of action and how we are using the theory in our coding and analytical work in general. Throughout our thesis, and to be as transparent as possible, we will carefully and in a detailed manner describe both why we make the methodological choices that we do, and also how we do them. Lastly, we make use of the concept of *confirmability*, which is concerned with the researchers' abilities to avoid personal values and theoretical inclinations interfering with the study. We address this by always sticking to our theoretical framework and methodology, which guides us in the search for different themes and sequences in our empirical data. This secures that our assumptions and expectations will not influence the analysis. With the above terms combined, we believe that this thesis holds a significant and acceptable level of trustworthiness.

5. Analysis

In the coming section, we will analyse the empirical data following the above operationalisation (chapter 4). We aim to make a thorough analysis that will enable us to answer our research question,

which is: *How are right-wing Eurosceptic MEPs framing the climate change crisis discourse through populist speech?* We will analyse if and how the analysed Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) participate in the framing of climate change issues, seen through Benjamin Moffitt's theory of populist crisis performance. Besides, the final section of the analysis will investigate if and how the populist heartland – as presented by Paul Taggart – is a part of the framing from these MEPs.

5.1 Identify failure

By analysing how MEPs identify failures related to the climate change policies proposed by the Commission in the European Green Deal we hope to get a clear insight into how they contribute to the climate change discourse through populist speech. In analysing the first step of populist crisis performance we study how Eurosceptic right-wing MEPs position themselves concerning the climate change issue. Firstly, we are studying if and how it is presented as a failure.

5.1.1 Limited identification of climate change failure

We would expect to find crisis-inducing word usage and emphasis in describing the climate change issue as an acute problem. Additionally, we would expect the MEPs to mention different failures that they see in relation to climate change. One example is Aurelia Beigneux from the ID group on the EU Biodiversity Strategy:

> *It is urgent: we are witnessing the disappearance of species that are directly affected by climatic and environmental phenomena. The situation in the poles and in Australia reminds us of this sadly* (App. 3,1).

In this quote, she directly verbalises the graveness of the situation by using the word "urgent" about the disappearance of species. Furthermore, she elevates the problem to a wider global scale by including the situation in Australia. This leads to the second step of the analysis (section 5.2) concerning the elevation to crisis by introducing and linking the issue to a broader frame of failures. Another example of failure identification is Silvia Sardone from the ID group speaking in the debate on the European Climate Law. "[W]e are all aware of climate change, of the protection of nature, of the urgent need to protect the environment; we are all on the front line, without distinction" (App. 6, 2). The urgency, which is one of the main features of the first step, is again emphasised in relation to the protection of nature and the environment. Furthermore, she interdiscursively connects the climate change issue to warfare and military discourse by using the

word "frontline", which connects the issue to something we know as dangerous. Finally, she creates a sense of unity and commonality by using the inclusive pronoun "we" twice, as did Beigneux. This increases the identified failure, as "we" can be placed in opposition to climate change, as something to unite against.

However, our coding of the nine debates showed a meagre result in identifying the climate change issue as a failure. Few MEPs actually subscribed to the idea of a climate crisis. Some MEPs even engage in the discursive framing of the climate change issue by neglecting or depreciating it. An example is Hermann Tertsch from ECR, who seems almost offended that the EC has the nerve to present a Climate Law while the Covid-19 pandemic is raging across Europe (ibid., 4). Similarly, his party group colleague Andrey Slabakov suggests that the proposal is irresponsible and accuses the EC and the Climate Law to prioritise nature above the people.

> *We have gathered here today, it seems, in religious worship at the altar of the Green Deal. Well, I refuse to worship this obviously misguided idea, or the unreasonable way in which you set out to realize it. We are hostages of a left-wing green policy that does not stop demanding and is not interested in the effect on countries and people. (...). I tell you once again that with this climate law you are putting nature before people* (ibid., 7).

He victimises the European people in relation to the EC's proposition thereby positioning himself as a protector of the people in his critique of a policy that "is not interested in the effect on countries and people". Thereby he joins the choir of MEPs criticising the EC's proposal for being irresponsible. Alexandr Vondra From ECR refers to communism to present the EGD as a failure.

> *It is because it is a radical program. It is called a deal, but in fact it is a green revolution. We are conservatives, we do not believe in revolutions. (...) The Green Deal must not become a new communist manifesto, this time in a green colour* (App. 1, 3).

Just like Slabakov, he uses a very colourful language and he very clearly compares the EGD to a political direction that, according to him, does not belong within EU politics. Also, he denies the agreement-aspect of the Green Deal and introduces it as an undemocratic revolution. He does not neglect the existence of climate change as a problem that needs to be handled as Tertsch does. However, he is very critical of the proposed solution, which he thinks is exaggerated and rash. The above quotes are examples of a clear tendency in especially the first debates within our time frame, where the ERW MEPs are depreciating the issue of climate change even though that is the overarching topic of the debates. Instead, the MEPs tend to identify other failures relating to the proposed solutions to climate change, which will be the focal point of the following sections.

5.1.2 Social failures overshadowing climate failures

One of the main aspects, the analysed MEPs focus on, is how the proposed solutions to climate change will result in social issues and thereby create a failure. An example of this concerns the Sustainable Investment Plan and the Just Transition Fund and outlined by Elżbieta Rafalska from the ECR group, who focuses on workers in the fossil fuel industry:

> *"The plan presented by the Commission devotes very little space to those workers who are at risk of losing their jobs. This problem will particularly hurt employees with many years of work experience"* (App. 2, 2).

The focus on workers is, according to most literature on populism, a classic populist trait, where the politician tries to protect – or at least look like he or she is protecting – the little man from the evil elite (Taggart 2000, 94; Moffitt 2016, 1). In this case, Rafalska alludes a romanticised idea of the people who have worked for many years, implicitly saying that they have helped their country and the economy just to become "victims of the Green Deal" (App. 2, 2). Similarly, Ryszard Antoni Legutko from the ECR group highlights the social expenses of the EGD:

> *How have the new Commission, in 10 days since taking office, been able to fully understand how dramatically our economies could change as a result of this Green Deal? Have you an idea of the social costs as well as personal tragedies it will generate?* (App. 1, 2).

In this, he questions the EC's ability to fully comprehend the consequences of their proposal, implying incautiousness and carelessness. This is framed as a social threat to the European citizens, emphasised by using phrases with negative connotations such as "personal tragedies" and that the economy could change "dramatically". Further, he criticises the EC for proposing "a confused strategy", thus, much of the failure he identifies becomes connected to the EC as the problematic actor which will be further analysed in step four of the analysis (section 5.4.1). Legutko and Rafalska are far from the only ERW MEPs who identify negative social aspects as failures resulting from the climate change proposals. In fact, it is a consistent theme that we will see throughout the analysis.

5.1.3 Trade, competitiveness and financing failures

Another failure that MEPs have identified several times refers to trade agreements and the global competitiveness of the European Union. An example is from Ruža Tomašić from ECR, who calls the European agriculture today "expensive, inefficient and globally uncompetitive" (App. 4, 3). To Tomašić, the new EC strategy for sustainable agriculture does not seem to help in that regard, as she

is "afraid we will reach for the same solutions that have proven bad in the past" (ibid.). Another MEP focusing on the same aspect is the ID group's Ivan David, who predicts that the cost of the strategy "will be borne by the EU Member States, the EU as such, but also by farmers, who pass the costs on to prices and become less competitive themselves" (ibid., 1). Both of the above MEPs highlight a failure regarding the lacking global competitiveness of the European agricultural sector. The non-attached Robert Rowland also mentions this lack of competitiveness along with other issues that he relates to the proposals of the EC:

> *Madam President, we have now reached a tipping point where we see clear evidence of job destruction across Europe due to the insane green policies of the EU. (...) They think they have the power to magically create new jobs once they have destroyed existing ones. (...) the Commission pays for the folly of the Green New Deal and is forced to rescue large swathes of Europe's obsolete industrial base that has been intentionally destroyed* (App. 2, 3).

By using terms like "insane", "destruction" and "destroyed" he presents the green policies in a very negative light. Destruction is a very fierce choice of word that describes something that cannot be repaired and has ceased to exist, according to the Lexico Dictionary (2020a). Thus he creates a fatalistic atmosphere around the economy of the European Union. Furthermore, he attacks and frames the EC as irresponsible for leaving a whole industry in the lurch because of its wish to make a green transition. He also doubts that the EGD will "magically" create new jobs, implying with the word "magically" that it is not realistic to do so. Throughout his statement, Rowland often credits negative results to the EC specifically by saying "they" did this and "they" did that. The very vocal criticism of the EC is a recurring failure throughout the empirical data, which we will address more thoroughly in section 5.4.

Another failure identified is about financing, which is mentioned by Jadwiga Wisniewska from ECR: "The proposed amount is absolutely not sufficient. So, will the Just Transition Fund be just in name only?" (App. 2, 6). Also implying that the transition might be unfair, Guido Reil announces that "The Green Deal is the most anti-social project in the history of the European Union" (ibid., 3). They both hint interdiscursively at injustices in the EC's proposal, which according to them will result in some people receiving preferential treatment while others will be left behind. It is typical for populist speakers to draw upon the unjust treatment of people and that the populist speaker positions themselves as a self-appointed voice of the people (Moffitt 2016, 96). Johan Van Overtveldt, from ECR, attacks the JTF with a different focus:

(...) you have just confirmed what I feared in December: the Green Deal is a voluntaristic plan with a price tag of EUR 1,000 billion. But there is some confusion of tongues because is this 1,000 billion the same as the 1,000 billion I hear about from the EIB? (...) The fund is already in danger of becoming such a dangerous grab bag that divides the Member States (App. 2, 1).

Confirming someone's fears is never a good thing, thus he attributes something negative to the plan and describes it as a "dangerous grab bag" and as a "voluntaristic plan" both connoting negative and irresponsible economic actions. Moreover, by highlighting the numbers that do not seem to match, he implies that the plan is not thoroughly prepared. Whether this is true or not, does not play a large role to him as he begins stating his certainty "(...) you have just confirmed what I feared (...)" thereby dismissing any doubts. In general, Van Overtveldt's tone can be argued to be patronising and supercilious, and he presents the financing of the EGD as a failure as well as insinuating that it will lead to a much bigger failure – the division of Member States.

The above quote involves the JTF, but Paolo Borchia wonders in relation to the EGD "(...) where we are going to get the money to finance what appears to be a repeat of the Juncker plan" (App. 1, 3). The Juncker Plan was a €315 billion investment plan that raised questions over the lack of new cash that was labelled as an exercise in "recycling and re-labelling" already existing programmes and for the financing plan being too little and too late (Valero 2016; Gordon 2017). Hence, Borchia juxtaposes the alleged failures of the Juncker Plan to the EGD which can be seen as an attempt to interdiscursively connect the two failures.

The above are all examples of how the ERW MEPs identify a failure in the economic and financial aspects of the EC's proposals. Another feature of this failure is that it is often connected to a group of people identified as negatively impacted and whom the MEP in question seeks to protect against these policies. The presentation of this relationship between the people vis-à-vis those responsible will be analysed and elaborated further in section 5.3.3.

5.1.4 Sub-conclusion

In the first section of the analysis, we have analysed the empirical data following Moffitt's first populist crisis performance step which is to identify failure. As opposed to our initial expectations we did not find much identification of climate change as a failure or crisis. However, this does not mean that the theory of populist crisis performance is insufficient or inapplicable. Rather it has helped illuminate the content and the nature of the MEPs' statements, i.e. how they conceive and talk about the matter. We found that several aspects surrounding the proposed solutions to climate

change were presented as failures especially referring to social and economic issues. In the following, we will analyse how Eurosceptic right-wing MEPs elevate the identified failures to a crisis and connect them to other societal issues.

5.2 Elevate to the level of crisis

In this part of the analysis, we will follow the identified failures in the Commission's proposals on climate action to see how MEPs participate in the framing. According to Moffitt, populist crisis performers would seek to heighten the failure to a sense of crisis by creating a sense of urgency and connect other issues to the identified failure. This can be done by connecting other issues to the climate change topic and by inducing urgency through specific language use, metaphors, et cetera.

5.2.1 The threat of global markets

A failure identified in subsection 5.1.3 is the issue of global competitiveness and trade agreements for the EU. From the empirical data is it clear that these subjects are of importance to the ERW MEPs and that it is something they elevate to a crisis, which is the focus of this subsection. One example is Paolo Borchia's statement in the EGD resolution debate that contains powerful language, creating a certain tone of graveness.

> *This is as if competitiveness wasn't one of the most serious problems facing our businesses faced with very aggressive international competition. If competitiveness is lacking, market shares and consequently jobs are lost, and then it happens that companies relocate and paradoxically go to pollute other countries* (App. 1, 3).

Terms such as "aggressive" and "serious problems" creates a sombre and somewhat urgent tone to which he adds the threat of lost jobs and lost competitiveness, indirectly implying severe economic implications. By mentioning the aggressive international competition he highlights one of the key issues for several of the Eurosceptic MEPs. In the way he frames the resolution, he attempts to shift focus completely to the competitiveness of European businesses in the discourse on climate change. The competitiveness of the European industry is something the MEPs often point out concerning the climate change policies and one aspect of this failure is free trade agreements, which are a true scapegoat for the MEPs. The proposed climate legislation is presented by MEPs as restraining for the European market, including both small- and medium-sized enterprises and the larger industries such as the car industry. This concern is quite often mentioned in relation to the FTAs despite that

these are not a part of the legislative proposal in the specific debates. One example is Herve Juvin from ID on the EGD resolution:

> *The issue of climate change is not the most important thing. The poisoning of our water, earth and air, the race to the bottom maintained by the free trade treaties, are also major problems (...)* (ibid., 4).

Not only does he directly connect the FTAs to issues relating to environmental pollution, he also presents the latter as having nothing to do with climate change – as if the EGD does not seek to solve problems of pollution, which it does for example through the Biodiversity Strategy. The expression "race to the bottom" directs the attention to debates on social dumping and prioritising profit over people. Catherine Griset of the ID group also connects the EU's global competitiveness to the Climate Law, specifically on the goal of emission reductions by 2030. "By raising it to 60%, you will impose a punitive ecology on companies and households weakened by the crisis, for the sole benefit of our competitors" (App 6, 3). The competitors are not specified further than "foreign competition" later in her statement. By describing the competitors scarcely, they can comprise of many different actors, which can be argued to be Griset's use of a typical populist tool which is to remain vague in the description of both enemies and one's own side (Moffitt 2014, 201). Griset links the proposed solution to the issue of the Covid-19 crisis and its economic effects on European citizens and businesses, thereby presenting it in a very negative light rather than as a solution. Thereby she attaches several issues to the competitiveness and trade-related failure she identified. Another example of this opinion that is held by several ERW MEPs is outlined by Gianantonio Da Re from ID:

> *(...)nothing is said about the social and economic costs that this [goal of zeroing greenhouse gas emissions by 2050] will entail: let us think of the inevitable loss of competitiveness of our companies with respect to countries like China, India and the United States, which do not share the climate objective (...) The fight against climate change must take place by safeguarding our businesses and above all let us remember to save them from bankruptcy* (App. 6, 5).

As we found in section 5.1 he too accentuates a socio-economic crisis that he thinks will follow the EC's proposals. Apart from this, he emphasises the threat of large global actors to trade. He uses the personal pronouns "our" and "us" several times in reference to the industry and makes it seem like something that must be protected, which can imply vulnerability and threat. In the latter sentence, he explicitly places businesses above the fight against climate change, thus placing them within the discourse. Moreover, this reflects the priorities that he shares with most of the MEPs analysed – people and industry above the climate. In general, MEPs from both ID and ECR seek to protect the

global competitiveness of European businesses. However, a distinction can be drawn between ECR who mainly mentions and emphasises the importance of heavy industries, while MEPs of ID often, but not exclusively, advocate a citizen and SME-focused perspective.

5.2.2 A cataclysmic employment crisis

Among the issues with the perceived loss of competitiveness is the loss of jobs in the Member States. From the ERW politicians' perspective, this is an issue caused in part by the FTAs but also by the green proposals, supposed to phase out energy sources such as coal and oil. Especially coal is a big issue for some Polish MEPs, as the Polish economy and energy supply is still highly dependent on it, as mentioned by ECR's Isabela-Helena Kloc, who asks:

> *Why should Silesia wallow in poverty and suffer a social crisis? There are countries whose climate transformation will cost nothing, other countries will cope with minimal effort. Poland, whose industry is most dependent on coal, it will be an economic and social cataclysm* (App. 6, 5).

Kloc starts by naming not just a Member State but a specific (mainly) Polish region famous for coal mining that will be severely affected by the phasing out of coal. To her, it is more destructive than transformative. She never mentions it directly, but she insinuates that the green transformation is unfair to some. Also, she indirectly says that the EU lacks solidarity with Silesia among others. This expresses her Euroscepticism and with her choice of words she elevates the failure to a crisis, as she calls the consequences "an economic and social cataclysm." A cataclysm is a large-scale and violent event in the natural world (Lexico 2020b), and it is a very strong word to use. Furthermore, this point fits very well in Moffitt's description of this specific strategy in populist crisis performance, where he mentions metaphors of pathology, contagion or natural disaster (Moffitt 2015, 200-201). The focus on Silesia also touches upon other populist traits such as the heartland and especially the framing of 'the people' and 'the responsible' (ibid., 198). Kloc creates identification among her voter base by mentioning a geographical area specifically and creating a sense of unfairness and a lack of solidarity from the undescribed 'responsible', who – in this narrative – leaves this whole region behind. The ID MEP Paolo Borchia also speaks about the loss of jobs and regional consequences in critical terms: "half a million workers affected, 160.000 jobs at risk across Europe, fifty regions affected – these are the likely numbers of what could be the next employment crisis" (App. 2, 5). By opening his speech in this way, he elevates the issue to a crisis and even grants it a name – "the next employment crisis". This is an effective way to enter the framing

competition or even to hijack the debate and divert it to revolve around his chosen topic. By enumerating the possible consequences in this way expands the issue and creates a sense of urgency.

Many of the right-wing Eurosceptics focus on what they see as severe social consequences in general, which they fear will be the result of the measures proposed in the EGD. This is especially the case in the second debate on the Just Transition Fund, where ID's Ivan David says that "treating a sick planet on a part of a continent at enormous cost and poor effectiveness with significant side effects is a bizarre idea" (ibid., 2). Indirectly, he says that what the EU does is pointless because we are only a small part of the world, and the attempt to make a difference includes, according to him, several negative consequences to society. David's colleague in the ID group, Guido Reil, says that it "is going to break our backs. Let's end this madness" (ibid., 4). The MEPs use figurative and colourful language to express the critical aspects they see in the JTF such as "sick planet", "bizarre", "break our backs", and "madness". On a textual level the choice of words expresses their opinion but is also part of framing the climate change debate, they create a negative tone and thereby contribute to the climate change discourse as something that will have severe social consequences. Similarly so do Kloc and Borchia contribute to the framing of climate change proposals as a social crisis, with their concrete examples of failures.

5.2.3 Connecting crises

Another derived issue that the right-wing Eurosceptics focus on in a way that promotes a sense of crisis is the so-called 'working poor'. This has been a very debated topic in the EU over the past years resulting in the EC presenting a proposal for the introduction of a minimum wage in the Member States in the fall of 2020. Thus this is also apparent in the analysed debates on different parts of the European Green Deal. One example is in the debate on forestry, where the non-attached MEP Ivan Vilibor Sinčić tries to connect illegal deforestation to the lack of a minimum wage. He argues that poverty forces some people to fell trees to create an income even though it is illegal, and his solution is clear:

> [W]e need to introduce a minimum wage in order to fight poverty so that these people do not
> have to fell trees in order to survive. By introducing universal basic income, we would resolve
> this pressure on forests, environmental and nature devastation (App. 7, 2).

What Sinčić does here is perfectly in line with Moffitt's second step. He connects several issues to promote a crisis by tying poverty and environmental problems so close to each other that one of

them is a symptom of the other (Moffitt 2015, 199). In doing so, he tries to switch the focus to an issue that might be more pertinent with his voter base. Furthermore, he mentions "environmental and nature devastation," (App. 7, 2) which is a significant wording. Sinčić thereby manages to indicate that without a universal minimum wage the environment will be destroyed. A similar example of connecting crises is from the debate on a new biodiversity strategy, where the British non-attached MEP June Alison Mummery talks about electric pole fishing and super trawlers. Even though she does focus on biodiversity in this matter, she also relates it to another issue, making it even more critical.

> *These death trawlers are blamed for nearly wiping out whole fisheries in East Africa and destroying the incomes of some of the poorest people. These are only two small examples of the EU putting profit before biodiversity* (App. 3, 3).

The income of the poor is once again a significant part of the MEP's message, as she tries to relate biodiversity and income and thereby expanding the problem. She emphasises the critical nature of it with words such as "destroying" and "wiping out" and she also presents the EU in a very negative light as she makes it responsible for extremely negative consequences to biodiversity. This reflects badly upon the EU as it seems hypocritical to present a biodiversity strategy while profiting from nature in other domains. Furthermore, she expands the issue to a global level by including East Africa, thereby making the crisis seem larger. Just like Sinčić, Mummery relates the debated strategy to another crisis in such a close manner that one becomes a symptom of the other. They both connect two previously unrelated issues interdiscursively which brings the newly introduced topics into the discourse on climate change and the green transition.

5.2.4 Sub-conclusion

Throughout this section, we have found that instead of elevating climate change to a crisis, we see that many MEPs in the data analysed seek to shift focus to other failures that are framed as being even worse and that they elevate these to a crisis. Not only do they correspond to the populist trait outlined by Moffitt by elevating failures to crises, their doing so contributes to the framing of the climate change discourse. We have found that the ERW MEPs introduce new problems around climate change action that are described as the general symbol of the failure. They do so on a textual level via language use as well as on a discursive level by connecting the debated questions to hitherto unrelated issues. We have not found the elevation to crisis as much in relation to the problem of climate change as the socio-economic failures from section 5.1. The MEPs do not

always talk directly about climate change, the benefits of the proposed solutions or how these should be more ambitious. Instead, they widen the debate by focusing on other topics which they elevate to crises through metaphors, a sense of urgency, and the connection of other issues. Concerning Moffitt's second step of populist crisis performance, the statements analysed can be argued as contributing to a discourse on a socio-economic crisis in a populist manner, while the elevation of a climate change crisis is less apparent. However, the analysis has not rendered many examples of a temporal dimension, which is a populist trait in the elevation to crisis (Moffitt 2015, 200-201). This might make sense in relation to our findings in subsection 5.1.1, which pointed towards certain neglect of a climate crisis among the analysed MEPs. They do not agree that climate change is a crisis, and therefore it is not odd that they are not creating a sense of haste relating to climate change. Regarding our findings until this point, we would expect them instead to add a temporal dimension to the socio-economic failures identified. However, we have not found direct verbal references to time, but as shown throughout this section they have created a sense of urgency.

5.3 Framing of 'the people' and those responsible

In the previous section, we looked at how the identified failures are expanded to lift them to a crisis. One of the ways the MEPs do so is by including those affected and in this section, we will analyse how this personification of the people takes place and how they are constructed vis-à-vis the framing of those responsible. First, we will look at those responsible and secondly the people, analysing how they are presented discursively. Thirdly we will analyse the relationship between the two and how it is constructed and framed by the Eurosceptic right-wing MEPs.

5.3.1 Those responsible

As mentioned in the above sections, the European Commission is criticised heavily throughout the empirical data and often presented as the opponent to the people. Not only do the ERW MEPs present failures, but they also contribute to the discourse of the EC being responsible for the failures they present. One example is Ivan David from ID who poses in the debate on the proposal for a biodiversity strategy: "This draft proposed by European Commission's is just another ambitious attempt to use European taxpayers money for vaguely defined projects" (App. 3, 3). He makes a clear division between the EC and the European citizens, instead of calling them citizens he

emphasises that they contribute economically by calling them "taxpayers" which puts the EC in a more negative light as an institution that is interested in purposely spending money. On a similar note, Mazaly Aguilar from ECR accuses the EC of being "far removed from the reality of our field and unable to offer solutions to a sector that needs more understanding and urgent support" (App. 4, 4) on the topic of agriculture and livestock sectors in the debate on the Farm to Fork Strategy. Like David, she contributes to the discourse of the EC as distanced from the people, being out of step with what is going on in the Member States and what battles they are facing. She adds a dimension of pressure by using the word "urgent" and interdiscursively referring to a sector that is already strained. Another aspect that several MEPs attribute to their discursive representation of the EC is elitism, as done by Sylvia Limmer from ID on the Climate law debate in October 2020.

> *Instead of establishing a stable framework for a prosperous economy, an elite which is surpassing itself in complaining about the emergency situation and they want a massive reduction of 40, 55 or 60 per cent, cost whatever it may, and I say that literally* (App. 6, 1).

Limmer accuses the EC of focusing on ambitious climate goals instead of securing the economy, which, in the light of the Covid-19 pandemic's deleterious effects, is a weighty complaint. Moreover, she emphasises the proposed impracticability by listing different and rising reduction targets. Antipathy towards the elite is a key component of populism and it is important in the attempt to create an identity (Moffitt 2015, 201). Nevertheless, the identity construction we see in the analysis is first and foremost a line of demarcation to the responsible, making clear what the MEPs will not support, rather than describing what they support and who. This characteristic is typical populist as stated by Taggart who argues that "populists are often more sure of who they are not than of who they are" (2000, 94).

Moffitt's analytical description of 'the responsible' makes it possible to identify them as a group of people, a social or physical institution. In line with this, our analysis hitherto shows that the MEPs in question contribute to a discourse in which the EC is responsible for the potential crises that the MEPs have identified. Through language and interdiscursivity, they are presented as 'the responsible' in the identified failures. However, it is not necessarily as grave as it could be, according to Moffitt's framework. The EC is not blamed by the ERW MEPs for taking advantage of 'the people' nor being dangerous (Moffitt 2015, 202). What we also see is that while some MEPs attack the EC directly through their wording, others do it indirectly making it seem more objective which is also a characteristic of Moffitt's third step (ibid.). By identifying failures in the proposals of the EC and elevating them to crises, the MEPs do not explicitly discriminate against them, they

simply frame their opposition to the ideas through a predicted crisis, thereby indirectly blaming those responsible, which is also a populist strategy according to Moffitt (ibid.).

5.3.2 The people

Contrary to the presentation of those responsible, the framing of the people takes many different forms through the empirical data. Common for several of the depictions of the people is the underlying message that they are the ones carrying the economy and that they are also the ones negatively affected by the proposals of those framed as responsible. This is often the case when the people are mentioned as workers or taxpayers. Among the first ones to do so within the analysed timeframe is Elżbieta Rafalska from the ECR group, who asks: "Will these workers not be the victims of the Green Deal?" (App. 2, 2). Her political colleague from Bulgaria Andrey Slabakov talks into a similar discourse, when he wonders "where will these billions come from? With taxes, of course. Taken from those who have just lost their jobs" (ibid., 7). Apart from being spoken of as the backbone and indispensable parts of the EU and their specific Member States, another theme shown in the above examples is that the people are the ones wrongfully paying the socio-economic bill for climate action. The framing is rather broad and inclusive, which a lot of different people would be able to see themselves in. This is in line with a typical populist trait which is to remain vague in the descriptions of both the people and those responsible. By keeping the characterisation unclear it becomes possible for the MEPs to rhetorically include large numbers of voters who can feel represented. However, this is not the only way of speaking about the people. Some MEPs are concentrating on smaller groups, typically specific groups of workers or other categories such as the "farmers as well as consumers" (App. 4, 1), or even more specific labour- and geographically bound groups, as Izabela-Helena Kloc, ECR is mentioning:

> I will tell you what the price of the Green Deal is from the perspective of the people –
> inhabitants of my region. The cost of creating new jobs for employees of the Polish Mining
> Group alone is PLN 200 billion (App. 6, 5).

Kloc is in several debates focusing on Polish workers mainly in coal mining and this is no exception. Here, she equals the term "the people" with her region in Poland, when she tells us how expensive the Green Deal will be for them. Further, she creates identification to her home country by referring to the cost in Polish Złoty instead of Euros. This is far from the only case of mentioning specific regions. A Belgian MEP mentions Flanders (App. 6, 6), an Austrian mentions his home country and specifically the citizens living in the countryside (ibid., 4-5), and another Polish MEP

mentions several regions; "Lower and Upper Silesia, Lesser Poland and Greater Poland" (App. 2, 2). These are a few examples among many that represent a clear tendency in the empirical data.

Additionally, we have found that the MEPs also refer to small companies in their framing of 'the people'. This is the case with the ECR MEP Pietro Fiocchi who focuses on SMEs:

> *If all the amendments are approved, the regulation will be extremely punishing, especially for the small and micro-enterprises. (...) The introduction of the concept of 'no data, no market' is very dangerous for a lot of smaller companies (...)* (App. 5, 1).

The focus on smaller companies can be a way of taking the side of the little man in the fight against politicians and multinational companies, which the EC is blamed for taking the side of by Herve Juvin (App. 1, 4-5) or other perceived threats. This is in correlation with Taggart's heartland: the empirical data shows that smaller companies and both their owners and employees are closely tied to the romanticised homeland where the people belong (Taggart 2000, 95). They are the silent majority of workers, who contribute and get on with their life and who deserve representation by the populist speakers (ibid., 93).

Thus the ERW MEPs use a rather large amount of their statements to refer to "the people" and give them a large role in the debate. This creates a certain closeness to the people which is in line with how Taggart describes populist speakers as seeking to invoke the people "as a generalized entity subject to the same conditions and frustrations as the individual" (ibid., 111). These frustrations and calling forth a common enemy strengthens the internal cohesion of those who feel unjustly treated by the elite (Moffitt 2015, 201). On the contrary, the elite is definitely excluded, although the MEPs' discourse of those negatively affected is rather wide. This typical hostility against the elite is a classic trait as described in section 5.3.1.

5.3.3 The relation between the people and those responsible

In the next part of this section, we focus on the discursively constructed relationship between the two groups presented above – namely those responsible and the people. We see a clear tendency, as we have already touched upon above, that the EC is depicted as the responsible and certain groups of European citizens victimised as the people. This finding is only being strengthened when looking at how they are discursively presented in direct relation to each other. Aurelia Beigneux from the ID group uses her contribution to the debate on a new biodiversity strategy to pardon 'the people' for the biodiversity problems, the EU is facing:

Human activity is obviously responsible. But precisely, rather than systematically moralizing citizens and acting only through fiscal means, is it not rather the politics who should be blamed? (...) The health of our countrymen is threatened by air pollution, water pollution, land pollution, efficiency policies and pressure from financial power (App. 3, 1).

By strongly implying that the blame lies with the politicians, she removes any guilt in causing climate change from the ordinary people who are simply following the current rules, made by the politicians. And who are then these politicians? The term does probably not include Beigneux herself in this matter. Instead, it is plausible to think that this quote is directed at both the EC and the largest groups in the EP, who can all be seen as the elite in the eyes of populists. These two groups are thereby placed in opposition to each other. The same accusation of neglect of the citizens is present in Roman Haider from the ID group's statement in another debate:

When it comes to the demands for ever-stricter climate targets, the EU institutions, political groups and NGOs outdo each other almost every week. Only one group is not considered – namely the citizens of Europe. Those citizens who live in the country and not in the big cities, and to those citizens who need their car to get to work (App. 6, 4).

Haider too paints a rhetorical picture of the people as being victims and excluded from the decisions made in EU institutions and other elite gatherings. Again we see the elite in opposition to the people, a typical populist speaker trait. He links the elite with certain groups that are presented as opposed to the people because they are framed as causing the crisis (Moffitt 2015, 201). The way the EC and the people are presented discursively by the MEPs are very much in line with the third step of Moffitt's populist crisis performance. Nevertheless, Moffitt's examples of those responsible according to populist actors include societal groups such as Muslims, Asians, academics or bureaucrats (ibid., 202). In this regard, our findings are slightly different as the scapegoat is an institution. Of course, it is made up of people, but the investigated MEPs primarily refer to them via the institution in which they are employed, namely the EC. Thus our analysis can be seen as an example of how the theoretical framework can be expanded to include institutions. Because even though 'the responsible' is not a societal group as in Moffitt's examples we still find the strong distinction between 'us' and 'them', between the people and those responsible. This Manichean tendency is one of three main features of populism and is an inherent part of populist speech (Moffitt 2016, 16, Taggart 2012). From these findings, we can conclude that the populist characteristic of demarcating a strong border between a victimised people and an elite is a prominent aspect of the ERW MEPs contribution to the discourse on climate change. Throughout the empirical data, we find numerous examples of how this framing of the negatively affected

people and the responsible is highlighted and emphasised as an important element in the climate change debate. From the above analysis, we also see a tendency in the representation of the people in line with Taggart's description of the heartland as this concept is closely connected to the people who belong there. We will return to this in section 5.6.

5.3.4 Sub-conclusion

Our findings in this section reflect that the EC is framed as those responsible following Moffitt's theoretical framework on populist crisis performance. The EC is not presented as being fatally dangerous but still as a catalyst for the socio-economic crisis as a result of its proposals to fight climate change. Also, the EC is framed in opposition to the people, who play a significant role throughout the empirical data. The ERW MEPs generally place themselves very close to the people, thereby invoking a sense of unity against the elite, which is excluded from the otherwise quite broadly defined group. Concerning the interrelation between the people and those responsible, we found, following Moffitt's third step that the two are presented in opposition to each other. There is a strong boundary between the two in a rather black and white representation, where the people are victimised and those responsible are accused of inflicting a socio-economic crisis.

5.4 Presenting simple solutions and strong leadership

This step in Moffitt's theoretical framework has two intertwined sides to it. As the headline suggests, one of them is for the analysed politicians to deliver suggestions to simple solutions and thereby be seen as strong leaders, representing the people, whom the section above elaborated on. The other side of it is to what extent the politicians criticise their political opponents or generally talk about them negatively. The two are intertwined because, as Moffitt expresses it: "The portrayal of other political actors as incompetent and ignorant of the true urgency of the crisis allows populist actors to position themselves as 'straight-shooters' who cut through the 'bullshit'" (Moffitt 2015, 204).

5.4.1 The populist, irresponsible and hypocrite Commission

The latter way of promoting oneself on behalf of political opponents is especially evident in our empirical data, where the European Commission is often criticised very aggressively. It begins in the very first speech, where Silvia Sardone from the ID group says:

> *Now I have heard talks of 50 per cent in 2050, well that is just pipe dreams, isn't it? Climate*
> *neutrality before 2050. But have you looked at the social and economic impacts of this? I*
> *understand that the Commission needs to have a rather trendy image, it is not as if people really*
> *love you, but just coming up with buzzwords and slogans, I don't think is the right thing, is it?*
> *Just to keep people happy* (App. 1, 1).

The topic is the overarching European Green Deal framework, and Sardone is speaking about the EC's proposed CO_2 reduction target, which she clearly believes is unrealistic. She accuses the EC of delivering empty words and polishing its image rather than making a difference. In fact, and paradoxically in this thesis, this quote can be interpreted as Sardone saying that the EC is being populist, as she accuses them of following public opinion instead of being realistic and sensible in their goals. This can be seen as a way to make herself seem more responsible, which is in line with the theoretical framework where populist speakers present themselves as stronger leaders than their opponent (Moffitt 2015, 204-205). In the same debate, ECR's Alexandr Vondra is critical about the decision to even hold the debate.

> *[W]hy does the Commission call the parliament to listen to this rather than do it at a press*
> *conference. It is not because of our carbon footprint. Because of the two hours we are here, we*
> *have actually extended our carbon footprint because we fly here from all over Europe* (App. 1,
> 3).

Vondra is using sarcasm to express what he thinks is a ridiculous decision from the EC. Consequently, he manages to introduce a sense of hypocrisy without saying it directly, because if the EC wants the greater part of 751 MEPs to fly to Brussels for a debate, how much do they care about the climate? This can be seen as a way to spark a bit of doubt whether the EGD is for the benefit of the climate or the EC. Thereby, Vondra and Sardone are rhetorically constructing similar pictures of the EC as wanting only to look good without actually doing any good.

Another focal point in the critique of the EC concerns whether or not its position in the EU legislative system is even justified. Several MEPs mention this issue in small phrases, reminding people that the EC is an unelected legislator. This theme is especially present in the first debate and a significant part of the criticism is triggered by the President of the EC Ursula von der Leyen leaving the debate early. That decision was far from popular with some MEPs like Pietro Fiocchi from the ECR group:

> *Madam President, and dear missing President of the Commission, Ms von der Leyen – I hope*
> *this is not a sign of the times to come: that she thinks she can avoid listening to a democratically*
> *elected Parliament – I want to state that I am 110% behind the new Green Deal, but I have two*
> *strong demands to the – missing – Commission President, Ms von der Leyen* (App. 1, 4).

In his statement, he never seizes a chance to point out that von der Leyen has left the debate. One sentence is particularly aggressive towards the EC, as Fiocchi calls the Parliament democratically elected, with the underlying addition that the EC is not. Markus Buchheit from the ID group says "[t]he President of the Commission is no longer here, I believe you are giving us further hurdles" (ibid., 4), and Paolo Borchia from the same group also addresses von der Leyens departure: "Now what I wanted to say to Madam von der Leyen before she left the room (...)" (ibid., 2). This issue is never the main topic in any of the statements. Instead, it permeates their framing of the EC and it is a small but constant critique through the debate. In another debate, the Belgian MEP Johan Van Overveldt from the ECR is going in a slightly different direction as he criticises specific parts of the EC proposals: "We are not enthusiastic about creative accounting and certainly not for financial adventures. We want to focus on innovation and concrete, workable action" (App. 2, 1). In this example, the MEP talks about what he and his group want to do. At the same time, he manages to criticise the EC by implying that they fictionalise numbers to make its plan for a Just Transition Fund work. Others are in several debates calling the EC proposals "ideological" in terms of climate change ambitions rather than being sensible and responsible (e.g. App. 6, 3; App. 2, 2; App. 5, 1). The scolded ideological approach is framed as causing the socio-economic crisis mentioned in section 5.2. Moreover, they accuse the EC of introducing more bureaucracy or burdens to companies who will suffer under the proposals (e.g. App. 6, 2; App. 5, 1; App. 2, 2). This expresses their opposition to the proposals and can be seen as a way to connect the identified crisis to the sender. According to Moffitt, this connection of the identified crisis to a sender is part of the populist performance of crisis, as they would seek to present other leaders, or in this case the EC, as less qualified and less concerned with the crisis they perceive as the most important, namely the socio-economic crisis (2015, 204).

5.4.2 The extreme green left

Other ERW MEPs point their criticism towards MEPs from different political groups, namely The Greens, which is a leftist, environment and climate-focused group that had a very good election in 2019 (see section 1.2). The green group is among the closest to direct opposition to the conservative groups on the right-wing. One example is from Nicola Procaccini, ECR, in his long criticism of the deforestation proposal.

The problem must be addressed head-on, not overlooked, but as long as it is done by keeping at a due distance from the usual environmental extremism that doesn't care about scientific data (App. 8, 2).

Though he does not say it directly, there is little doubt that Procaccini is talking about the left side of the EP. This can be either The Greens or the Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL), which is positioned furthest to the left. It is peculiar that he is talking about them not caring about scientific data when other debates on climate change often have shown that the left is using the exact same argument in the other direction. Throughout his statement, he criticises the suggested approach, without offering any concrete solutions himself. At the same time, he tries to give the impression that his opponents from the left are addressing the issue in a wrong and extreme way, thereby framing them negatively in comparison with his own party group. One of Procaccini's group colleagues is more direct when addressing the problems she has with the green groups. Mazaly Aguilar says:

(...) despite the concessions made by the rapporteur to the Greens, which I feel were excessive and unjustified, there hasn't been enough to staunt the insatiable appetite of the Greens and co. They want everything or nothing. I am very surprised that those groups that most speak about dialogue consensus and understanding in this house are then the first to boycott all those reports where they don't get 100% of their demands (App. 7, 1).

Aguilar praises the report that is being debated and attacks the Greens because of their – in her view – non-negotiating way of doing parliamentary work. She frames the green parties as incapable of reaching compromises and not being willing to accept anything less than their exact demands. This makes them seem irresponsible and as unprofessional politicians because generally, politics is seen as the art of compromise. The same accusation is central in ECR's Andrey Slabakov's statement, as he says "[w]e are hostages of a left-wing green policy that does not stop demanding and is not interested in the effect on countries and people" (App. 6, 7). These examples can be seen as a populist way to divert the attention to a criticism of the opponent instead of focusing on the actual topic of the debate and contributing with concrete input (Moffitt 2015, 198; Taggart 2000, 112).

The tendency is that these conservative MEPs address the division between them and the green left and try to win the admiration of the voters, which can be seen as a way to frame their opposition as being reckless, irresponsible and not capable of doing politics the way politics is meant to be done. By doing so, they frame themselves as the direct opposition not only politically but also in the way they operate in their parliamentary work, as negotiators and responsible democrats who seek the best possible compromise. All of this is not only completely in line with

Moffitt's theory but also with Taggart, who says that straightforwardness, simplicity and clarity are clarion calls for populists (Taggart 2000, 97).

5.4.3 Sub-conclusion

The tendency to frame political opponents negatively to appear as stronger leaders contributes to what we have found hitherto in the analysis. The ERW MEPs are trying to reframe the discourse on climate change to the socio-economic crisis, and this is no exception from that. By framing the opponents negatively in comparison to themselves, they make themselves seem superior. And by pointing out hypocrisy and irresponsibility among other actors, they dissociate from them and become more 'real people' than politicians or part of those responsible – perfectly in line with Moffitt's theory on populist actors who seek to place themselves as a part of the people and dissimilar to other elite politicians (2015, 204-205). On the other hand, we have not found any significant tendency for the MEPs to propose simple solutions, even though that is also a part of Moffitt's fourth step. Of course, the overall impression would have been clearer if we had also found examples of that, but from the found examples in this section, we find that to some extent Moffitt's fourth populist crisis performance step is significant regarding the empirical data.

The second and third steps of populist crisis performance are important in making the foundation for Moffitt's fourth step because those responsible (section 5.3) are the ones who are blamed for being incompetent in this section and the crisis identified and elevated (section 5.1 and 5.2) will point to a single crisis that needs the attention according to the ERW MEPs. Thereby this analytical section has demonstrated how the crisis plays an important role in the reframing of climate change discourse and the framing of the EC.

5.5 Continuation of the crisis

In Moffitt's framework on populist crisis performance, an important step is to create a sense of continuation of the crisis identified. This can be difficult because of the instantaneous nature of crises which makes them hard to uphold and justify their maintained relevance (Moffitt 2015, 207). This section will focus on if and how the Eurosceptic MEPs seek to continue the crisis identified earlier, i.e. the socio-economic crisis resulting from the climate action proposals by the EC. We are aware that with the relatively short time frame of our empirical data (approximately 10 months from first to last debate) it is difficult to see the development over time, therefore we will study how the

Eurosceptic right-wing MEPs can be seen to continue the crisis by expanding it and by intertextually and interdiscursively connect it to other crises.

5.5.1 Adding new aspects

In this subsection, we will analyse if and how the previously identified socio-economic crisis is lifted to a higher level by changing the focus.

Nicola Procaccini from ECR discredits the suggested strategy to halt and reverse deforestation in the EU. "We know on the other hand that severe tropical deforestation cannot be compensated for by the reforestation that is carried out in other areas of the world" (App 8, 2). On one side, he redirects attention to other areas in the world, expanding the problem of deforestation and thereby supporting the EC in the fact that this is a problem that needs attention. On the other side, he continues: "be careful not to burden European companies unnecessarily with further geopolitical burdens, because it would not be fair to them, especially at a time like this" (ibid.). Thereby Procaccini draws in the Covid-19 pandemic and the commercial competitiveness of the European industry as seen in section 5.2.1. This can be seen as a way to downplay the actual issue of deforestation and its role in climate change, while at the same time expanding the socio-economic failure identified as we have seen throughout the analysis.

Some MEPs frame the socio-economic crisis by shifting the focus like the non-attached Croatian MEP Ivan Vilibor Sinčić, who uses the forestry debate to talk about a European minimum wage (App. 7, 2), or Andrey Slabakov, ECR, who uses the debate on a climate law to mention the Mobile Package, which is a different law. According to him, it "destroyed an entire sector in Central and Eastern Europe and drove thousands of trucks empty" (App. 6, 7). They are thereby shifting focus to the socio-economic crisis and expanding the debates to include several socio-economic issues.

5.5.2 Intertextual and interdiscursive amplifications

This subsection focuses on how MEPs strengthen the identified crisis intertextually and interdiscursively. The ERW MEPs connect the crisis they see in the proposals intertextually, for instance, Sylvia Limmer in her critique of the Climate Law "The emperor is naked, ladies and gentlemen – and nobody is looking" (App. 6, 1). By using this idiom she makes a reference to the fairytale by H.C. Andersen about the need to speak up if something is wrong even though the

majority acts as if everything is in order. This can be seen as reflecting negatively on the Climate Law and the sender – the EC. Another example is Silvia Sardone's statement in the Farm to Fork strategy debate where she compares the EC to "a green big brother" (App. 4, 3). Here she could be referring to the character and symbol from the George Orwell novel, that today is often used to describe extended government surveillance that forces citizens to follow the government's will (Literary Devices 2020). Like Limmer, she raises the problems she detects in the strategy to a societal problem by framing it in a discourse of a surveillance society.

Another recurring feature is the ERW MEPs mentioning communism, for instance by Andrey Slabakov from ECR: "The Green Deal and its supporters behaved like young Bolsheviks who unreservedly believed that miners could be turned into computer specialists in six months" (App. 2, 7). By comparing the EGD's supporters to Bolsheviks, who are known to be communists, he places them nearly as far away as possible from his own party group on the political spectrum (Britannica 2020). We also saw a communist reference by Alexandr Vondra in section 5.1.1 who amplified the socio-economic failure crisis that could result from the EGD by denouncing it a "new communist manifesto". Another example is Robert Rowland's comparison of the Commission to Soviet-era economic plans: "The promised job creation is an illusion propagated by our masters in the Commission who roll out their seven-year Soviet-era Gosplan" (App. 2, 3). These examples highlight how the MEPs analysed interdiscursively connect the crisis to communism, a political line long-abandoned within the EU and in ways that are not short of negative connotations.

5.5.3 Sub-conclusion

In this section, we have found that there are some examples of how the socio-economic crisis is attempted to be lifted to a higher level by switching the focus. The ERW MEPs use some interdiscursivity and intertextuality to criticise the EC and connect negative and well-known stories to the institution. However, neither of these are general or permeating features of the empirical data. Throughout the data and from the above analysis we have found that instead of focusing on the debated climate-related topics, the ERW MEPs switch focus to a socio-economic crisis caused by the EC's actions to fight climate change. They present the identified crisis in a somewhat one-sided negative light, which is a typical trait according to Moffitt (2015, 205-206). Since we have chosen to follow the development of how the MEPs frame the climate change discourse as a socio-economic crisis, it is not surprising to us that we have not been able to detect another switch of

focus, as the introduction of the socio-economic crisis already is a change of focal point and an attempt to reframe the discourse on climate change. Another challenge in the empirical data is the limited timeframe as mentioned earlier. According to Moffitt, populist speakers will attempt to move the crisis from an extraordinary to an ordinary situation (2015, 208). We have not been able to detect this, which may be due to the limited time frame. Nevertheless, Moffitt admits that it is difficult and politicians rarely are successful in doing so (ibid., 207-208).

5.6 Heartland

Populism often draws on romantic versions of landscape, nature, and the people who inhabit it and Taggart's concept of heartland offers an analytical approach to investigate the framing of it. In this section of the analysis, we will therefore study how the Eurosceptic right-wing MEPs frame nature, heartland and the people who belong there.

5.6.1 Evocation of sentiments about the heartland

In this section, we will analyse the data in relation to Taggart's concept of the populist heartland, which refers to a romanticised, simple way of life. An important part of the heartland is the people who belong there (Taggart 2012). As we found in section 5.3.2 the people are a key part of the MEPs' rhetoric. A reference to the heartland can, for instance, be by sentimentalising a specific place, for instance, the home countries of the individual MEPs. But mentioning a home country is not equal to nationalism, as it does not necessarily include the whole population (Taggart 2000, 97). Rather they focus on selected groups within society as we have seen in section 5.3.2. This distinction between nationalism, that includes everyone, and populism that refers to certain unclear groups of society, is evident in the empirical data. We have found that the ERW MEPs are committed to the people who belong in their home countries (their heartlands so to speak) and not to a common European people as we could expect from the more pro-EU groups. One example of this is the references to the Silesia region in Poland, that Kloc, Rafalska, Tobiszowski, and others mention in their statements (App. 2, 2, 4, 6; App. 6, 5). Secondly, farmers and people employed in manual work sectors across different Member States as found in section 5.3.2 are often mentioned. For instance, Guido Reil from ID draws upon his own work experience in the German coal mining area, Ruhr.

> *The Green Deal is the most anti-social project in the history of the European Union and anyone*
> *who believes that they can prevent the collapse of coal regions with money and structural aid*

has learned nothing from history or the past. (...) There is no more mining left there, and my home, the Ruhr area, is now Germany's poor house. In the city of my birth, Gelsenkirchen, there is the highest unemployment rate in Germany, there are most poor children, and there are most poor old people (App. 2, 4).

Especially on a textual level, he chooses terms that create a pathos-filled and sentimental tone, such as "the city of my birth" and referring to the poverty of specific groups of the population that generally are viewed as more vulnerable thereby creating a sense of pity. This rather emotional rhetoric is typical populist (Moffitt 2015, 203). The poverty is described as caused by the end of coal mining which is also a typical conservative and populist trait concerning the heartland – the resistance to new ways of living and a longing for the past (Taggart 2000, 16, 93, 96). Thirdly, the diversity of the European people is highlighted and romanticised, as something that is threatened by EU policies by Herve Juvin, who refers to it as "our common treasure" (App. 1, 4), similar to the tone in Reil's statement about the coal mining population. From these statements, a certain Euroscepticism is demonstrated as well as a characteristic populist longing for a time when integrating EU policies did not have homogenising influence. These are just some of the examples of how the ERW MEPs draw in the heartland in their statements on the climate change policies of the European Commission. By framing the ways and people of the idealised heartland as better off without the policies, they contribute to the critique that we have identified in previous sections and emphasise their focus on socio-economic aspects.

Per Taggart's theory, this implicit or explicit idea of a heartland is a key element of populist speech and in this light, the ERW MEPs can be seen as populist in the way they seek to frame the debate. The continuing reference to different groups of people can be seen as enforcing the democratic accreditation of the ERW MEPs as they portray themselves as the "real" representatives of the people in opposition to their political opponent (Taggart 2000, 98).

5.6.2 People above nature

The previous subsection highlighted populist traits in the ERW MEPs contribution to the framing of the people and the heartland in the discourse on climate change. In the following, we will analyse the relationship between people and nature in the statements. There are two reasons to do so: Firstly, both are integral parts of the heartland according to Taggart (2000, 95). Secondly, we have seen throughout the empirical data that ERW MEPs accuse the EC of prioritising nature above people, as mentioned in section 5.1.1. Roman Haider also raises the problem: "When it comes to the demands

for ever-stricter climate targets, the EU institutions, political groups and NGOs outdo each other almost every week. Only one group is not considered – namely the citizens of Europe" (App. 6, 4). Instead of highlighting the negative consequences of climate change for the nature of the heartland, he contributes to the socio-economic crisis that will strike the people of the heartland. Furthermore, he emphasises the importance of the people rather than nature in the debate on climate change. This is a general aspect of the ERW MEPs contribution to the debates. Instead of focusing on nature and the environment, they often mention their constituencies, jobs, industry and the people who live there. For instance, Izabela-Helena Kloc from ECR uses the phrase "from the perspective of the people – inhabitants of my region" (App. 6, 5). Or Anna Zalewska from ECR who asks if Frans Timmermans has "already talked to his Dutch farmers" about the proposed Climate Law. Furthermore, she criticises the proposal by mentioning the negative socio-economic problems she sees from it.

> *(...) you will find out that people are carelessly talking about how unemployment will increase, how energy poverty will increase, how the price of water, waste and finally the price of energy will increase. We did not promise this to our citizens. We promised our citizens European solidarity and respect for the treaties* (App 6, 1).

Similarly so does Andrey Slabakov, "Every time you raise your goals and congratulate yourself on how progressive you are, you doom people to unemployment and hunger. Hungry people don't produce carbon dioxide" (App. 6, 7). Different groups of people are part of the rhetoric and it is often in a contrary relation to the proposals of the EC (as mentioned in 5.3.3). Thus, we see a tendency in the rhetoric of the MEPs to do the opposite of what they blame the EC for and change the debate from prioritising nature to prioritising people – they position the people above nature, and attempt to push the discourse in this direction instead of towards nature and climate. Additionally, they frame the relationship as the people being treated unfairly. For the ERW MEPs, the proposals are unfair to the people who belong in the heartland, as they see the EC as disconnected from the reality in the different Member States.

5.6.3 Singularity of the heartland

Despite the general tendency, some of the ERW MEPs do acknowledge the problem of climate change, especially in the debates on the New Forest Strategy and on the matter of deforestation (App. 7 and 8). Here we see a romanticisation of forests and nature, which is an important part of populist speech on landscape and lifestyles of the people who inhabit the heartland (Taggart 2000,

5). This we have seen mostly in relation to the romanticisation of how the people live and work as described above and in section 5.3.2, but there are also examples directly about nature. One of them is Teuvo Hakkarainen from the ID group.

> *We, the Finns, live in the forest and from the forest. In the forest, I am at home and breathe freely, here in the concrete hell there is pollution and environmental destruction. An economically managed forest guarantees a livelihood, food, raw materials, energy, recreation and unspoiled nature* (App. 7, 1).

Hakkarainen accentuates nature, the beauty of it, how it is an integral part of the lives of the people, and he places it in opposition to the big city. He uses very colourful language to describe this dichotomic difference, clearly establishing the frontiers to the "concrete hell" which is a classic populist trait – the Manichean tendency to separate everything in categories of either good or bad (Taggart 2012). But even though the MEPs agree with the issues raised in the forestry and deforestation debates, they only mention the problems on a national or regional level rather than the Union as a whole.

According to Taggart the heartland and its populace are inherently singular, meaning that the heartland refers to a single territory of imagination with a single, homogenous population (2000, 96). From this, one could imagine that more pro-EU MEPs would refer to a singular European people with a common identity, while the opposite would count for the Eurosceptic MEPs. Our findings reflect that the Eurosceptic MEPs analysed talk about the people of their home country, but never the whole Union. On the contrary, they often invoke the sovereignty of their nations. As the MEPs belong to the Eurosceptic right-wing groups of the EP this is not surprising, and it demonstrates their Eurosceptic viewpoint. Regarding climate change issues which are, if anything, transboundary it seems that they neglect the universal consequences and the need to act collectively in their stubbornness to give up sovereignty of the Member States.

5.6.4 Sub-conclusion

We chose to include the analytical concept of the heartland to illuminate the role of nature and the relationship between the people and where they live in the ERW MEPs' statements. The above analysis shows how the people and the territory they live in, the heartland, are part of how the MEPs discursively construct the issues in the climate change debate. Based on our puzzle referring to populism among ERW MEPs, we expected some degree of implicit or explicit references to the heartland as this is one of the main characteristics of populist rhetoric (Taggart 2012). Moreover, it

was interesting to include exactly this part of Taggart's theory as the heartland so distinctively describes places of habitation, which is one of the things that can change as a result of climate change. If the MEPs in question agreed with the EC's problematisation of climate change we could, according to the theoretical framework of Moffitt and Taggart, expect them to elevate climate change to a crisis by describing the suffering of nature, the landscape that the people live in. But as we have demonstrated throughout the analysis the ERW MEPs rather see a socio-economic crisis following from the proposed climate change initiatives. From this finding, it could be expected that they would emphasise more economic and social aspects of the heartland. What we found in this section is that they do include nature to some extent, but not as much as they emphasise the socio-economic consequences for the people. For the ERW MEPs, the heartland principally contains hard-working people, industries and SMEs whom they seek to defend and support. Moreover, they talk into a discourse of the people being treated unjustly, as the EC prioritises nature above people. From this, it can be concluded that their references to the heartland propel the people into the discourse on climate change as they are prioritised higher than nature and climate.

5.7 Concluding remarks on the analysis

This section summarises the findings from the sub-conclusions throughout the analysis. Through a critical discourse analysis of populist crisis performance, and through the application of Taggart's populist theme of the heartland, we set out to find how Eurosceptic right-wing MEPs contribute and frame the discourse on the climate change crisis, and if this framing could be characterised as populist in relation the theoretical framework. However, we quickly discovered in section 5.1 that climate change was rarely identified as a failure, rather the negative social and economic consequences of the proposals related to the EGD predicted by MEPs were described as critical. These consequences were announced as a result of the proposals to combat climate change, and thereby the MEPs showed their critical opinion to the proposals as well as their neglect of the severity of climate change.

The different social and economic failures that we found MEPs identify in section 5.1 was shown to be elevated to a crisis level in section 5.2. This elevation was mainly found through textual and discursive references to other issues they present as problematic in line with Moffitt's theory, but less by direct references to time. The analysis of Moffitt's third step continued the socio-economic crisis from sections 5.1 and 5.2. Here we analysed who 'the people' and 'those

responsible' refer to according to the ERW MEPs, and we found that the two groups were presented in opposition to each other. Here, those responsible were primarily identified to be the EC proposing the criticised legislation for debate, while the people were identified as those socially and economically affected in accordance with the populist focus on the little man. The fourth section of the analysis found to some extent a populist characteristic evident in the statements, that is the framing of opponents as far removed from the people, being irresponsible and hypocritical. On the other hand we did not find many suggestions for simpler solutions following the second aspect of this step. However, it was concluded that the very critical framing of the EC, could be argued to be a populist presentation of the political opponent. In section 5.5 our findings pertaining to Moffitt's fifth point of populist crisis performance were limited. From the theory and research puzzle we would study how a climate change crisis would be continued by expanding it and switching focus, but as a climate change crisis was somewhat neglected, naturally we did not see an attempt to continue the crisis. Instead, as found throughout the analysis, the ERW MEPs sought to switch completely to the socio-economic crisis. Finally, the analysis of Taggart's idealised heartland theme showed populist traits in how the MEPs constructed the heartland. They often referred to the MEPs' home countries and the people played a large role in the discursive construction of the heartland. This section also showed, in line with the elevation of the socio-economic crisis, that the socio-economic consequences for the heartland played a much larger role than did aspects such as nature and environment.

Concludingly, this analysis has found that Eurosceptic right-wing MEPs primarily perform a socio-economic crisis instead of a crisis that concerns climate change. We have found that they raise socio-economic issues to a crisis in debates that primarily concern climate change, and based on these findings we have argued that the ERW MEPs can be seen as reframing the climate change discourse in a populist way.

6. Discussion

The discussion chapter is organised as follows: Firstly, we will discuss how our thesis relates and contributes to the literature reviewed. This is followed by a discussion on how our theoretical framework and methodology respectively are instrumental in answering our research question.

6.1 Our contribution to the literature

In this section it is discussed how our findings in the analysis can contribute to the existing literature surrounding the topic. The most prominent literature concerning the subject of this thesis was explained in section 1.2, and this section will discuss our findings in relation to some of the work mentioned there. Our main finding in this thesis has been that Eurosceptic right-wing Members of the European Parliament very rarely focus on climate change as an urgent crisis that needs to be prioritised, even in debates on that specific topic. Instead, by constantly shifting the focus to loss of jobs and unfair taxes, they are trying to reframe the discourse on climate change to be more about a variety of socio-economic problems that they through both textual and discursive practices seem to rate as more important. Another relevant finding is that the MEPs are using populist rhetoric in their reframing of the discourse. This is somewhat in line with what we found in our literature review, which will be discussed below.

Both Mudde and 't Hart & Tindall see crises as windows of opportunity for political utilisation in part because of their ability to shape public perception (Mudde 2019, 25; 't Hart & Tindall 2009, 22-23). Accordingly, our analysis found that the ERW MEPs are trying to seize this opportunity to frame the climate crisis in a way that suits their voter base. The difference is that the way they try to frame the crisis is so far removed from the original discourse on the topic that they almost create a new, parallel debate. Thus, on the one hand they seize the opportunity of the crisis to try and change the levels of political support for both themselves and their opponents. On the other hand, they move far away from the debate on climate. Instead of criticising the European Commission for not being good enough at stopping or limiting climate change, they criticise it for other elements of its attempt to do so, like a loss of jobs or an unfair distribution of burdens in society. In relation to our research question this can be seen as an attempt to reframe the discourse. This attempt can be seen as an addition to the findings of Mudde and 't Hart & Tindall. Apart from them trying to control and take advantage of a crisis as well as make themselves seem better, we have found that their way of doing so can be argued to be populist. Another difference in our findings compared to the existing literature is the ERW MEPs way of talking about the climate crisis. According to Hilson, right-wing populists typically talk about climate by speaking about nationalism and identity, but we have found that they rarely mention climate (2019). However, the MEPs do applaud national identity in their statements, it is climate change that is largely being neglected in favour of the socio-economic aspect mentioned above. This neglect is an area where

our findings correlate with the existing literature, showing us that right-wing populists are generally hostile to climate action (Lockwood 2018, 712). We have not sought to determine whether or not the analysed MEPs in our thesis are populists, but we have found that the way they frame the climate change discourse can be seen as populist, according to Moffitt and Taggart's theories. Our finding, the lack of focus on climate change in the ERW MEPs statements, is thus accordant to Lockwood's finding about populist right-wing's hostility towards climate action. From this, it would hardly make sense for the MEPs to criticise the EC for not doing enough in relation to climate, but it does make sense to criticise it for doing too much or doing it the wrong way as we have found in the analysis. Hence, the ERW MEPs criticisms of the EC's proposals can be seen not only as a way to utilise a crisis to gain popularity, but also it reflects their political opinions opposed to climate change policies. This leaves the negative socio-economic impact of climate action as an obvious field of critique for the ERW MEPs. Our findings and those of Lockwood are in line with the far right-wing historically being opposed to the cross border nature of climate change and action. Since it is closely connected to globalisation, they see climate action as something the wealthy elite imposes on them (Stephens 2020), which makes the MEPs' attempt to talk about socio-economic consequences for the people even more logical. This is also in line with our focus on populist crisis performance.

In section 1.2, we also mention the work of Nathalie Brack, who divides Eurosceptic MEPs into four different groups (The Absentee, the Public Orator, the Pragmatist and the Participant) as well as placing them on a scale from soft to hard Eurosceptics with the Absentee and the Public Orator being the hardest. This is an interesting angle to study Euroscepticism in the European Parliament, which could be the basis for future research. We have used her work to define Euroscepticism as a concept in this thesis, but with her categories in mind we have noticed some tendencies in the empirical data and our analytical work. For instance, we have found that MEPs from the ECR group tend to be more soft Eurosceptics than those from the ID group who tend to be harder Eurosceptics. This is visible in several quotes from the analysed debates, where ID politicians often are more confrontational and critical of the EU and the EC, while ECR members are somewhat less hostile and more willing to negotiate. It is important to note that this finding is not based on a thorough analysis but on unsupported observations we have made while scrutinising our empirical data. This makes the ID MEPs under analysis match the Public Orator-group mentioned in section 1.2 and 2.6. The Absentee-group is also typically found among hard

Eurosceptics, but as their characteristics include a lack of participation, they are probably not very well represented in our analysis. The ECR MEPs will as soft Eurosceptics often be found in either the Pragmatist-group or The Participant-group (Brack 2018). This example of a simple application of Brack's theory could be interesting to expand in future research in combination with critical discourse analysis. Another scholar, Sørensen, has found that Eurosceptics are often closely connected with populist politics, but that they are fundamentally different. She describes that ERW politicians in the EP provide an important contribution to the democratic debate on European integration, and that distinguishes them from populists whom she sees as unwilling to participate in democratic debates (2020, 173-174).

MEPs who are unwilling to participate have remained an unknown quantity in our analysis as the plenary debates are our only means to disclose the opinions of them. We have found that it is the same small group of ERW MEPs who participate in the debates on the EGD. This may indicate Brack's Absentee group being present in the two political groups whose MEPs we have analysed. This would be an empirical limitation, as we are unable to study the opinions of absentees and their reasons for abstaining. However, the absence of these MEPs may on the other hand just be a result of the way MEPs are organised into different committees, resulting in them having different areas of expertise and interest, while they leave other areas to their party group colleagues. A quick count showed that the majority of ID and ECR members in the ENVI and ITRE committees participated in the debates analysed. Even though nothing can be concluded from this count, it does show a tendency towards the ERW MEPs not abstaining from participating in plenary debates on the EGD. Furthermore, there can be many other reasons for MEPs to abstain from participating in debates or even from voting, for instance if a MEP's political group and national party has different opinions (Rasmussen 2008, 15).

6.2 Theoretical discussion

This section will discuss the theory in relation to our research question. As mentioned (section 2.1), we chose Moffitt's theory on populist crisis performance because it encompasses both crisis and populism. Furthermore, it was possible to use it in our focus on speech and discourse and could be operationalised in line with the method of critical discourse analysis. Since our research is specifically focusing on these topics Moffitt's is more suitable than a theory such as that of Taggart (2000), which has a wider analytical scope with only a minor focus on crisis. Still, Taggart does

include that populism is a "reaction to a sense of extreme crisis" and that it often emerges in crises (2000, 2), but it plays a smaller role in his theoretical framework compared to Moffitt's where it plays the main character throughout all six steps. Therefore, we believe that Moffitt's approach was the most precise in relation to our research question. This precision is of course closely connected to our deductive approach which means that we depart from a theoretical standpoint that provides us with certain expectations and an a priori approach to our empirical data. This approach has inevitably led us to regard other aspects as less relevant or maybe even inhibited us from finding them. However, based on the above arguments, we believe that the research design, the composition of theory and methodology, is the most suitable to answer our research question.

On the other hand, Taggart's theory might shed light on other interesting aspects of empirical data. While Moffitt's theory focuses on politicians' public performance such as rhetoric, speech, and strategy (2015, 197-198), Taggart's framework could be useful in a more all-round approach to studying populism and ERW MEPs. Furthermore, it could be useful in studying a longer timeframe. From a methodological point of view, some of Taggart's points seem more obvious when analysing a larger span of time, for instance, his fifth point that focuses on the success of populism and populist actors over a longer period. If we studied the development in the European Parliament over several years, maybe including an election, it would be interesting to use this analytical step. However, our time frame is shorter, and we focus on how MEPs attempt to influence a discourse rather than how this discourse transforms over time. This we will return to in section 6.3.

Another theoretical aspect that can be discussed is the inclusion of one of Taggart's six points of populism. The reason why we did not include all of them is that some are somewhat overlapping Moffitt's, and others are methodologically impracticable to the empirical data. But how does the single step of the heartland contribute to the analysis? Exactly the point of heartland can be seen as closely connected to nature, climate, and environment and therefore, we argue, that it complements our analytical framework because our empirical data consists of climate change debates. Even though our analysis rather quickly got to revolve around a socio-economic crisis rather than a climate crisis, we chose to keep the heartland section of the analysis. This turned out to be rather fruitful as the analysis of if and how the ERW MEPs referred to the heartland showed us two interesting things. Firstly, it showed that the only way the ERW MEPs approved of climate action was in relation to the romanticised description of their home countries. Thus this was one of

the few ways they talked about climate and actually debated the climate aspects instead of diverging the attention. Secondly, we found that for the ERW MEPs the people of the heartland and the social and economic aspects concerning them, play an important role in terms of prioritisation as well as in the discursive framing and building of the socio-economic crisis. This is clear in the way these people and their current and future problems are present throughout the empirical data. Thus, we believe that Taggart's populist point of the heartland provided beneficial aspects to our analysis of how the ERW MEPs frame the discourse on climate change through populist speech.

In this thesis, we have applied a discursive theoretical approach to populism, as outlined in section 2.1. If we had taken one of the other two approaches, our results might have been different. Had we taken the ideational approach, we would also be have to change the aim of the study to determine whether the analysed MEPs are populists or not. If we were completely devoted to the ideational approach, the method of critical discourse analysis and the same empirical material could still be used. An ideational study would attempt to make the deduction that if the MEPs use populist rhetoric, they must be populists. That would probably be an immature and unthorough conclusion, which is why a broader empirical material that includes MEPs' actions might be preferable to make such an assessment. The last of the three theoretical approaches is the strategic one that implies a strong focus on a political leader. This could be the President of one of the two ERW groups in the EP, but it could also be a prominent figure in the EP. We would still be able to study how (s)he tries to reframe the climate change discourse by doing a comprehensive critical discourse analysis, but we would need a new set of empirical data, as plenary debates would be far from satisfactory when studying only one person. Instead, we could include public speeches, social media posts and interviews in news media among other sources. Nevertheless, these examples are simply a superficial application of two other approaches to populism, that requires a more thorough utilisation to make further conclusions.

6.3 Methodological discussion

This section will discuss the methodological approach of the thesis. Using critical discourse analysis has provided us with a three-step method to analyse data in relation to our theory, however, the third step – social practice – could be expanded in a larger study to see how the framing attempts by the ERW MEPs propagate and manifest in society. In such a study one could include sources like social media posts or presence in the news media as our current empirical data would

be insufficient. To make a qualified attempt to answer how the MEPs affect and change a discourse would require a larger time frame for the study and a broader scope of data. When looking at the empirical data for this thesis – the statements from plenary debates – the format constitutes a closed environment. In relation to Fairclough's social practice aspect, the data does not illuminate the societal effects of the discourse framing and how they might change, but it gives a clear picture of the political opinions of the MEPs in question as well as how they frame the debated issues. Still, CDA research is known to privilege the in-depth analysis of a smaller number of texts because it allows and provides an extensive treatment of the topic of research (Sengul 2019, 383). What we aimed to study was the framing of climate change discourse in the statements and therefore we believe that the scope of data has been appropriate in relation to the CDA method. Furthermore, we have chosen this method because of its ability to illuminate how something is spoken of rather than only the contents of what is said. If we were to study the latter, we could have employed a content analysis instead of the chosen CDA as it is a method used to describe the content and meaning of qualitative material (Schreier 2012, 1). It has been argued that in-depth critical discourse analysis offers a valuable method to analyse political text and communication and that it should be employed concurrently with social scientific techniques (Sengul 2019, 378, 389; Fairclough 2010, 436). Here we have used Moffitt and Taggart's social theories to provide the aspect of populism in relation to crises.

Another characteristic of the data is that we are unable to say if the ERW MEPs mention their home countries and constituencies more than MEPs from other political orientations as we analysed in section 5.3 and 5.6. For further research, it could be interesting to conduct a comparative study analysing both left- and right-wing MEPs and what role their home country plays in the framing of the climate change discourse with a particular theoretical focus on Taggart's heartland. Another way to do a comparative study could be to study the same actors as in the previous example and compare their rhetorical style from the EP to their rhetoric in their respective home countries. A different way to expand the empirical scope could be to change the focus to climate change policies in general and surveying a full election period. Nevertheless, with the limited timeframe and extent of this thesis as well as our wish to avoid a shallow analysis of a broad topic, we chose to narrow our focus to the parliamentary debates and not a comparative analysis, which has made it possible for us to do a deeper and more detailed analysis. This limits our field of expertise to a single group and, apart from what we know from previous research on other MEPs

and other policy areas, we are unable to do a direct comparison. We cannot say anything about the left-wing or the rest of the elected MEPs. However, we do not see this as an issue hindering our response to the research question as one of the characteristics of qualitative studies is to delve deep into a subject and be able to make sense of the meanings or phenomena brought to a specific discourse (Della Porta & Keating 2008, 28). The area that we can say something about might be limited, but as the literature is limited on the political right-wing's relation to climate change policies and especially ERW MEPs, our analysis could function as a base for further research. The group we are studying is interesting because its relation to climate change is less documented than the political left-wing, and because we know from previous research that the right-wing has engaged in populist discourse or politics concerning other issues.

One limitation concerning discourse analysis and the empirical data of this thesis is the aspect of time. As mentioned, the debates analysed stretches over approximately 10 months which can be seen as a rather short period. If one wishes to study the development of the discourse on the climate change crisis in the EP in general, the study could be expanded to several years and include other actors. For instance, it could be studied if the ERW MEPs have success in making the more environmentally oriented MEPs include socio-economic consequences to a higher extent. However, we are not studying the change of discourse, but instead how MEPs frame it and present it, and thereby we find out their opinion and what they seek to include or exclude as important topics. Our contribution to the field can function as a basis for further research analysing the development over time in the climate change discourse. The time period under analysis has been a special and transformative one for the EU. Many interesting things have happened and are still on-going such as Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic, which both could be interesting to study with the same theoretical framework as we have used in this thesis. Another interesting aspect to study builds on our knowledge that crisis is inherent in populism. From this stance, it might be apparent that crises are more easily raised because of the current on-going issues. In comparison with earlier times with fewer or smaller crises, there might be less populist speech and crisis performance visible in the statements and in debates on climate change.

Throughout this section, we have discussed our contributions to the literature and suggestions for future research, as well as theoretical and methodological choices and how these could be different. In the following chapter, we will summarise the findings from the analysis and the discussion.

7. Conclusion

Climate change action plays an important role in European politics today, but it remains a fiercely debated subject. Through a critical discourse analysis based on the theoretical framework by Benjamin Moffitt as well as the assisting theory by Paul Taggart we have sought to answer the following research question:

> *How are right-wing Eurosceptic MEPs framing the climate change crisis discourse through populist speech?*

Throughout this process, we have revealed that the Eurosceptic right-wing MEPs in question, to a large extent neglect the climate change crisis. Instead of an elevation of climate change as a crisis, we have seen an unambiguous attempt to frame the climate change discourse as closely connected to a socio-economic crisis. We have seen this through a focus on certain societal groups, references to the heartland, and by connection to other overarching issues. The way they have done so can be seen as populist in relation to the theoretical framework. We have operationalised the theory to be able to analyse step by step if and how the analysed MEPs reflect the six features to determine whether or not they can be seen as populist. From the analysis, we can conclude that the ERW MEPs frame the climate change discourse in a populist way, not that they frame climate change as a crisis, but rather the proposed legislation for climate action by the Commission.

Our method of choice, the critical discourse analysis, has provided us with insights about how something is spoken about and more specifically, how the discourse on climate change is framed. Concerning our empirical data, our research question defined a narrow focus, which made it possible for us to make an in-depth and detailed qualitative analysis. However, we have throughout the analysis and discussion found that studying a wider spectrum of MEPs could offer interesting possibilities to draw parallels and make comparisons both in relation to what is acknowledged as crises and to the extent of populism in the different political wings of the EP. The theoretical frameworks by Moffitt and Taggart have functioned well in this thesis, because of their generally effortless application on our empirical data. It has contributed to keeping the analysis coherent and structured because of our systematic operationalisation. However, a minor part of our main theory, populist crisis performance by Moffitt, could not be applied to our data and was left out of the analysis. We are convinced that this has not had an impact on our final conclusion, as the reason for excluding this step was due to empirical shortcomings.

Our analysis and scope of data have given deep insights to the Eurosceptic right-wing MEPs' contribution to the debates about proposals from the European Green Deal which covers an important policy area in the EU. We contribute to the current literature, analysing the interrelation between climate change policies and right-wing Euroscepticism. These two areas have each been studied thoroughly, and our findings are generally in line with the findings in existing literature, but they have not often been connected. As the two fields are combined in this thesis it contributes with a new aspect and offers new questions for future research. Based on the findings in this thesis, we argue that the study of framing of discourses can be seen as valuable because the framing of an issue or a crisis has a considerable impact on chosen solutions and ensuing policy-making. Furthermore, more specifically in relation to the subject of this thesis, the framing of the climate change discourse can be argued to be especially relevant in a time of an international health crisis posed by Covid-19 and the questions about economy and solidarity that follows.

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9. Appendix bibliography

Appendix 1: **Debate on The European Green Deal Resolution**
Debate held 11.12.2019
Downloaded 01.11.2020 from: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/
CRE-9-2019-12-11-ITM-007_EN.html

Appendix 2: **Debate on Sustainable investment plan, just transition fund and Roadmap on Social Europe**
Debate held 14.01.2020
Downloaded 01.11. 2020 from https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/
CRE-9-2020-01-14-ITM-006_EN.html

Appendix 3: **Debate on EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030**
Debate held 15.01.2020
Downloaded 01.11.2020 from https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/
CRE-9-2020-01-15-ITM-019_EN.html

Appendix 4: **Debate on Farm to Fork Strategy – the key role of farmers and rural areas**
Debate held 13.02.2020
Downloaded 01.11.2020 from https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/
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Appendix 5: **Debate on the Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability**
Debate held 09.07.2020
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Appendix 6: **Debate on the European Climate Law**
Debate held 06.10.2020
Downloaded 01.11.2020 from https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/
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Appendix 7: **Debate on The European Forest Strategy - The Way Forward**
Debate held 06.10.2020
Downloaded 01.22.2020 from https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/
CRE-9-2020-10-06-ITM-007_EN.html

Appendix 8: **Debate on An EU legal framework to halt and reverse EU-driven global deforestation**
Debate held 21.20.2020
Downloaded 01.11.2020 from https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/
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Appendix 9: **Debate on A New Industrial Strategy for Europe**
Debate held 23.11.2020
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