"Power to the People!" – the discursive promotion of energy democracy by local actors in Leipzig

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1. Introduction

Energy democracy is a comparatively young social movement that advocates, among other things, for a less centralized, renewables only, more inclusive, and democratic approach to energy production and distribution, characterized by more citizen participation and involvement in decision-making, planning and ownership of the means of energy production (Burke & Stephens, 2017: 38) Examples range from local discussion rounds in energy infrastructure projects to collective ownership of solar panels in villages. Energy democracy's advocates argue that this way, a more just, equal, and democratic energy system and society may be built (Szulecki & Overland, 2020: 5). Citizens' active involvement in and acceptance of energy projects and its sector seem more crucial than ever before, as countries all over the globe rush to increase renewable energy capacities in the face of worsening climate change and its effects or efforts of independence from fossil fuel-rich countries and regimes due to political agendas.

The city of Leipzig is no stranger to this. Former East Germany's second biggest city and nowadays often referred to as Germany's boomtown or 'Hypezig', Leipzig has a remarkable connection to the issues of energy, its production and distribution. Marketing itself as an 'energy metropolis' the city is the seat of the EEX, the European Energy Exchange at which energy is traded. It is also a gold-status recipient of the EEA, the European Energy Award, given to municipalities implementing extensive measures for climate protection, emission reduction and energy efficiency. Additionally, the city agreed to become carbon neutral last year by 2040. It is thus not surprising, that to many different local actors including political parties, associations, companies or ordinary citizens, energy democracy is becoming a more viable and feasible alternative to the established centralized system of energy production and distribution. These actors influence and shape the local (and implicitly also global) discourse surrounding the issue, using a wide variety of different discursive measures to sway public opinion and gain traction for their cause. But how do they do that?

That is what I aimed to examine in this research and thesis on the case of Leipzig, by analysing four different local actors and their publicly available material in a multimodal discourse analysis. Through analysing the different discursive means applied by these various actors, I intended to uncover the different mechanisms utilised by them to promote energy democracy, as well the thus created discourses and narratives.

Ultimately, I aim to answer the problem: How do different local, energy democracy-endorsing actors promote ED and shape the (local) discourses surrounding the issue?

2. Literature review

As a first step of my thesis, I conducted an extensive review of literature from social and political sciences surrounding the topic of energy democracy (ED) as well as discourse on energy democracy. However, it should be noted that particularly regarding discourse, there is not a vast amount of literature relating to ED. As multiple authors note, this illustrates the need for further research in this area needing to be conducting, underlining the relevance of my thesis in the fields of social sciences and discourses studies.

As a comparatively young term, ED is emblematic of the academic literature surrounding it. Described in one text as "by no means a fully developed or uniform concept" (Weis, Becker & Naumann, 2015: 5)[1], the literature about it is equally diverse in its approaches and focuses. Kacper Szulecki and Indra Overland echo this notion in their paper "Energy democracy as a process, an outcome and a goal: A conceptual review" (2020), noting that the "lack of agreed definition or even common frame […] is not merely an inconvenience – it is symptomatic of the fragmentation of the energy democracy literature" (Szuleki & Overland, 2020: 2). Subsequently it comes as no surprise, that a substantive amount of the literature I came across both in my initial dealings with the topic, as well as in my later research process, is focused on defining the term energy democracy.

However, much of the here assessed literature can be classified into two groups:

1. Classifications and definitions of the term ED as well as its dimensions.
2. Studies of direct manifestations of ED, often in regard to the respective social and/or geographical context in which they appear.

The previously utilized text by Szuleki and Overland provides a great starting point for this literature review. In it, the authors analyse a vast amount of literature on the topic while also creating a first categorization of the commonly produced understandings of ED: energy democracy as a process that is challenging the status quo of energy production, as an outcome of decarbonisation resulting from an increased amount of renewables and which goes along with increased democratization, as well as a normative goal to which one could aspire (Szuleki & Overland, 2020: 2). The specific theoretical implications of this categorization shall be dealt with in more detail during the theory section of this thesis.

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[1] „keinesfalls um ein abschließend ausgearbeitetes oder einheitliches Konzept" (Weis, Becker & Naumann, 2015: 5)

Three very crucial texts described in Szulecki & Overland's work, those by Becker and Naumann (2017), Burke and Stephens (2017), as well as by Szulecki (2017) himself also fall into this category of extensive literature review and subsequent categorization of ED. Becker and Naumann generate a detailed typology of approaches to energy democracy. They sort various projects described in research along the axes of respective political objectives, the mode of organisation, technologies and resources involved as well as spatial dimensions. They then group them into the ones promoting decentralized energy provision, those promoting collective forms of ownership as well as those advocating for energy sovereignty (Becker & Naumann, 2017: 6). Importantly, they also note that these groupings are not mutually exclusive, but instead add to one another (Becker & Naumann, 2017: 9).

Burke and Stephens provide a detailed analysis of numerous policy instruments and their outcomes in order to assess the various approaches to ED in the United States. They structure the different approaches to it as well as their intended outcomes along three major goals they identified: Resisting the current approach to energy production and distribution, reclaiming the energy sector as well as restructuring it (Burke & Stephens, 2017: 38). To both authors, ED can be understood as "contemporary expressions of earlier social and environmental movements within and beyond the energy sector" (Burke & Stephens, 2017: 37), a notion shared in many other studies as well (Chilvers & Palett, 2018; Angel, 2016; Szulecki & Overland, 2020).

The division of the goals of ED provided by Burke and Stephens is based on various resources, but the wording particularly corresponds to the discussion paper "Resist, Reclaim, Restructure" (2013) by Sean Sweeney, written for the organisation Trade Unions for Energy Democracy. In his discussion paper, Sweeney explains the need for ED by setting it against the backdrop of increasing climate change, workers' exploitation, the ineffective ongoing energy transition, and energy poverty. He appeals to an increase in advocacy for ED by providing instructions for unions, social movements, and individuals. Importantly, Sweeney's text contains an inherently normative component.

Szuleki's (2017) work is also focused on providing a conceptualization of energy democracy. Like Sweeney, he locates ED in relation to other normative concepts such as climate, energy, and environmental justice. He then continues to explain the desirability of ED to make energy governance more democratic.

Referencing Benjamin K. Sovacool and Michael H. Dworking's conceptualization of energy justice as an analytical and decision-making tool, Szulecki applies their dimensions of popular sovereignty, participatory governance, and civic ownership as well as their specific indicators to ED. He then argues that this "allow[s] for comparisons and designing policy change leading towards the energy democracy ideal" (Szulecki, 2017: 15), thus also creating instructions for action.

The normative component appearing in both previous texts is nothing too unordinary in much of the ED literature. Authors like Weis, Becker & Naumann (2015) even argue, that terms such as energy justice (which we will explore in the theory section as well) and energy democracy are "explicitly normative" (Weis, Becker & Naumann, 2015: 11), something also considered by Szulecki and Overland. And just like them, Weis, Becker & Naumann set out to define the term energy democracy, drawing comparisons to previously brought up terms like energy justice or energy poverty. However, their definition further relates ED and its different manifestations to concepts like political ecology, solidarity economy and economic democracy, all with their differing implications for the understanding of the concept.

Similarly, to the previously examined text, James Angel (2016) also provides a compelling account of the current energy sector and the resulting need for ED. In his definition, Angel also draws on related concepts such as energy justice, energy sovereignty and energy poverty, both to define ED and to underline the need for it. However, Angel also emphasizes the importance of different power relations in the struggle for energy democracy, writing that "those with power are attempting to ensure that dangerous questions are sidelined: questions about who benefits and who loses out from the transition" (Angel, 2016: 7). These power relations are further alluded to on a grander scale in various texts, as authors describe both approaches to ED in and implications of climate change for people in the global South (Weis, Becker & Naumann, 2015; Burke & Stephens, 2017; Becker & Naumann, 2017).

Although a frequently appearing issue (Weis, Becker & Naumann, 2015; Szulecki & Overland, 2017), matters of power and discourse are not as widespread in the literature on energy democracy, as noted also by Jason Chilvers and Helen Palett (2018) in their power relations-emphasizing text on the formation of publics of energy democracy. To them, much of the literature on ED conceives 'the public' as well as their actions in relation to energy democracy, as a "highly specific, pre-given, external, and naturally occurring" (Chilvers & Palett, 2018: 2) category.

Instead, they argue for a constructivist and relational perspective on ED and its practices, in which both the concept itself and the publics around it emerge through collective practices.

Their approach is thus characterized by a more agent-driven, and institution-emphasizing understanding, both of which are very relevant to this thesis.

Another text following a similar notion is the one by Laurence Williams and Benjamin K. Sovacool (2020), in which they analyse discourse in UK political parties on shale gas extraction. After providing a brief definition of ED, which utilizes many of the already discussed texts, Williams and Sovacool analyse a vast number of statements made by various political parties and actors on their respective position concerning the extraction of shale gas. By doing so, they illustrate various networks of actors that form so-called discourse coalitions, which are created around specific frames of the issue. According to them, their understanding of frames follows research by Robert Entman, who understood frames as "being about what is said and what is emphasized" (Williams & Sovacool, 2020: 1245) in order to present the issue at hand through a particular lens.

Both above-presented concepts are hugely important for my research, as they emphasize the role actors play in the construction and shaping of the discourse surrounding the topic of energy democracy. Having now provided a detailed overview of the literature that is focused on the definition and categorization of the term ED, I now also want to present some crucial examples of the second group identified: literature focusing on specific manifestations of energy democracy.

Importantly, many of the previously brought-up texts provide examples of specific manifestations of ED. James Angel (2016) for instance makes specific references to national strategies of central state ownership of the means of energy production in Uruguay or Greece. Weis, Becker and Naumann (2015) also reference examples of ED, for instance concerning the origins of energy justice in the US, where lawsuits had been filed by racial minority communities against the construction of a toxic waste landfill in Houston. Another example referenced in both texts is the 'Berliner Energietisch' – an initiative advocating for a municipally owned energy provider in Berlin in 2012, powered exclusively by renewables and under the democratic control of citizens.

We see that many texts supply specific examples of manifestations of ED, as it serves both to illustrate the variety of the concept and its social movement and as it helps to picture the specific and varying local contexts and goals.

Regardless, some research focuses predominantly on one or multiple of these local manifestations of ED. It is these that I now want to present in the following paragraphs.

One of the most crucial of these texts is one by Becker and Kunze (2015). In "Wege der Energiedemokratie. Emanzipatorische Energiewenden in Europa", the two authors begin by again providing a definition of energy democracy. To them, the democratic energy transition proposed by ED advocates rests on the five dimensions of participation, ownership, added value and employment, ecology, and sufficiency as well as emancipation as politics. However, most of their work consists of the analysis of 15 case studies of "small, already functioning democratic energy transitions" (Becker & Kunze, 2015: 10)[2] in the European Union, through which they intend to examine whether these energy transitions, along the established dimensions, are of social benefit. These case studies fall into three categories: energy cooperatives, transition in the most peripheral spaces as well as projects they consider unconventional. They range from energy cooperatives in Italy or Spain to energy efficient renovations in a disadvantaged city borough of Malmö or the resistance through renewables by a village threatened by an enlarging coal pit in Germany. On these examples, Becker and Kunze illustrate the various manifestations of ED and emphasize the importance of the local context to these projects and energy democracy. Importantly, they also note the danger arising from an inflationary usage of the term, as it may motivate oppositional actors to hijack it for their own narratives.

Another example of literature focusing on specific manifestations of ED is Bregje van Veelen's (2018) research on governance processes in community energy projects in Scotland. Having defined the various community groups as well as their respective technologies at use in his 2017 research, van Veelen examined whether community projects in Scotland are justly considered more democratic. By conducting over 30 in-depth interviews he uncovered aspects of ED emphasized by participants of these communal projects as well as those with which they struggled. For instance, van Veelen describes the issue of inclusive decision-making (a core aspect of ED) and the desire for more involvement. He asserts that many members did not wish for greater involvement in decisions. On the other hand, decisions always being made by the same active members may result in a less inclusive decision-making process and subsequent results, also making the project potentially less democratic.

Van Veelen further claims that a low number of attendants or participants in a project may be an often-appearing characteristic of rural areas. Through this example and the results of his research, he illustrates context and locality-specific issues of different manifestations of energy democracy (van Veelen, 2018: 651-652).

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[2] „kleinen, schon funktionierenden demokratischen Energiewenden" (Becker & Kunze, 2015: 10)

The notion of the importance of specific local contexts and factors is also echoed in Daniel Chavez's text on the energy sectors of Latin America, as well as the possible implications one may draw for the future development of the UK energy sector. Throughout his text, Chavez provides insights into the historic and current energy sectors of Brazil, Uruguay, and Costa Rica, of which the latter two are particularly characterized by a strong state role played in the production of energy. In Costa Rica, for instance, no profit-driven private enterprise is engaged in the production of energy and 99.7% of the national energy mix consists of renewables (Chavez, 2018: 5). Despite also making a case for decentralized production or other forms of ownership, Chavez thus argues for a strong, even hegemonic role of the state in energy production and coordination on the national level – something he claims the UK should attempt to mirror. His text vividly illustrates the various local factors and approaches taken to ED and emphasises the need to pay close attention to local contexts in order to assess their specificities but also possible implications for the global energy sector.

Before coming to the theory section of my thesis, I will briefly summarize the findings of my literature review. As a young and fragmented concept, literature on energy democracy is equally diverse, with many different focuses and approaches. Much of the literature I found stems from social and political sciences and is centred around definitions and conceptualizations of the term, often working by relating it to other concepts or by categorizing its manifestations. Other literature, despite also defining the term specific to the research, focuses on analysing specific, local manifestations of ED according to various aspects, such as its democratic nature, or its implications for other local contexts. Although inherently seen as relating to issues of discourse and power, specific literature on these aspects of energy democracy is comparatively scarce. My literature review thus implies the need for an exact definition of the term for the context of my thesis, the importance of paying specific attention to the local dispositions as well as the overall need to look into the discursive construction of the meaning of energy democracy. It also illustrates the need to examine discourse in relation to ED. Based on this literature review, I aim to contribute to the ED literature on discourse, particularly in the academic field of social sciences, as the actors involved, the modes utilised and practices applied, as well as the thus created discourses and narratives require more attention.

3. Theory

In the following section of my thesis, I will introduce the most relevant theoretical concepts applied in this research. To begin with I will present various sources on social movements, to establish the basics of the concept of energy democracy. As already established in the literature review, there are many concepts inherently related to ED. The second part of this section thus contains elaborations on energy justice and energy poverty, both of which are utilized in order to provide a comprehensive definition of energy democracy in the frame of my research and thesis. Thirdly I will introduce another crucial concept for this work – discourse. And lastly, as I intend to conduct a multimodal discourse analysis (MMDA), I will also present the concept of multimodality.

3.1 Social movements

When wanting to understand energy democracy and its related concepts, it is first imperative to give insights into the concept and theory which they are based on. The most crucial of these is the concept of social movements, as ED itself is a specific manifestation of a social movement. To do so I shall present various definitions and conceptualizations of the term, starting with those of European sociologists Alberto Melucci (1981) and Alain Touraine (1985), before coming to Mario Diani (1992) and his approach trying to unify the various concepts.

Italian sociologist Alberto Melucci (1981) states that in advanced capitalist societies, social movements have been challenging the narrative of continuous progress and modernization without disturbance to the political or social system surrounding it. He argues that we must consider what he describes as conflict-centred collective action, "which is capable of linking actors and systems, class relations and incidents of conflict" (Melucci, 1981: 201), thus forming the basis of his understanding of social movements. To Melucci, collective action is the variety of behaviour centred around a conflict in a specific social system. As the term 'collective' indicates, various actors are involved in the "struggle […] for the appropriation and orientation of social values and resources" (Melucci, 1981: 202). Crucially, the involved parties act due to notions of solidarity. Collective action may contain various forms of behaviour that "transgress the norms that have been institutionalized in social roles which go beyond the rules of the political system and/or which attack the structure of society's class relations" (Melucci, 1981: 202).

Only if these two conditions are met, collective action can be called a social movement. Collective action only fulfilling the first of these characteristics is termed 'conflict-based action', while the latter is described as 'deviance'. This differentiation between different types of collective action further solidifies Melucci's concept of social movements, as the collective action centred around a specific conflict in a given social system, but which also challenges the limits of the respective system (Melucci, 1981: 203).

He further categorizes collective action into conflict-based organizational action and conflict-based political action. These are actions taking place when "a conflict occurs within the limits of a given organization or political system" (Melucci, 1981: 203). Applied to his concept of social movements, Melucci classifies so-called 'organizational movements', about which he writes the following:

> "The types of collective behaviour found in this case are situated at the level of a given social organization and are directed against the power governing a system of norms and roles. The action aims at a different division of resources, a functional adaptation of the organization, and a redistribution of roles. But, at the same time, it tends to transgress the institutional limits of the organization and to go beyond its normative framework. The conflict leaves the organization and moves toward the political system" (Melucci, 1981: 203)"

On the other hand, Melucci also describes 'political movements', which are collective action focused on gaining political support and participation for a specific cause, while also contesting the system's limits regarding political participation and the ability to express political demands (Melucci, 1981: 203).

Lastly, Melucci imposes another dimension on these various forms of collective action – class. To him, class permeates these various forms of collective action and thus social movement, as the structuring and governing power within a system is nothing other than "a transcription of class relations" (Melucci, 1981: 204). Class, and subsequently the imposed power relations, work to reproduce the internal mechanisms, norms, and roles of an organization. So, when conflict-centred collective action within an organization challenge not only the organizational limits but also the external source of power that permeates it, we may speak of a class organizational movement. This idea also applies to political movements when the dominant political force is challenged.

Melucci's concept continues but I shall end these assertions here, summarizing that to him: social movements are conflict-centred collective actions that challenge the boundaries of their respective social or political system as well as the powers that govern these systems, which are rooted in notions of class relations.

Alain Touraine's (1985) understanding of social movement is different, but not unlike Melucci's notions. Touraine claims that social movements are not descriptions of reality, but that they are "an element of a specific mode of constructing reality" (Touraine, 1985: 749). He describes social movements as a specific variant of a social conflict.

Like Melucci, Touraine's understanding of social movements is rooted in notions of collective behaviour, (social) conflicts and class struggle. Collective behaviour though, may not necessarily be a form of social conflict, as he illustrates on the example of changing fashions or panic crazes. Instead, a social conflict "presupposes a clear definition of opponents or [competing] actors and of the resources they are fighting for or negotiating to take control of" (Touraine, 1985: 751). This means that to him, a conflict and the connected collective behaviour forming the basis of a social movement is dependent on a specific frame within which it takes place. This idea is not unlike Melucci's conception of collective action undertaken by multiple actors, bound to a conflict, within a specific system in which the distribution of resources or the boundaries of the system are challenged.

Touraine continues by distinguishing between various distinct forms of social conflict, for instance, conflicts focused on the re-(construction) of a specific political or cultural identity, or ones that are centred around collective interests which are being pursued. The most relevant of these social conflict types for the concept of social movement, however, is the one describing social conflicts "whose stake is the social control of the main cultural patterns, that is, of the patterns through which our relationship with the environment are normatively organized" (Touraine, 1985: 754f.) It is only these conflicts which Touraine subsumes under the term social movements.

Along the three aspects "definition of the identity (i) of the actor, the definition of the opponent (o), and the stakes, that is the cultural totality (t) which defines the field of conflict" (Touraine, 1985: 760f.), Touraine explains social movements as being clearly defined by the relationship between the actors involved in the struggle and their stakes in the conflict, distinguishing it from other forms of collective behaviour.

The following text passage serves as fitting illustration of Touraine's concept. He writes:

> "[It] can be symbolized by writing that a social movement is *i-o-t* and political *struggle i-t, o-t, or i-o*. The collective pursuit of interests corresponds to an even lower level of integration of these elements: the actors are self-centred and the field of their competition or conflict can even be defined as a market, which is defined independently from actors. That corresponds to *i, o, t*, where each element is separated from the others. So political pressure and defense of interest must be defined not only by their specific nature but as nonintegrated and lower-level social movements" (Touraine, 1985: 761).

Through this explanation, Touraine subsumes various manifestations of conflict, such as political pressure, under social movements. While social movements have a specific alignment of their components, these components are also part of other forms of social conflict, they are just inherently sorted differently. This means that one may very well observe social movements through their partial components in disintegrated forms as "some components of social movement must be found in all social conflict" (Touraine, 1985: 762).

As done previously with Melucci, I want to end these assertions concerning Touraine's concept here with a brief summary: To Touraine, social movements are various forms of collective behaviour grounded in the existence of a social conflict. They have clearly defined actors and their identities, opponents, an arena in which their struggle takes place as well as specifically defined stakes in the conflict – the specific alignment of which makes them social movements.

The last theorist I want to present in this section of my thesis is Mario Diani (1992). He attempts to merge various definitions of social movements, including the above-elaborated ones, into a coherent, more synthetic concept. The result is a definition of social movements as "a network of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups and/or organizations, engaged in a political or cultural conflict, on the basis of a shared collective identity" (Diani, 1992: 13).

Importantly, Diani distinguishes between social movements and social movement organizations. It is not a specific organization that forms a social movement, but multiple social movement organizations that interact with other social movement organizations, forming a grander and more loosely organized social movement in the process (Diani, 1992: 4).

He suggests that the features he considers characteristic of social movements may not simply exclude various types of organizations, such as previously thought distinct ones like political parties, from being part of a social movement. Although an anomaly, political parties may thus very well recognize themselves and be recognized by others as part of a social movement (Diani, 1992: 15).

Diani concludes that the various types of social movement organizations forming a social movement, carry out various functions inside it. For instance, a political party recognizing itself as part of a social movement may be heavily involved with campaign mobilisation or the specific formulation of demands.

Lastly, there is another important component to Diani's definition of social movements: the question concerning their differentiation from other forms of informal interaction. Crucial to this is the notion of collective identity, inherent in Diani's concept. He writes that "the essential condition is that the sense of belongingness exceeds the length of the public activities and campaigns" (Diani, 1992: 16). Following this idea, it is collective identity that may either cause the formation of a new, different social movement through new forms of collective identity or that may provide stability and persistence in periods of inactivity. Collective identity thus becomes the foundation of the continuous existence of social movements, differentiating it from other forms of informal interaction, for instance, characterized by collective identity motivating occasional outbursts.

Coming to an end of this paragraph, I want to summarize the various aspects provided by these authors, that make up the definition of social movements utilized in this work. Social movements like ED, as understood in this thesis, are networks of informal, collective action centred around specific conflicts, conducted by various, specific actors and their opponents, in a particular system. In this system, a struggle is taking place for the distribution of power, roles, resources as well as meaning, much of which is influenced by powerful, primary dimensions such as class. Social movements further challenge the boundaries of their respective system.

The various actors interact with and struggle against one another due to notions of solidarity and most importantly collective identity, which is also a crucial component in the longevity of social movements and thus their inherent character. Social movements may include a wide range of social movement organisations, including but not limited to political parties or interest groups. The actors analysed in this thesis, for instance, can all be recognized as social movement organisations. Social movements are not defined by a single group and instead depend on their interaction. This way, they are an influential component of the reality construction undertaken by their members and followers.

Having now defined social movements, I want to dive into two specific examples of it: energy poverty and energy justice. Both of these are crucial when wanting to understand the concept and social movement at the heart of this thesis: energy democracy.

3.2 Energy poverty, energy justice and energy democracy

As previously explained in the literature review section of this thesis, energy democracy is a rather loosely defined concept. It strongly relates to other relevant concepts and social movements, which provide a useful perspective for comparison and thus definition of the concept itself. Therefore, I deem it sensible to first provide some background of the two related concepts of energy justice and energy poverty in order to then be able to firmly understand energy democracy.

Energy poverty

The first of these concepts I want to focus on is energy poverty. Particularly in light of last year's invasion of Ukraine by Russia, energy crises and the rising costs of energy have been at the centre of political and everyday discourse in Europe and around the globe. As the term would suggest, energy poverty deals with the inability of people to access or afford energy. In terms of its scientific definition, energy poverty is an equally diverse term as energy democracy.

Gonzalez-Eguino (2015) writes that energy poverty "refer[s] to a level of energy consumption that is insufficient to meet certain basic needs" (Gonzalez-Eguino, 2015: 379). He goes on to refer to Amaluya Reddy (2000), who defines energy poverty as "the absence of sufficient choice in accessing adequate, affordable, reliable, high-quality, safe, and environmentally benign energy services to support economic and human development" (Reddy, 2000: 44). Gonzalez-Eguino describes various aspects contained in Reddy's definition that are of great relevance. Especially in relation to human development, the ability of choice is a crucial factor. After all, a lack of energy may mean insufficient home heating or cooking, but it may also factor into access to education, information, or health. Choice translates to an ability to participate in society, a lack of such thus meaning the opposite. Another important component of this definition are the various, desirable characteristics of energy services, like sustainability, which he understands as crucial to consider in specific local settings (Gonzalez-Eguino, 2015: 379).

He also describes three distinct but complimentary approaches to measuring energy poverty. Firstly, the technological threshold describes access to current energy technologies. Secondly, the physical threshold describes "the minimum energy consumption associated with basic necessities" (Gonzalez-Eguino, 2015: 380). Everyone below this level would be deemed energy poor. Lastly, he describes the economic threshold, which is the most widely used measure and sets the maximum level of income that should be spent on energy at 10%. (Gonzalez-Eguino, 2015: 380).

Other authors also recognize the issue. James Angel (2016) describes how in Spain alone; 7 million people are struggling to pay their bills. This issue also heavily applies to Germany, where CLEW, a journalistic network focused on the energy transition, explains that recent studies of the 'Institut der deutschen Wirtschaft' found that up to 25% of all German citizens paid more than 10% of their monthly salary on energy (Wehrmann, 2022; Henger & Stockhaus, 2022). Importantly, Angel also explains various causes of the issue, such as increasing bills, decreasing salaries as well as inadequate housing quality. He continues by relating energy poverty to social and economic issues like "the impacts of market liberalisation and privatisation, a) on energy prices, which allow corporations to profit from soaring bills and b) on the housing market, which leave many of us at the mercy of profiteering landlords" (Angel, 2016: 20). Angel then presents his case of social movements as a reaction to energy poverty appearing, among other places, in the UK and Spain. These movements make use of a wide variety of different tactics, including political pressure, petitions, and legal actions. Other than immediate action, like a temporary stop on housing evictions, many of these claims are centred around notions of transparency, environmental protection, as well as democratic control (Angel, 2016: 22).

Their aim is to make the energy sector, and thus society as a whole, more just to the actual needs of the people and their realities, leading to the second related concept.

Energy justice

As the term would suggest, energy justice and its respective social movement relate the concept of energy production, distribution, and consumption to notions of justice and fairness. More specifically, it considers "the moral implications of our collective energy decisions […] as aspects of equity and morality […] are seldom explicit in contemporary energy planning and analysis (Sovacool & Dworkin, 2015: 435). Angel writes that the discourse surrounding energy democracy only has very limited influence and usage in the global south, where the term energy justice is deemed far more accurate to the experiences of people and their realities (Angel, 2016: 12; Stephen & Burke, 2017: 37). In a similar notion, he describes the term energy sovereignty, predominant in Latin America, as it "offers a clearer rejection of imperialism and colonialism" (Angel, 2016: 12).

Becker & Naumann (2015) explain energy justice as a continuation of environmental justice, a claim and movement originating in the US in the late 1970s.

Here, lawsuits were raised against the construction of a new toxic waste landfill in Houston in a neighbourhood predominantly occupied by people of colour. As with the entire debate around energy democracy, energy justice does not have one concise definition of the term. From the above-presented examples, however, we may take that there are those groups of people (f.e. ethnic minorities) that are disproportionately subject to injustice regarding energy production, distribution, and consumption. We can also find this notion in Szulecki and Overland's (2020) text, stating that energy justice critiques "injustices related to class, race, gender or spatial inequalities" (Szulecki & Overland, 2020: 3). This claim is further echoed by Becker and Naumann, as they reference both the National Agency for the Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP) as well as Honor the Earth, an association founded by Native Americans, in their attempt to define the term.

Both organizations describe the impact of unjust energy production and distribution as well as the consequences of climate change, placing their respective communities at a disadvantage. Following this line of thought, Becker and Naumann present energy justice as a social movement opposing this situation. Its actors are attempting to "democratize power production and create systemic change that advances environmental and social justice" (Honor the Earth, 2014, as cited in Becker & Naumann, 2015: 8). This injustice relates to issues of poverty and more specifically energy poverty as described above.

On the example of the UK, Becker and Naumann write that "justice is discussed here not so much in relation to locations of production, but as a counter-design to energy poverty and revolves around the question of access to energy supply" (Becker & Naumann, 2015: 8)[3]. Similarly, applied to Germany energy justice also functions as a counter term to energy poverty, in which the struggle for energy justice and its claims work as criticism of the current situation of widespread energy poverty.

From both of the above-presented concepts, we can take a wide variety of different claims and aims. Among them are a reduction of inequality, greater control over the energy system and its structure as well as climate and environmental protection. Despite not being synonymous with these social movements, energy democracy is very related to them and thus also mirrors many of their respective objectives. However, as the main concept of this research it is now required to bring these various aspects and claims together into a more coherent and applicable concept.

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[3] "Gerechtigkeit wird hier weniger in Bezug auf Standorte der Produktion diskutiert, sondern als Gegenentwurf zu Energiearmut und dreht sich dabei um die Frage des Zugangs zur Energieversorgung

3.3 Energy democracy

We finally want to come to the most relevant concept of this research – energy democracy. As previously explained in detail, ED has no one single, concise definition. Instead, the concept should be understood as "an archipelago" (Szulecki & Overland, 2020: 3), in which various approaches to the concept are connected, but do not form one coherent 'island'. Following this idea, Becker and Naumann (2017) write that ED should be understood as "an umbrella concept that encompasses various calls by social movements, critical think tanks, trade unions and political parties for more just, democratic and sustainable energy systems in different contexts" (Becker & Kunze, 2015:2).

As does much of the literature on ED, its main claims and components can be particularly well explained around the three dimensions contained within Sean Sweeney's (2013) discussion paper, written for the organisation Trade Unions for Energy Democracy. ED as a social movement is about resisting, reclaiming, and restructuring the current energy system.

> "[…] energy democracy can be built around three broad objectives, namely the need to resist the agenda of the fossil fuels corporations; the need to reclaim to the public sphere parts of the energy economy that have been privatized or marketized; and the need to restructure the global energy system in order to massively scale up renewable energy and other safe low–carbon options, implement energy conservation, and ensure job–creation and true sustainability" (Sweeney, 2013: ii).

Resisting describes the need of opposing the currently established energy system, which is dominated by a few major corporations and a centralized energy production using fossil fuels. With the rising global demand for energy, Sweeney describes a definite risk for an expansion of global fossil fuel usage. Particularly in times of crisis, this is not an unwarranted claim. In China alone, the construction of new coal plants will provide 6 times more capacity than the rest of the entire world combined (Myllyvirta et al, 2023: 2). And in Germany, 12 coal plants were reactivated in 2022 in order to save gas for the winter and avoid an energy shortage (Witsch & Stratmann, 2022). Authors like Chilvers and Palett (2018: 2), as well as Szulecki and Overland (2020), further support this notion, writing that ED and its related social movement organisations aim at "resisting the fossil-fuel dominant energy agenda" (Szulecki & Overland, 2020: 4). Resistance to the established structure of our energy system, however, may come in various forms. Sweeney alludes to measures such as policy resistance, like opposing continued privatization of the means of energy production or cutting subsidies on energy production through fossil fuels.

Another possible approach lies in the further development of carbon capture technologies or more renewables. (Sweeney, 2013: 33; Burke & Stephens, 2017: 37).

The increase in renewable energy production capacity is at the heart of ED. To Szulecki (2017) the central idea of energy democracy is "the decarbonization of the energy system and the increased deployment of renewable energy sources" (Szulecki, 2017: 2). Burke and Stephens too write that ED's goals include a transformation to energy coming exclusively from renewable energy production (Burke & Stephens, 2017: 37). But it is not solely about bigger renewable energy capacities. Instead, this transition is understood as "an opportunity to transform economic and governance systems" (Williams & Sovacool, 2020: 1234). One might justly ask – how? Through reclaiming the energy system.

Szulecki explains that renewables such as solar panels, wind turbines and biogas plants require fewer investments and can be placed in different locations compared to conventional means of energy production, like a coal plant for instance. Therefore, renewables and their deployment are more accessible to small-scale investors such as cooperatives, municipalities, and local communities (all of which are the prime institutions and agents of ED), thus decentralising the energy system (Becker & Naumann, 2017: 5). Instead of merely being energy consumers, these actors become "active prosumers of energy" (Szulecki, 2017: 2), both producing energy and consuming it. By doing so, they contribute to a system in which the ownership of and control over energy production is not centralized in a few major companies, but instead more dispersed between various diverse, democratically controlled actors, who are thus empowered. In his text with Overland, Szulecki further underlines this thought, stating that "the more we move to a renewable and distributed system, the more the energy sector is democratized" (Szulecki & Overland, 2020: 2). Becker and Naumann (2017) as well as Becker and Kunze (2015) both explain that through a decentralization of the energy system and dispersed ownership of the means of energy production may not only the usage of renewables be contributed to, but also a dispersion of both investment and (political) decision-making. Through such means, people have the ability to reclaim the energy sector. This is also how Sweeney and Angel understand the aspect of reclaiming, reversing privatization and transferring the means of energy production to entities such as cooperatives or municipal energy providers (Sweeney, 2013: 38; Angel, 2016: 15). In essence, this means that "a transfer of resources, capital and infrastructure from private hand to a democratically controlled public sector will need to occur" (Sweeney, 2013: ii). Importantly, Sweeney also raises the point that energy operations already owned by the public sector also need to be revaluated and their organisation adjusted to society's needs.

Lastly, this reclamation of the sector also requires a fundamental change in the system, leading to the final component of his assertions.

By reclaiming the energy system and moving resources to the public sector, energy regimes, institutions and their generally accepted premises are restructured fundamentally (Szulecki & Overland, 2020: 4). This process of transformation also applies to the global energy system as a whole, in which the movement and aim of ED, function as "a vehicle for a new set of values and a sense of purpose – values grounded in solidarity, sufficiency and sustainability" (Sweeney, 2013: 43). Sweeney claims that it is only through such a system, that modern day crises like climate change can be adequately addressed. According to him, restructuring the system translates to the establishment of not only the above-described values, but also of the creation of a new awareness for the relevance of renewables and a way of decentralized energy production (Sweeney, 2013: 43f.). Through a global restructuring, the system can better accommodate crucial components of ED's struggle, such as inclusion, social justice, democracy, and true sustainability (Burke & Stephens, 2017: 37).

These are some of the main claims of the ED social movement, but there are other relevant aspects I deem important to bring up.

Szulecki and Overland in particular raise a number of relevant thoughts to consider. They understand ED as a combination of both pragmatic and normative arguments. They further argue that energy democracy, besides the above-presented components, should be viewed from various perspectives.

Firstly, ED can be understood as a process, initiated, and carried out through international social movement organizations and grassroots initiatives to challenge the current structure of the energy system (Szulecki & Overland, 2020: 2). It is "both an ongoing process and a social movement driving the process forward" (Szulecki & Overland, 2020: 4). The most crucial element of this understanding of ED, is its current materiality. It already exists and its movement is already taking place. Szulecki and Overland understand this as proof of energy democracy and its practical enactment being inseparable, meaning that ED exists through active participation.

Secondly, ED may be understood as an outcome, resulting from continued decarbonisation and a more fragmented and democratic energy system and sector. The authors write that "in this line of thinking, the technological transition comes first, thereby enabling political and social change" (Szulecki & Overland, 2020: 5).

Literature referred to in the text claims that, through the usage of modern technologies in line with energy democracy's aims, changes in behaviour, perspective and opinion may indeed be supported.

Lastly, ED may also be understood as an aspirational goal, "a principle guiding policies and action towards a just and democratic energy system" (Szulecki & Overland, 2020: 5). In this notion, societal change is not caused by technological developments only, but a parallel political change caused through democratic engagement. Similar to the previous understandings it "emphasizes the politicization of energy governance as a means towards its democratization" (Szulecki & Overland, 2020: 5).

To summarize the so far made assertions concerning ED, I have provided a table found in Burke and Stephen's work on the issue. Along the three dimensions of resisting, reclaiming, and restructuring the energy sector they sort various intended outcomes of the respective dimension and thus provide a great overview of measures advocated for by energy democracy.

Goals for energy democracy	Intended outcomes
Resist the dominant energy agenda	• Fossil fuels remain in the ground. • Expansion of fossil fuel infrastructure and development of extreme forms of energy and extraction stops. • Land grabbing for large-scale renewables ceases. • Fossil fuel subsidies end. • Privatization and marketization of energy sector halts. • Undermining of climate protection stops. • The most dependent on fossil fuel industries protected, especially labor. • Public resources shift away from fossil fuels. • Public legitimacy of the fossil fuel industry is reduced. • New social alliances are created (e.g., unions, environmental groups, municipalities).
Reclaim the energy sector	• Energy corporations democratize and localize. • Social/public control of energy production and consumption normalizes. • Parts of the energy sector that have been privatized or marketized return to public control. • Principles of public interest within and democratic control over publicly-owned energy companies is restored. • New energy companies, ownership models and financial investment systems under social and public control develop.
Restructure the energy sector	• Energy sector moves away from the profit motive. • Energy access and assets are shared broadly and community wealth-building is supported. • Energy systems are governed as a commons. • Community power and capacity to control energy systems strengthen. • Emphasis shifts from growth to wellbeing, sufficiency and environmental quality. • Economic and political power is decentralized and distributed. • Capacity for energy planning increases. • Geopolitics of energy supports global cooperation and peace over competition and conflict. • Solidarity, inclusion and open, democratic participation advances. • Workers, low-income communities and communities of color hold central positions within energy systems. • An understanding of the energy sector as interdependent within the natural environment pervades.

(See Table 1, Burke & Stephens, 2017: 38)

There are two more components I want to emphasise now, both of which are particularly relevant to the research context presented in this thesis.

Firstly, the relevance of ED in the German context. Despite its similarity to other concepts such as energy justice, Weis, Becker and Naumann (2015) explain that it is "no coincidence, that in Germany it was not justice, but especially democracy that was chosen as slogan" (Weis, Becker & Naumann, 2015: 10)[4]. After all, energy cooperatives and so-called 'Stadtwerke', which are municipally owned energy providers, are very prevalent in Germany. Angel even describes Germany as inspiring, as "60 new non-profit municipally owned supply companies (Stadtwerke) were established between 2007 and 2012, with over 190 distribution grid concessions returning to municipal hands" (Angel, 2016: 15). This too applies to Leipzig, where the city is the lone shareholder in the Stadtwerke and where in 2008, the citizens of Leipzig rejected a proposal to sell a 49,9% share to a French energy company by a large majority ("Gescheiterte Privatisierung", 2008).

Weis, Becker and Naumann go on to assert that in Germany, the debate is particularly relevant due to the 'Energiewende', a widely used political term meaning as much as energy transition, and its specific manifestation and conduct. At the centre of this debate, they define questions of actors (the central cooperatives and municipal energy providers against big companies) and of the specific design of the energy infrastructure (centrally organized vs decentralised), further supporting ideas presented previously (Weis, Becker & Naumann, 2015: 12). This means that to the context in Germany and Leipzig, these issues (including their actors) are of fundamental importance to consider in this research.

The focus on actors in the creation of the local manifestation of ED's social movement as well as the related discourse construction are a central notion in this research. This idea is dealt with in depth by Chilvers and Palett (2018). They explain that the relation of the public, as both a field of contention and a pool of different actors, has become increasingly important to many aspects of the energy sector, including corporate strategy, government policy, research, and social movements. However, they criticize that too often, 'the public' and its actions, are understood as "highly specific, pre-given, external, naturally occurring categories" (Chilvers & Palett, 2018: 2). Instead, they argue for a relational perspective grounded in constructivism which "views forms of participatory democracy and publics as being co-produced, constructed, emergent through the performance of collective practice" (Chilvers & Palett, 2018: 3), as this way closer attention may be given to power relations and practices of exclusion, politics, and materiality.

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[4] „ist es kein Zufall, dass in Deutschland nicht Gerechtigkeit, sondern vor allem Demokratie als Slogan gewählt wurde" (Weis, Becker & Naumann, 2015: 10)

All these aspects are detrimentally important when wanting to analyse discourse, as they are inherently related to it. In their understanding, not only is there multiple publics surrounding ED, but these are actively constructed by the actors within and outside of them. They are not fixed categories, but instead depend on their actors, the environment, and other factors from which they cannot be separated. Research set in this context needs to consider the specific role played by institutions and other actors, in the construction of ED publics, as they are "continually being made, constructed, and remade through the performance of socio-material practices" (Chilvers & Palett, 2018: 6). In order to analyse these processes, the authors promote research that "explore[s] how instances of energy democracy and energy public mobilization are constructed and get made" (Chilvers & Palett, 2018: 9) as well as how the various actors, may they be humans or not, influence these processes. The analysis of documents is one way to do so, providing insights into, for instance, the various means utilised by these actors. That is exactly what I aimed to do in this research, providing further justification. To be enabled to do so properly, now want to come to the last big theoretical concept relevant – discourse and multimodality.

3.3 Multimodality, social semiotics, and the concept of discourse

Having now established both social movements as well as ED and its related terms, I want to come to the last part of my theory section. As I conducted a multimodal discourse analysis for this research, both the notion of discourse as well as multimodality need to be explained. As a very extensive concept, I can only provide a brief but for this context sufficient description of discourse, before providing insights into the related paradigm of multimodality. My specific actions will be dealt with in the method section.

Crucial to the concept of discourse, is the French philosopher Michel Foucault. According to Bryman, Foucault understood discourse as a set of linguistic categories relating to a certain object. How that object is depicted in turn frames the comprehension of it (Bryman, 2016: 528). Discourse forms a version of the object, which then constitutes the object itself. It is thus much more than mere language: it is a constituent of the social world, as it produces images or versions of the numerous aspects of the social world, and thus of society as whole.

Social systems are constructed through the assignment of knowledge and meaning. Foucault (2002) understood discourse as the producer of both, thus creating the specific social system. He claimed that discourse had a material effect: it constitutes and produces practices which systematically form the objects they communicate about.

Discourse then can be understood as a way of organizing knowledge that constructs the social world, through a collective understanding of discursive logics. As discourse is the structuring force of a social world, Foucault argued that it must be understood as related to the broader historical and social context in which it is constructed. To him, it is intertwined with the social order and the distribution of power. These power relations establish a priori rules and criteria for legitimating knowledge and truth in the discourse structure, influencing the ongoing production of meaning. Through repetition in society, the rules of discourse adjust meanings to the political rationality that governs its production. However, political intentions and the ability to adjust meaning are masked under the perceived universality, objectiveness, and stability of discourse (Foucault, 2002).

Stephen Gill (1995) describes Foucault's concept of discourse as a "set of ideas and practices with particular conditions of existence, which are more or less institutionalized, but which may only be partially understood by those that they encompass" (Gill, 1995: 402). This again refers to the previous assertions concerning both power relations and the masking of the ongoing meaning and knowledge assignment and legitimation processes.

Rosalind Gill (2000) distinguished distinct characteristics of discourse, which she defines as a way of constituting a particular view of social reality (Gill, 2000: 176). She claims that discourse is a topic, a focus of inquiry, as opposed to being a mean of accessing and understanding social reality. Additionally, she regards discourse as a form of action: language is a mean of achieving goals, such as presenting a certain object in a desirable light or winning an argument. Lastly, she claims that discourse is rhetorically organized and concerned with "establishing one version of the world in the face of competing versions" (Gill, 2000: 176).

In the process of discourse assigning particular meaning to spoken and written words, other meanings and interpretations of these words are excluded. In every society, the production of discourse is controlled by certain procedures. This is accomplished through discourse commentaries - statements that continuously reaffirm the meanings created by discourse without disrupting it. Through this reiterative process, discourse both homogenizes and normalizes. In this sense, discourse is constituted of language, belief, and action patterns that circulate ideas and distribute power (Johnstone, 2018). By pre-determining the criteria for statements to become regarded as knowledge, discourse constructs social reality. Thus, discourse can be a powerful tool for controlling.

It regards everything that does not correspond with the definite, assigned truth, as deviant, and it enforces these rules through its various practices which are governed by power relations. Therefore, it is imperative to analyse discourse and its effects reflectively, as to recognize how a dominant discourse may oppress or exclude marginalized discourses. Or how a discourse may try to destabilize fixed meanings that are accepted as universal truths in society. (Johnstone, 2018). But how do we analyse something as vague, underlying, and complex as discourse?

In social sciences, discourse is usually considered a communicative action in the language medium that creates meaning (Johnstone, 2018). Importantly though, discourse is not limited to the language medium: it can be constructed through other modes, such as visual, audio, and material means. Examples include architecture, music, photography, but also social action. This diversity of modes requires a multimodal approach to analysing discourse, to which I will come to shortly. Generally, though, discourse analysis "emphasizes the way versions of the world, of society, events and inner psychological worlds are produced in discourse" (Potter, 1997: 146). Critical discourse analysis is influenced by Foucault's work that connects language and its modes of use to the importance and distribution of power and social difference in society:

> "We define a discourse as an interrelated set of texts, and the practices of their production, dissemination, and reception, that bring an object into being. In other words, social reality is produced and made real through discourses, and social interactions cannot be fully understood without reference to the discourses that give them meaning. As discourse analysts, then, our task is to explore the relationship between discourse and reality." (Phillips and Hardy, 2002: 3)

Critical discourse analysis focuses on the role of language in society and political processes. It considers language as a form of social practice that is used to legitimize, maintain, and naturalize social power, controlling the ideas and values that create our society (Bouvier & Machin, 2018). The language and discourse produced by any kind of institution or actor is done consciously, reflecting the interests and aims of those in power, as it manufactures a universal consent that those interests are, in fact, common sense.

In other words, analysing discourse provides insight into the way certain actors have the power over shaping discourse that builds ideas and values, and essentially defines our reality. In this research, I will analyse a variety of actors that are involved in constructing the affirmative local discourse concerning energy democracy and the thus connected social reality, by examining the various modes these discourses are constituted of. Followingly, it is also important to introduce the concept of social semiotics, as our understanding of discourse is based on it.

Social Semiotics

Social semiotics as a concept deal with processes of meaning-making and the actors engaged in it. It thematises the different modes of communication produced and used by actors to present and convey their understanding of their reality as well as its respective power relations to others (Bezemer & Jewitt, 2009: 1). First described by Michael Halliday (1978) in his book Language as social semiotic, he understands language as a result of the social processes of the ongoing interactive meaning exchange that individuals engage in with one another.The construction of a reality, which Halliday also calls culture, cannot be understood without the semantic system (the language) through which it is constituted. If we understand language as a social semiotic, it thus means interpreting it under consideration of the specific social and cultural environment and context, in which the culture itself is interpreted through the application of semiotic terms (Halliday, 1978: 2). Halliday also writes:

> "Language does not consist of sentences; it consists of text, or discourse - the exchange of meanings in interpersonal context of one kind or another. The contexts in which meanings are exchanged are not devoid of social value; a context of speech is itself a semiotic structure, having a form (deriving from the culture) that enables participants to predict features of the prevailing register - and hence to understand one another as they go along." (Halliday, 1978: 2)

Their awareness of the rules of a language as well as the culture it constitutes are imperative in this understanding. It allows actors to successfully transmit a specific message. In their interaction though, they do more than merely convey information. They also exchange meaning. Through these exact actions actors recognize, maintain, and reproduce their position in the respective social structure while at the same time imparting their system of shared knowledge and values (Halliday, 1978: 2).

In summary, language not only communicates the social system but serves as an imminent manifestation of it. As it "plays a part in determining what we say; and what we say plays a part in determining the context" (Halliday, 1978: 3), the specific context and environment are of huge importance. These basic assumptions are crucial to the concept of multimodal discourse analysis. Language is a social system that emerges from inter-actor exchanges of meaning (and thus discourse), structuring the reality of those engaged in it by both containing rules itself and by providing to the construction of a variant of reality - a culture - with different availabilities to access, usage, understanding and subsequently power.

Together with Gunther Kress, Theo van Leuween (2005) played a vital role in the development of social semiotics and multimodality. He describes a number of core terms for social semiotics, which matter hugely for later assertions on multimodality and MMDA.

Core Term	Explanation
Semiotic resources	Semiotic resources (or modes) describe "the actions, materials and artefacts we use for communicative purposes, whether produced physiologically (...) or technologically (...)" (Van Leeuwen, 2005: 285). It is through these semiotic resources that meaning can be expressed. They are particularly relevant to my conducted MMDA.
Semiotic function	To Van Leeuwen, Semiotic function is the function one aspect of a text, for instance a sentence or a word in a sentence, may fulfil (Van Leeuwen, 2005).
Semiotic regime	A semiotic regime describes the particular ways in which a context structures the usage of semiotic resources. In contexts such as political competition for instance, parties with a long history and many members can be perceived as credible. This influences how they may apply various modes or their capacity of exerting influence through them (Van Leeuwen, 2005).
Connotation	With Connotation, Van Leeuwen means the import of a semiotic resource from its usual context into a different one (a process which is also called resemiotization), thus charging it with a specific value or idea. Revenue numbers of energy companies may be a sign of success in a company intern presentation, but they may also be used to criticise the companies when put on a banner in a public demonstration.
Style	Style describes how "a semiotic artefact is produced, or a semiotic event performed, as contrasted with the discourse and genre it realizes" (Van Leeuwen, 2005: 287). It can convey very diverse meanings, such as the personal style of the person involved in a communicative event. Composition is important to so-called "space-based texts and semiotic artefacts" (van Leeuwen, 2005: 274), which may be written language texts, for instance. It also contains three components: information value, framing and salience (Van Leeuwen, 2005).
Affordance	Affordance, as understood by van Leeuwen in relation to Gibson, illustrates the possible ways of utilising an object, which is also based on how it is perceived to be. The properties of the object depend on the one observing it as well as the subjective intentions and needs of the actor in question. For instance, an advertisement for a cooperative representing the ED movement may be attributed great affordance in communicating the message and gaining traction for the cause at hand.
Linking	Linking the way in which information in its different forms is linked to one another, for instance in hypertext. Two key components of linking are extension (an item of information adds to the prior one) and elaboration (the item of information holds the same information as the previous one) (van Leeuwen, 2005).
Composition	Composition is important to so-called "space-based texts and semiotic artefacts" (van Leeuwen, 2005: 274), which may be written language texts, for instance. It also contains three components: information value, framing and salience (Van Leeuwen, 2005).

(Graph 1 – 'Core Terms of Social Semiotics')

Having now presented all these terms, it is time to come to the next important aspect of this research - multimodality.

Multimodality and Resemiotization

Stemming from the works of Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen, multimodality is a concept developed to recognize the growing diversification and relevance of different semiotic resources (or modes) other than language, which may be utilised in a text (Iedema, 2003). After all, language is only a component of the entirety of diverse meaning making practices that can be used (Kress, 2011: 37).

I want to emphasize that by 'text' I do not mean a set of written language, consisting of words and sentences. Instead, I understand text as "the material site of emergence of immaterial discourses" (Kress, 2011: 36). In this research, text may for instance come in website landing pages, flyers, or promotional videos. These texts can include a wide array of different modes, thus requiring a multimodal understanding and lens.

Iedema considers a multimodal understanding of meaning making as grounded in two preliminary notions. Firstly, the decentralization of language as the primary mean of constructing and representing meaning, as I have described it above. Secondly, the suspension of established customs concerning the roles afforded to the various available modes.

Referring to Kress and Van Leeuwen, Iedema argues that previously existing boundaries are increasingly reduced due to the ongoing diversification of our world, for instance through multiculturality, globalization or overall technological progress. As established already, our semiotic practices are entrenched in and in turn also impact social and cultural dimensions. So, if these become more diverse and barriers more penetrable, so do our semiotic practices, enabling a reassertion and redefinition of practices and thus a greater variety of utilizable modes (Iedema, 2003: 33-35).

These numerous modes are increasingly heterogeneous and can include, other than written and spoken language, music and videos, images, but also colour, gestures, architecture, and others. Crucially, to multimodality, these different modes do not act as separate entities, as they "integrate across sensory modalities (e.g., visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory, gustatory, kinesthetic) in multimodal texts" (O'Halloran, 2011: 2). In other words, they are not just present besides each other, but instead fulfil their specific semiotic function as an integrated accumulation in the form of a multimodal text.

This interaction of different modes, a process also called intersemiosis, is central to multimodality (O'Halloran, 2011: 2). Previous conceptualizations considered modes to exist in a hierarchy, in which each took over specialized tasks.

Instead, Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001) advocated that, to better represent contemporary semiotic practices, a new approach was required (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001: 2). They dropped the idea of modes existing in hierarchies and argued that "common semiotic principles operate in and across different modes, and in which it is therefore quite possible for music to encode action, or images to encode emotion" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001: 2). Although some modes may be used more extensively depending on the text and practice, no one mode is given "a priori privilege" (Iedema, 2003: 40).

Followingly, the concept of multimodality will be applied to notions of discourse analysis, making multimodal discourse analysis this thesis's method.

It is here were I want to end the theoretical assertions concerning the concepts utilised in this research. In summary, this research aims at analysing the various modes utilised by a set of diverse local actors in Leipzig to generate or contribute to an affirmative discourse of the energy democracy social movement. But how did I gain the data to answer this question? How did I choose the actors in question? And how did I conduct the multimodal discourse analysis? These questions will be dealt with in the next section of this thesis.

4. Methods and methodology

Having established the theoretical concepts relevant to my research, I now want to provide a detailed account of the methodology applied in the process. To begin with, I will introduce the applied notions of epistemology and ontology as well as my research criteria and research strategy, after which I will go into the data collection and sampling process. I will then continue by describing the various actors chosen for my analysis, which also enables me to explain my selection process. Afterwards I wil provide a methodological overview of how I conducted my multimodal discourse analysis. Finally, I will also explain the ethical considerations undertaken as part of my research process.

4.1 Epistemology and Ontology

To begin with, it is important to explain the epistemological and ontological approaches applied in this research. Epistemology concerns the question of what knowledge is and how a researcher is enabled to uncover it, thus knowing about things (della Porta & Keating, 2008: 22; Alharahshesh & Pius, 2020: 40). In other words, it is about "a certain understanding of what is entailed in knowing, that represents how we know what we know" (Al-Ababneh, 2020: 78).

Epistemology also concerns the question as to whether principles and concepts prevalent in natural sciences, like notions relating to the role of evidence or logic, can be applied in studying phenomena occuring in the social world (della Porta & Keating, 2008: 22; Bryman, 2012: 27).

The epistemological perspective of positivism considers reality as independent from social actors, thus making it observable and measurable through senses and scientific measures. Della Porta and Keating write that to positivist, "the world exists as an objective entity, outside of the mind of the observer, and in principle […] knowable in its entirety" (della Porta & Keating, 2008: 22). Positivism promotes research being objective, an aim made achievable through the perceived seperation of the research object, a phenomenon in a social reality, and the researcher (della Porta & Keatin, 2008: 23; Bryman, 2012: 27f.). Positivism places further emphasis on the role of the senses, as "only phenomena and hence knowledge confirmed by senses can genuinly be warranted as knowledge" (Bryman, 2012: 28). It is through these senses that positivists confirm or disprove hypotheses they generate through theory, ultimately leading research to provide facts that enable the researcher to generate law like explanations for phenomena (Bryman, 2012: 28).

The related epistemology of realism shares some of positivisms' sentiments, also assuming reality to exist outside of human interaction and thought as well as its 'measurability' through an approach similar to natural sciences (Bryman, 2012: 28; Al-Ababneh, 2020: 81).

Although a valid theoretical approach, positivism and realism are not fitting epistemological approaches to my research. The text by Chilvers and Palett (2018), utilised in my theory section, provides a fitting clue as to why. They criticised that publics of ED were too often considered a fixed, external and pre-given category. These publics, and their respective discourses, are nothing other than forms of social reality. Following a positivist or realist approach would translate to understanding these realities as external, separate from actors and independent from their action. This idea is fundamentally opposed to notions of discourse, which considers meaning and social reality as being constructed, through the inter-actor negotiation and assignment process of meaning to social practices as well as their undertaking. It also places heavy emphasis on the context of action and meaning, which is disregarded in positivism. Further, Chilvers and Palett also argue for this understanding, claiming publics surrounding ED to be continuously (re)constructed by engagement between actors. A perspective mirroring these notions is thus required.

Therefore, the epistemological approach taken here is particularly oriented towards interpretivism. Opposing positivist notions, interpretivism is centered around "the view that a strategy is required that respects the differences between people and the objects of the natural sciences and therefore requires the social scientist to grasp the subjective meaning of social action" (Bryman, 2016, p. 30). Interpretivists understand this subjective meaning as crucial to knowledge. Humans assign meaning to their practices and actions. The meaning we assign to a task may in turn motivate us. A researcher then needs to find out about the subjective meaning attribution instead of applying external universal laws, as stated by positivism (della Porta & Keating, 2008: 24).

As is central to my understanding of discourse, interpretivism places extensive emphasis on the context, particularly in relation to the respective actors. After all, only through context can we understand subjective meaning (Alharahshesh & Pius, 2020: 41). Wilson (2002) further underlines the interpretivist concept of applying different measures in social sciences compared to natural sciences. Humans and their interaction are the primary research objects in social sciences, but are "themselves interpreting the social world that we, as scientists, also wish to interpret" (Wilson, 2002: 2). Therefore, I need to exercise the same practices applied by them in order to understand how people make sense of their reality and thus create discourses

Interpretivism sufficiently takes into account context, subjectivity and differences, thus increasing sensitivity to individually ascribed meaning. This way, I as a researcher am enabled to gain enriched insights into the object of research (Alharahshesh & Pius, 2020: 41-42).

Of course, ontological perspectives also had to be recongized when conducting this research. Ontology questions what exactly we may find out about and thus generate knowledge of. In essence, it concerns the nature and form of the phenomena or entities that we investigate in our research (Bryman, 2016: 32; Aliyu et al.,2015: 13f.). It also deals with the question as to whether these (social) entities "have a reality external to social actors, or whether they can and should be considered social constructions built up from the perceptions and actions of social actors" (Bryman, 2016; 32). Objectivism proclaims the former, considering meaning and the thus created social reality independent from actors operating within it. As with positivism, this idea is fundamentally opposed to notions of discourse and discourse construction, as well as the conceptions presented by Chilvers and Palett concerning energy democracy publics. Constructionism on the other hand thus becomes a plausible choice for this research's ontology.

Constructionism considers meaning, and thus social realities, as being emergent or constructed from the interaction of actors. Realities are not external entities, but instead come into being because of the meaning negotiation process of different actors – like humans (Al-Ababneh, 2020: 79). In constructionism, reality can not be observed and subsequently known directly, as it is understood by positivists. Instead, it must be observed through the meaning construction and assignment by actors and individuals (Young & Colling, 2003: 375). Constructivism is focused "on the meaning making and construction of the social and psychological worlds through individual, cognitive processes" (Young & Collin, 2003: 375). The role of the researcher in this process is also taken into account, as it is also a researcher's particular interpretation and variant of the constructed reality.

In summary, this research follows an interpretivist and constructionist approach. These concepts are applicable due to several reasons. Discourse is the interactive assignment of meaning and thus also the creation of a specific version of social reality, containing rules, conventions and power relations. It comes into being due to the interaction and negotiation process of various actors. If we intend to understand it as such, we also have to perceive social reality as being co-constructed and analysable. Constructionism, therefore, is the appropriate ontology.

4.2. Research strategy and research criteria

Basing my approach on the previously expressed considerations, I applied an inductive qualitative research strategy in this thesis. Qualitative research aims at examining meaning making processes. This includes questions of its attribution, the involed actors, as well as the context and environment. Instead of aiming to uncover lawlike causal explanations, qualitative research emphasises knowledge about and understanding of human nature (della Porta & Keating, 2008: 26). This can be achieved through "a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018: 43). Another key goal of qualitative research lies in understanding "the motivations that lie behind human behaviour, a matter that cannot be reduced to any predefined element but must be placed within a cultural perspective" (della Porta & Keating, 2008: 26). Crucially, these phenomena and the meaning attributed to them by people, are studied in their respective context in qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018: 43). This aligns very well with conceptualisations of discourse and its study.

Bryman names three key components of qualitative research. To begin with, it often adheres to an interpretivist epistemological position, in which the the emphasis lies on "the understanding of the social world through an examination of the interpretation of that world by participants" (Bryman, 2016: 380). Further, qualitative research also adheres to a constructionist ontological logic. This implies that social entities are an outcome of the interaction of various social actors. This illustrates that my preliminary conceptions align well with my selected research strategy, as I focus on the collaboratively constructed discourses surrounding ED, which are rooted in subjective interpretations of information and its meaning. Lastly, Bryman also explains how qualitative research regularly works in an inductive fashion, meaning that theory is generated out of the conducted research (Bryman, 2016).

It is important to mention that my research is in part deductive, as I base my primary conceptions on previous research and theory. Nevertheless, I subsequently conducted a multimodal discourse analysis in which the primary focus was on the multimodal text, with its images, videos and other modes contained in it. These findings were then interpreted with the aim of generating some form of generalization concerning the discourse construction around ED and its representation through the respective actor. These analyses and more generalised notions thus inductively emerge from my data. In order to form these generalizations, I have gathered a wide range of data and it is this exact process and the data that I want to elaborate on in the following part of my thesis. Also, thus generated results only have limited generalisability. After all, discourse and its analysis are very context-specific, limiting my results.

To be able to generate them in the first place I have gathered and analysed a range of data, stemming from diverse actors that are involved in ED and its representation. My data selection process will be presented shortly.

However, before doing so I want to present a variety of research criteria applied in this thesis in order to guarantee the research's quality. These assertions are based on conceptualisations of Ines Steinke (2004), who explained their importance and formulated a variety of criteria. According to her, these criteria are imperative to a research as they ensure its quality and enable avoiding randonmess and subsequent issues of credibility. While typically quantitative criteria like validity or objectivity have their relevance, she states that qualitative research requires criteria different from those applied in quantitative studies (Steinke, 2004: 185f.).

One criterion she formulated is a concise indication of the research process. Contained in it are components such as the utilised methods, evaluation criteria in regards to the aim of the research, and the appropriateness of applied procedures. Concerning my research and particularly multimodal discourse analysis, this indication is of great importance (Steinke, 2004: 188f.). To this point, the theoretical considerations and concepts have been explained extensively. This section of the thesis further adds to the indication by providing in-depth information on the methods used, the underlying perspectives as well as the choice of actors. In connection, the chosen theory and methodology are highly appropriate to answer my research question.

Another criterion named is intersubjective comprehensibility. A clear indication of the research process, as presented above, enables this. By exact documentation of the research process, used methods and context, other researchers are enabled to follow my argumentation and can comprehend the made choices. Steinke writes that "it is essential to give explicit information and detailed documentaion about the steps in the analysis" (Steinke, 2004: 188). This section in particular enables this comprehensibility as it contains much of the relevant information.

Two additional criteria were considered in this research. I argue that both have to be taken into account in connection, as they are highly related to one another. The first one are considerations concerning the limitations of the research. Steinke writes that this criterion questions the extend of generalisability of the research findings and thus their application outside of the specific research context (Steinke, 2004: 189). As stated previously already, my findings are very context and locality specific, particularly because discourse has to be analysed and understood in its specific context. My findings thus need to be seen in a Westerm European and German context. Nevertheless, I can contribute to the research surrounding discourse on ED and provide findings that enable a better understanding of the social movement on a local and global scale. The limitations of my research have been discussed previously and will be further mentioned in the course of the paper, particularly in the next section on my choice data and actors.

The last criterion taken into consideration, referred to as reflected subectivity, deals with the connection between researcher and research object. For instance, how has the researcher reflected on emotions or personal biases during the research process? Have these been indicated? As I conducted a qualitative research based on an interpretation of data, complete objectivity cannot be ensured. However, the personal components contained in my interpretation are, in part, providing further depth to my findings.

Further, throughout my research process I have continously reflected upon these issues, thus ensuring a sufficient and necessary degree of reflected subjectivity. This will be dealt with again in the chapter on ethical considerations.

Having explained epistemology and ontology as well as my research strategy and criteria, I now want to come to my method of data collection and choice of actors, before explaining my analysis process in the form of a multimodal discourse analysis.

4.3 Empirical data, collection process and choice of actors

In order to illustrate how various actors generate and shape the affirmative discourse surrounding ED in Leipzig, I have collected an array of different but all publicy accessible forms of data. Through the analysis of the multimodal texts I could illustrate the various modes and practices applied by these actors in their construction of the discourse. Before coming to the specific actors and forms of data, I want to acknowledge that both the actors as well as their data examples have been selected consciously. This has two implications: firstly, these are only a selection of actors, not the entire range of them. The results of my research are thus limited to these actors. Secondly, my data too is only a selection. Limitations apply here as well. As this has been a conscious selection, both academic and personal biases could have been applied despite the described reflection process. However, I still claim to have compiled an interesting and diverse set of actors and their respective data, helping to showcase how these differing actors apply equally differing practices – thus creating varying discourse surrounding ED in Leipzig.

To begin with, I will now elaborate on the process of data collection.

Purposive data collection

As stated previously, the data analysed in this research was selected for the purpose of answering my research question. Bryman describes this process as purposive data collection, in which data is collected according to a strategy and criteria that are centred around the notion of contributing to the research question. As also stated already, this way of collecting data has its limitations, constraining the researcher from a broader generalization of the findings outside of the specific context. If applied in the research process, it is particulary crucial for the researcher to clearly define the criteria according to which data has been collected and selected (Bryman, 2012: 416-424).

Before continuing, I want to repeat the problem formulation of this research: How do different local, energy democracy-endorsing actors promote ED and shape the (local) discourse surrounding the issue?

The data collected stemmed from four specific, differing, actors that operate in the local context of Leipzig which distinctly relate to ED and its social movement. As parties opposing ED would like not refer to it in their material, I have chosen to only analyse those actors that are affirmative of the movement in one way or another. These are obviously not all actors in the local environment, thus limiting my findings to the selected actors and the local context, only allowing a degree of generalization. Nevertheless, it enables me to illustrate a diverse set of discoursive practices applied by these actors.

The data collected from these actors was only considered if it was publicly available. By this, I refer to data that could be accessed online or in person without any limitations, like group memberships, passwords etc. After all, I intended to illustrate how these actors shape the local discourse, swaying public opinion and conveying their message. If the publics were the aim of their material, this material needs to be accessible to these publics. Further, I chose to only take into account material from the time frame of 2017-2023. This time frame has been selected due to the following considerations: issues of energy production, distribution and sustainability have gained particular traction in the past couple of years, a process further accelerated since 2022. Szulecki & Overland (2020) even illustrate that much of the academic literature on ED has been published since 2017, marking its increasing relevance for both in- and outside of the academic context. ED has gained further importance due to the increasing effects of climate change in recent years, like droughts, floodings and more, the looming energy crisis in Europe following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, as well as the measures taken by actors like the municipality of Leipzig in order to deal with these developments. Therefore, I argue that a lot of actors dealing with ED might have produced material on ED in the named time frame, thus making it particularly interesting to analyse.

Not all of the collected data can be analysed here, due to spatial limitations. Therefore, I have chosen samples of data that particularly illustrate the discourse at hand as well the measures applied by the actor in their construction of it. They serve to exemplify these strategies as well as the related discourses. This again limits the generalisability of my findings but nevertheless allows me to paint an interesting picture of the diverse strategies applied in forming varying narratives around ED.

I now want to come to the specific actors and the reasons for their selection.

Choice of actors

To illustrate the diversity of actors and created discourses, I aimed at choosing actors that differed substantially. Although this could have an influence on their comparability, it enabled me to depict the various approaches and strategies utilized in the shaping of an affirmative discourse surrounding ED by these local actors. The chosen actors are: a thinktank, organised as an association (Konzeptwerk Neue Ökonomie e.V.), a cooperative (Leipziger Energiegenossenschaften EGL eG), the municipal energy provider (Leipziger Stadtwerke) and a political party (Die Linke). To better visualize these actors I generated the graph underneath, illustrating their organisation.

(Graph 2 – 'Selection of Local Actors')

My consciously undertaken selection contains a wide variety of very different actors. They were chosen because they differed in size concerning the number of employees or members, their organisations form and their way or working, all of which has consequences regarding their reach and the generated discourse. What unifies these actors is that they all, somehow, relate to ED and approve of it, making them all social movement organisations of varying kind and thus their discourses somewhat comparable. While for two of these actors, their engagement with the topic is limited to a promotion of ED, the other two can also be considered as direct manifestations of the social movement, which is very relevant to their discourses. This also alludes to ED being both a process and an outcome in itself as described in my theory.

Further reasons for their selection included aspects such as their capacity for exerting or experiencing democratic control. After all, this is of great relevance when wanting to understand how these actors generate discourses on ED, which very much proclaims the necessity and quality of democratic control. Further, considerations were made concerning their addressed publics and thus target group. As I wanted to depict diversity in possible approaches and discourses, actors addressing different publics had to be chosen as they would likely apply differing practices for differing purposes.

I also want to mention to possible actors not selected. Firstly, unions are an important component in the ED discourse. A perspective from worker's representation could thus be very fruitful and interesting for a research. However, following an initial review I did not find sufficient material dealing with ED for this actor. This is not too surprising, as the daily 'bread and butter' of many unions in Germany is not centered around energy democracy. Secondly, I considered an environmental protection association. Their perspective with a likely focus on ED's environmental protection claims could also have provided interesting insights. Although they contained notions of ED in their material, my findings here too were very limited. Therefore, I chose not to include them in my selection.

A brief description of my selected actors is provided followingly:

Actor	Description
Konzeptwerke Neue Ökonomie e.V.	Konzeptwerke Neue Ökonomie e.V. is an independently working, non-profit association and think tank, operating in Leipzig since 2011. The association considers the current economy as unstable and undemocratic, resulting in widespread poverty, injustice as well as the destruction of the environment. Therefore, it advocates for a "social-ecological transformation" ("Das Konzeptwerk", n.d.), understanding itself as part of a bigger movement promoting this goal. The association focuses on conducting projects with other social movement organisations, education of minors and others, consultation, and the publication of academic texts on various topics such as degrowth, strategies for a car free city as well as socially just forms of taxation, living space distribution, or energy prices.
Leipziger Energiegenossenschaften EGL eG	Leipziger Energiegenossenschaften EGL eG is an energy financing, production, and provision cooperative in Leipzig, with approximately 200 members. Through buying shares (at least 2 for a total cost 100€), members finance the collective construction and operation of energy production means, for instance solar panels. The generated energy is sold locally, and the generated revenue returned to the cooperatives members. Members, who need to be of legal age, receive the right to vote in the cooperatives' general assembly and can take over further roles in the cooperative. The cooperative, which also provides gas, is a member of the nationally working Bürgerwerke eG, a cooperative consisting of many smaller, local energy cooperatives ("Energiewende in Bürgerhand?!", n.d.)

Leipziger Stadtwerke GmbH	The Leipziger Stadtwerke GmbH is the municipal energy provider (for electricity, gas, and heat) of the city of Leipzig, operating in its current form since 1992. Since 1997 it is part of the Leipziger Versorgungs- und Verkehrsgesellschaft GmbH, which is a holding group managing the areas of energy, mobility, and water management. The holding is 100% owned by the city of Leipzig, making it the lone shareholder. In 2008, the citizens of Leipzig rejected a proposal to sell the company to a private investor. As a municipally owned company focused on the provision of essential public services to citizens, the Leipziger Stadtwerke is not profit-oriented as such, but operates to finance itself and its own growth. In 2021, the revenue was at 71,2 mio €, while the company invested about 154,1 mio €. According to their own materials, the Stadtwerke also emphasise climate protection and sustainability, investing in renewables and innovative energy management concepts. In 2021, the company had 707 employees (Stadtwerke Leipzig GmbH, 2022)
Die Linke. Stadtverband Leipzig	Die Linke. Stadtverband Leipzig is the local grouping of the nationally acting party 'Die Linke'. The party was formed in 2007 and has its roots in both the social democratic party as well as the socialist unity party, the ruling party of the GDR. It understands itself as a socialist party, with its members considering themselves democratic socialists. Its main topics are social justice, worker's rights, NATO scepticism and demilitarisation. Particularly prevalent in former East Germany, the party had a total of 54.214 members in 2022, 6559 of which lived in Saxony. In the 2021 national elections, 'Die Linke' scored 4,9% of the votes, thus technically not qualifying for parliament were it not for gaining three direct mandates, one of which in Leipzig. In the 2019 municipal elections, the party gained a total of 21,4% of the votes, making it the biggest party. As such, the party currently holds 17 of 70 city council seats ("Die Partei DIE LINKE", n.d.)

Graph 3 – 'Description of selected Actors')

Data Overview and selection

The analysed data in this thesis is only a selection of the diverse sets of data available from each actor. To better illustrate and justify my selection, I have provided an overview of the data referring to ED I found for each actor underneath. Importantly, the data I finally analysed was also chosen with specific considerations in mind. Firstly, I wanted to select diverse data, meaning one that came from different platforms or channels, as I suspected different affordances to communicate and generate a discourse. Therefore, non of the data came in the same form. While one piece was a promotional video from a website, other data came in the form of a website landing page, a company published magazine article and lastly an advisory and imaginative brochure. Although this could pose problems of comparability, it nevertheless depicts a great diversity of possible approach. Secondly, data was also chosen for its richness in content. While some pieces of data contained information on ED, others like the chosen ones simply contained more of it. Lastly, data was also chosen regarding spatial availabilities. While analysing another video would have been great, I simply did not have the time and space here.

Actor	Data	
Konzeptwerke Neue Ökonomie e.V.	- Websites and homepages (x5) - Videos on various platforms (x2) - Publications in the form of discussion papers, consultations, and academic papers (x3)	
Leipziger Energiegenossenschaften EGL eG	- Websites and homepages (x2) - Videos on various platforms (x4) - Flyers and information sheets (x2) - Radio interview (x1)	
Leipziger Stadtwerke GmbH	- Websites and homepages (x2) - Videos on various platforms (x1) - Publications in the form of a magazine (x1) - Flyers and information sheets (x2)	
Die Linke. Stadtverband Leipzig	- Websites and homepages (x4) - Instagram Posts (x2) - Publications in the form of a magazine (x1) - Interviews (x1) - Social Media 'Sharepics' (x4)	

(Graph 4 – 'Overview of the found Data')

Importantly, my analysis only makes use of the English translation of the phrases, to enable a better flow of reading. A transcript for all pieces of data can be found in the thesis's appendix.

4.4 Multimodal discourse analysis

Followingly, I want to apply multimodality to discourse analysis, introducing my method of multimodal discourse analysis (MMDA). Subsequently, I will provide more information on the analysis of the modes prevalent in my data.

To O'Halloran (2011), multimodal discourse analysis can be understood as "an emerging paradigm in discourse studies which extends the study of language per se to the study of language in combination with other resources" (O'Halloran, 2011: 1). Kress understands that MMDA aims to "provide insights into the relation of the meaning of a community and its semiotic manifestations" (Kress, 2011: 37). These semiotic manifestations appear in the form of the different modes through which a discourse is expressed in a text. Consequently, Kress writes that the entirety of a text's meaning can be made visible through an analysis of all the involved modes. (Kress, 2011: 37). By involving new, numerous modes, the semantic field to be analysed becomes more and more complex. As the means through which meaning is expressed are expanded as well as the context changed, another crucial process has to be taken into consideration in multimodal discourse analysis - resemiotization.

As explained previously, whenever meaning making practices occur and discourses are present, the context is of utmost relevance to consider. However, context and practices may change, which is the essence of resemiotization. Iedema writes, that it deals with "how meaning making shifts from context to context, from practice to practice, or from one stage of a practice to the next" (Iedema, 2003: 41).To put it different, resemiotization is a process in which a text is separated from the specific context and situation in which it was first created. Through the interaction of different actors, different meaning is attributed to the text. Followingly, (re-) interpretation takes place, meaning is further contested and sometimes confirmed, new resources are involved, and thus the meaning of the respective text further changed.

Ultimately, this leads to the creation of a new version of reality, a different meaning associated with the text in question and different practices in which it is used (Iedema, 2003: 42). As discourses are always related to other previous or simultaneous events, they can only be understood in their context – this is referred to as "intertextuality" (Krippendorff & Halabi, 2020: 21). For instance, the discourse presented through one text may refer to another text or make use of its meaning. An image on a website most likely carries meaning in itself, adds to the meaning of the website as a text, but may also refer to a whole other text, meaning and discourse outside of the observable one.

So what are different components of MMDA? For instance, a website containing a video, an image, links and symbols is one multimodal text that requires all modes to be considered equal, as they all form the text and thus its meaning. Therefore, I will now go into detail concerning the analysis of specific modes. The here described modes are not all existing modes but those appearing in my data. My approach followed the conceptualisations presented above and in my theory section, with my analysis consisting of examining all components of the respective modes along dimensions and considerations described underneath.

Language analysis.

The first predominant mode is language, both written and spoken. As we have established already, language is discourse put into action. It is a sociocultural phenomenon, in which culture, context and more is expressed. Perspectives and beliefs, as well as power relations or identities may be conveiyed through specific choices concerning wording, grammar etc. (Gee, 2014). Language is done consciously, with the usage of specific styles indicating the position of the speaker in an interaction. These positions may be influenced by a wide variety of factors, such as ethnicity, gender, political institutions or class. How we "put different grammatical resources to use in different situations and contexts" (Gee, 2014: 11-13), in other words, how we apply language, translates into how we engage in and recognize social identities.

Grammar is of particular importance here, providing fundamental rules concerning words (lexicon) and their pronunciation or core meaning, syntax and the structure of sentences, as well as the semantic meaning of words, which may change depending on the context. Knowledge of a language's grammar allows a user to express meaning. To Gee, grammar is a "perspective-taking device" (Gee 2014: 67), that, through the choices made (including aspects chosen to be excluded) enable us as researchers to examine the perspective of the writer. Halliday and Hasan (1976) add to this as they define various types of cohesive markers and their function, such as pronouns (linking sentences through references), determiners (identification), substitutions (repetition avoidance), conjunctions (contrasting or adding to other points) or quantifiers (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). There is also figurative speech in every language and the usage of metaphors, though their understanding depends heavily on the knowledge of the interpreter. As a native German speaker, this should not be an issue in this research.

Another key component mentioned already is context. In many forms of communication, what is said or written is not everything a text is meant to convey. Context, for instance, may influence what and how something is expressed but it may also serve to convey what is being left unsaid, thus constructing a new context.

This assumption of what is not directly expressed, is called contextualization, putting whatever expressed into a new context. Crucially though, the scope of context is too grand to take into account every aspect, resulting in the frame problem described by Gee.

As discourse analyst I need to take into account this dynamic interaction by examining how written or spoken language is constructed in my data, which and how differing means, like wording, were utilised, how they reflect the context of the texts origin and how they works to construct a new context, as all these components of language express the specific discourse.

Image analysis

Similar to language, images have vast potential to express information and meaning. They too underlie specific visual grammar, following conventions or rules to convey their meaning. And just as language, this grammar structure can be analysed in images, as explained by Kress and van Leuween (2006) in their visual semiotic theory and Halliday's sysmetic functional approach. According to Kress and van Leuween, Halliday understands language to have three major functions: an ideational (the speaker's experience of the world), an interpersonal (the relationships between the interacting actors) and an intertextual function (how it relates to the rest of the text). Kress and van Leeuwen argue that this also applies to imagery and visual design, in which images can be analysed along three dimensions. Firstly, the representational one, which represents the relationship between what is depicted and the real world. In other words, what is the narrative of the image? Secondly, an interactive dimension, which describes the interaction between the image's producer and the viewer. In the gaze of actors (f.e. happy or stern), its direction (does an actor look at the viewer?) and taken angles (a low angle can represent power of the depicted), an image producer can incode meaning and thus represent discourse. There is also modality markers which include colour, depth, illumination, or contextualization and help to provide detail and credibility. Lastly, there is also the compositional dimension, which describes how the various components work together in their composition. In this dimensions, components can be questioned concerning their informational value (attributed according to their placement to one another), their salience (wether and how they attract the viewer's attention through placement and colour), or their framing (their seperation or inclusion through means like lines) (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006: 59ff.).

When analysing imagery in my data, I need to take into account all these aspects. How is an image composed, what are its components, how are they placed and coloured and how do they relate to other aspects in the image or the multimodal text as a whole?

This way, assigned and openly communicated as well as underlying meaning can be uncovered, allowing an insight into the discourse that is being constructed.

Video or motion picture analysis

Another frequent mode are videos. Ramey et al. (2016) describe video analysis as an increasingly useful tool in qualitative studies, as videos can depict both long time spans and activities and very detailed accounts of situations. They further have the advantage of being rewatchable, allowing the viewer/researcher to focus on different perspectives or components of the recording (Ramey et al., 2016). Two major areas of video analysis were identified by them.

Firstly, they describe transcription tensions. As the name would suggest, Ramey and colleagues describe the importance of creating multiple transcripts when analysing video material. After all, a video contains very different interactional modalities such as gestures, gazes, talk, body language, movement and many more. If a researcher was to transcribe language only, other interactional phenomena would not be recognized in the same manner. However, as a multimodal text, all aspects need to be considered to uncover the whole meaning conveyed. By considering all the modalities, a researcher can also understand their interaction and the relevance for the meaning at hand. A researcher is thus enabled to focus on various perspectives and features, allowing a more in-depth understanding (Ramey et al., 2016).

Secondly, they describe the representation of context. Recordings have the unique advantage of providing extensive access to the context in which they were taken, to which they further add by being viewable multiple times. Importantly, context may be uncovered through additional research. This needs to be done carefully though, as it may tarnish results emerging from the text only and, therefore, needs to be reflected upon (Ramey et al, 2016). Hutchins (1995) further adds that videos are not an impartial, or neutral source of data. After all, the recording is filmed through specific, purposive lenses and thus also influences the interpretation of the researcher. The researcher further chooses which aspects to pay attention to, again influencing the interpretation. Both need to be accounted for.

Lastly, I also want to include notions of motion graphics, as they frequently appear in videos. These are components of videos, such as design elements like letters, lines, or different shapes, which could be layered over or animated into a video. These too need to be considered, as they provide further information or express specific meaning (Babic et al., 2008).

When analysing my video data through MMDA, all these components need to be considered. The videos content, depicted actors, their actions, the surrounding, colours and more need to be examined by me, as they all make up the multimodal text. Through the conscious selection of them, the video maker is conveying specific meaning and thus also a discourse that can be uncovered by analysing these aspects. Importantly, an analysis should include various transcripts, focusing on either language, visuals, or other aspects of the video. This is how I conducted my video analysis in the context of this research, generating two transcripts.

Links

The last mode appearing in my data is links. Holton understands hyperlinks as "connective devices that allow users to direct each other in digital spaces" (Holton et al., 2014: 33). For instance, they may connect websites to each other, to other platforms or other texts. Their usage thus allows an actor to quickly access but also distribute a wide range of information. Hyperlinks thus become an "intentional communicative choice" (Sams & Woo Park, 2014: 295), also providing us with insights into the discourse. Holton described various functions of hyperlinks, of which information sharing was the most relevant (Holton et al., 2014). Links thus become another important mode to consider in their combination with other modes and can provide interesting insights into the discourse actors construct.

4.5 Ethical considerations

The ethical considerations applied in my research process have particularly been based on assertions of Martyn Hammersley (2020), who distinguishes between epistemic and non-epistemic considerations and values. Epistemic values concern the acquisition or production of knowledge, to which Hammersley describes the idea of truth as central. To him, "researchers have an obligation to try to ensure that the knowledge claims they produce are true" (Hammersley, 2020: 466). Another ethical consideration he describes is justifiability, by which he means the provision of evidence for the conclusions and claims made. Two more values described by him are the relevance of the research question and the feasibility of answering it. By these values Hammersley means that a researcher has to ensure his research is worth the effort and produces knowledge relevant outside of the intellectual environment. Further, the researcher is obliged to research questions to which they can feasibly find an answer to. All these values were considered in this research. I claim to be able to present representations of the various affirmative discourses on ED constructed by actors through the usage of multiple modes in their publicly available material. These results are my truth.

To prove my assertions, I provide in-depth analyses of the material at hand, while also acknowledging the limitations of my work. I cannot possibly provide a comprehensive account of all modes, discourses and actors and I am aware of my research being limited to this field of study and the local context. Nevertheless, my results may provide readers with a better understanding of the discourses surrounding ED and the practices involved in their construction and the construction of the social movement locally, but also globally. My research question, although grand in itself, is highly feasible, as it concerns only a small aspect of our shared social reality and the construction of this specific snippet of it. Lastly, through my investigation I may indeed uncover these mechanisms at hand, finding an answer to my research question.

Secondly, Hammersley also describes non-epistemic values. These include issues such as the avoidance of harm, autonomy, privacy, and reciprocity, and are usually "employed in the evaluation of actions" (Hammersley, 2020: 470). Actions, which in itself need to be 'right', conducted by me, the researcher, have consequences that require consideration and evaluation. Although crucial, these values do not apply in the same way to my research. I have only analysed publicly available data that was, most likely, curated specifically for publication. Issues of anonymity or privacy thus do not apply. The analysis of documents does not require consent forms or similar measures either. Further, the actors analysed autonomously published the material, in no way urging them to supply me, the researcher, with it. Harm cannot be done either, as the material does not contain private information or deals with marginalized groups that could be at risk of harm. The results of my work will also not jeopardize anyone, as the creators of the data remain anonymous, nor would my research have a negative influence on their job, emotional or physical well-being etc. My research is a discursive analysis of the means applied by various actors in their discourse construction. Although questioning the reasoning behind the specific choices made, they are in no way judged or valued.

Having now given extensive insights into the methods and methodology of my work, I finally want to begin with the presentation of my analytical findings.

5. Analysis

I will now provide a detailed account of the various analyses I have conducted, sorted according to the specific actor. I will begin with my analysis of the Konzeptwerke Neue Ökonomie e. V.

5.1 Konzeptwerke Neue Ökonomie e.V.

(Image 1 – 'Data Konzeptwerke')

The first actor to be analysed is the Konzeptwerke Neue Ökonomie e. V. As mentioned already, it is an interesting actor to analyse due to it being a representation of local academia, its inherent organisation along dimensions shared in ED as well as its specific organisation form as a non-profit organisation and think-tank. The data shown above is a chapter from the brochure "solidaric, climate just & self-determined. A utopian outlook on Pödelwitz in the year 2025", published by the Konzeptwerke in cooperation with local citizen initiatives in 2020. The primary focus of the brochure is the village of Pödelwitz close to Leipzig, which was planned to be demolished for the expansion of a coal pit and its people being relocated. In cooperation with citizen initiatives the Konzeptwerke formulated an action plan on which the brochure is based, outlining how the measures taken could change the village until 2025.

My analysis will specifically focus on the chapter 'energy supply & energy democracy'. There is a meaningful observation in the text's composition and arrangement with the other parts of the brochure. My analysed chapter is the first one following the introduction to the brochure, justifying the assumption that issues of energy are centrally important to the represented cause connected to the village, being given prime relevance so early in the brochure.

The multimodal text analysed here contains two distinct semiotic resources: written language and imagery. I will now analyse these in their order on the pages, following the natural course of the reader, which allows me to better understand the way the text's meaning would be conveyed naturally. To begin with, the title of the chapter is written in a light turquoise colour and very big font, making it the biggest writing on the page. Both its position at the top of the page and its size serve to underline that this is the central topic of the chapter. The two words 'energy supply' and 'energy democracy' are directly connected to one another and emphasised through their spatial proximity and the repetition of the word 'energy'. Both are given equal importance here, alluding to them being very relevant to one another. This connects the two issues at hand, referring directly to central claims of ED. The light turquoise colour seems to be a preferential choice only, although it contrasts well against the white backdrop. The headline of the page is followed by a paragraph, which is separated by two horizontal lines. The lines serve to direct the attention of the reader from the dominant headline to the writing in between them, marking it as relevant. The usage of an arrow pictograph further supports this notion, as it directs the readers gaze to the following statement. It reads that 'active citizens' in the region are committing themselves to 'energy justice' and a 'decentralised regenerative energy supply'.

'Active citizens' alludes to a form of citizen participation for, as we are also told, energy justice and decentralised energy production through renewables. Decentralisation and citizen empowerment are core issues of ED and are given proper space through this arrangement in the text. They also make convincing arguments for the shown engagement. I also want to mention the implications of 'Bürger*innen' in German. A form of gendering, the term is meant to include everyone inside and outsight of the binary gender spectrum. This is an indication of both the academic background of the paper as well as its inclusive position and narrative, which are in line with the discourse on ED. However, gendering is not unchallenged in German public discourse, having implications for the target audience.

The text continues through the usage of an image. On it, we see a field of brown grass with multiple solar panels placed upon it, making up the central portion of the picture. Behind them there is a white van with an orange pamphlet on it. The pamphlet states 'Power to the People!" while there seem to be multiple posters pinned against the van. To the left we see some bikes and another solar panel, while to its right we can see various white tents and another van in the distance. There is at least one person sitting to the right of the van. In connection with the rest of the brochure we can assume it is an action of the aforementioned actors, somehow relating to the village. The condition of the grass might indicate different things. In combination with the sky and the trees in the background, it could show that it was summer when the event took place, contextualising it. In connection with the solar panels, this would make further sense. However, it may also symbolise rising temperatures and drought, key issues of climate change. The solar panels also express two things. Firstly, that energy is being produced here – decentralised and by different, independent citizens. It may, therefore, be understood as a representation of this central claim of ED. Secondly, it reaffirms that the topic of the multimodal text is energy. Even without additional context we are thus reminded of the headline. In contrasting it with the dry ground it could even be seen as a solution to it – referencing the role of renewables in the energy transition. The orange pamphlet on the van is particularly noticeable through its colour and central position in the image. This provides further attention to its statement. 'Power to the People!' can be understood in multiple ways. Power may mean energy, again alluding to the topic and the depicted energy production. It may also convey power in decision making processes, referring to the issue of democratic control and decision making central to ED. The exclamation mark serves to underline this, making the statement an imperative, demand or directive. The white tents in the picture indicate, that it is a lasting event, as people intend to stay, while the white colour could also symbolise pureness, expressing the pure intentions of the protesters. The person depicted does not look at the camera, nor can we see the entirety of it.

On the following page, we find the next mode in the form of more written language. This one is coloured in a darker share, contrasting it against the white background but also against the rest of the written language, informing us of its relevance. It begins by stating that all previously lived in houses in Pödewitz have been provided with solar panels. A list of further villages is stated to now have 40% of their buildings covered with solar modules. Continuing, it is expressed that the working group 'village development Pödelwitz' has taken 'the next step' and developed a process for the foundation of an energy cooperative in 2023. By using the phrase 'the next step' the formation of an energy cooperative is presented as natural continuation of providing solar panels to the entire village. It thus alludes to empowering the citizens not only through the means of energy production but through a deeper institutionalization of their efforts in the form of a cooperative with democratic control, shared revenue, and responsibility. This process and the cooperative thus directly reference ED and its claims. According to the writing, the cooperative aims at providing the entire Southern Leipzig with renewable energy while a campaign called 'Energy democracy in the Leipziger Land!' is started at the same time. Energy democracy is thus specifically named for the second time in the text, the repetition further underlining its importance. A definite aim, 100% renewables in the region, is formulated and, through an exclamation mark, made a directive or demand. In the following the text describes the participation process of locals in the formation of an energy cooperative. The cooperative is again positioned as prime organisation form of ED, while its creation process follows similar democratic notions. The result is a cooperative that is 'grass-roots democratic' and works 'on a 100% decentralised energy supply' through renewables only, and in which members engage in all decision-making processes. These statements again refer to three major points of ED: democratic control, decentralisation, and the crucial role of renewables, all of which are presented to become inherent in the new form of citizen participation, thus making it seem very attractive to the reader. Decisions are made through "a participatory and communal process', so that costs 'can be split justly. 'Participatory' and 'communal' could be understood as synonyms thus serving to underline the character of the process, which is done in order to guarantee the just or social aspect of the new energy system in which all members share costs. The last paragraph describes the future plans of the cooperative and the help they hope to experience from the municipality and other actors, which could be seen as a nod to these actors.

A small paragraph in very small font at the bottom of the page, connected to the picture on the left side through an arrow pictograph, finally provides context on the aforementioned image: a climate camp that provides itself with energy, confirming the notion regarding the possibilities of a citizen driven decentralised energy production through renewables.

The last two pages contain three images, all with a brief description in the form of a small paragraph. On the left, we see the forecourt of the community centre in Pödelwitz. The image depicts a basketball board. On it, writing contains a wordplay, stating 'to give coal a basket', which is a German expression for turning somebody down. Through the combination, the board humorously expresses a rejection of the usage of coal for energy production in the form of a demand, indicated by another exclamation mark. In the background, we see another banner with writing, of which only 'climate justice knows no borders. Stop fossil fuel' can be read from our angle. Climate justice is named specifically here, possibly symbolising its close relation to ED and the common goals. The international character of both social movements is also expressed. All in all, the image serves to underline the already-made demands intersemioticly.

On the next image we see a crowd of mostly young, differently looking people carrying flags and a banner stating 'dance and sweating for Pödelwitz'. The statement contains another word-play, as 'Schwitz' (an abbreviation word for sweating) is used to rhyme on the villages' name. The banner further depicts a church, likely the village's one as well as music notes, a crowd of red people and the wheel of a coal dredger. The banner connects the statement further with the village and the people. The church acts as manifest representation of the historic and emotion-ally charged town centre, while the crowd is dancing and thus demonstrating in front of it to hold of the dredger meant to symbolise the expanding coal pit. Through the small paragraph we are informed of the depiction being an image of a 2019 demonstration in which 500 dancers 'creatively and expressively' protested for the preservation of the village. The image thus serves to express the protest and people's passionate involvement in saving the village, gaining further attention and support for the made demands.

The last image shows another 2018 demonstration under the title 'safe the climate, stop the coal', with 2000 participants. Diverse people with banners, signs and pamphlets can be seen marching through a street. Some are carrying a globe on the left side of the image. Another climate protest this image serves as connection to the wider issue of coal reduction and climate protection, possibly even referencing climate justice as done in the previous image with the basketball board. Both are thus represented as centrally connected to ED and its wider goal, through their frequent appearance and placement in the brochure.

Importantly, all these images are resemiotised. Although their original meaning, particularly in the context of Pödelwitz, might have been very similar, the usage of them in the multimodal text charges them with new meaning. Through their combination with the written language, the assigned meaning is redirected to ED and its aims.

5.2 Energiegenossenschaft Leipzig EGL eG

The next actor to be analysed is the Leipzig energy cooperative. The cooperative is a fascinating actor to analyse to its inherent organisation form, easy accessibility and it being a direct manifestation of ED that advocates for cooperatives generally. The data chosen to be analysed comes in the form of a 2:12 min video from their website, titled 'EGL – energy transition for Leipzig' in which the cooperative presents itself and its cause. To better structure my analysis I will provide screenshots and a table for each frame, analysing its content. The utilised modes are video, speech, and written language in the form of motion graphics.

Frame 1

Scene	Content
1 - Rooftop	Scene description: playful, country-like music starts playing, rooftop in Leipzig, recognizable through the high building (Uniriese) in the background, blue sky, green tree in background, man speaking with brown hair and beard, wears a blue suit shirt, two muscular, young men with no shirts in blue overalls carry a solar panel, put it down, then toast with drinks. Spoken language: Hello, my name is Matthias Mattiza. I am the founder of the Leipzig Energy Cooperative. As a citizens' company, we want to jointly produce electricity from renewable energies and make a regional contribution to the energy transition. To do this, we install and operate solar plants, for example. Because we want to use the city's potential and supply Leipzig with more regional and green electricity.

(Graph 5 – ‚Frame 1 EGL')

The first frame opens with playful music, an urban scene identifiable as Leipzig, and a man in a blue shirt introducing himself as the founder of the Leipzig energy cooperative. Immediately from the start, the video is situated in the urban region of Leipzig, drawing close connections to the cooperatives' background. The blue shirt provides a sort of business credibility to Mr Mattiza, while the absence of a tie makes him seem less formal, thus establishing trust but no formal authority. The speaker looks directly at the viewer while talking, creating a connection between the two. As the camera is placed on sight level, both the speaker and viewer are presented as equal and within a similar power relation. Through an open body language, messy hair and calm voice, the speaker adds to a sympathetic and down-to-earth image of himself and the cooperative which he represents. His status as founder ascribes him additional credibility.

(Image 2 – ‚Frame 1 Video EGL 1‘)

The blue shirt, blue sky, green trees, and music add to an uplifting, generally positive mood. Mr Mattiza's speech is hugely relevant, containing much of the frame's information. He describes the cooperative as a 'citizens' company'. It is thus established that the company is run by and for citizens, alluding to their empowerment through organisation forms prevalent in ED. In essence, the speaker describes the companies' aim of 'jointly producing electricity from renewable energy', thus making a 'regional contribution to the energy transition'. 'Jointly' again conveys the connection between citizens in working together, additionally establishing that the energy production works through renewables only. This energy production is placed in a 'regional' local context, again referring to the cooperative operating in Leipzig, drawing on the regional connection of the people to gain support.

(Image 3 – ‚Frame 1 Video EGL 2‘)

This is a direct nod to ED, establishing that by jointly producing energy, the citizens promote an energy transition to renewables but also one in which they have more power as decentralised energy producers.

The speaker provides an example of solar panels that the cooperative installs and operates. Said solar panels are immediately shown on the roof, carried by two men. They symbolise various things. Firstly, as both are young, muscular and wear no shirts, this can be understood as a typical example of 'sex sells', trying to garner attention. More abstractly though it may symbolise that the cooperative is sexy and attractive to participate in, aiming to convince people to join. The two are also young, possibly illustrating the availability of the cooperative and ED for young people. Followingly, as the speaker leaves the frame, the two happily make a toast using sparkling wine glasses, alluding to a success in their installation of the panel and abstractly the cooperative as such, which is presented as a reason for joy and celebration.

Frame 2

Frame	Content
2 – Park	Scene description: Park with green gras and trees, cloudy sky, two men in suits with ties are sitting on the floor, playing with toy cranes and lorries. Both are looking at each other. Pushing over toys. Man comes over and takes one crane away and moves to a crowd of people demonstrating. They are holding signs and pamphlets. Signs are city signs of Leipzig, pamphlets contain nuclear warning sign, criticise nuclear energy and call for renewables. People are also carrying pitch forks and scythes. They follow the speaker. Spoken language: Perhaps you say, why do we need an energy cooperative in Leipzig? Well, we don't trust our colleagues here to bring about the energy transition. However, it is important to us to live in a clean environment. That is why we take on our responsibility as citizens. The Leipzig Energy Cooperative offers you the opportunity to get involved from the comfort of your own home. That means helping to shape the energy transition in the long term and making your own local contribution. Nowhere in Leipzig can you do this so directly

(Graph 6 – 'Frame 2 – EGL')

The second frame opens in a park with the same speaker. Although lush, the sky is clouded, setting the tone for the rest of the scene as more confrontational. Mattiza begins with a rhetoric question as to why a cooperative would even be necessary. He justifies its existence by expressing distrust in 'our colleagues', referring to two men in suits and tie sitting in the background playing with toy cranes and lorries. This is a crucial scene. The business attire of the men contrasts them to Mattiza and his casual attire and body language, identifying them as businessmen. They thus become representations of big corporations in the energy sector, which are not seriously promoting a renewable energy transition according to him.

(Image 3 – ‚Frame 2 Video EGL 1‘)

They are also reminiscent of playing children, humorously undermining their credibility. They can then be seen pushing over some toys, symbolising a destructive process. The current energy sector and its organisation are thus negatively charged, run by big businesses with their aims in mind only. The cooperative as a representation of ED is juxtaposed to this, presented as an alternative in which it is not these cooperations but the citizens that make constructive choices, working for a 'clean' and thus good environment and future. Mattiza then explains that 'we' (the citizens, the cooperative and even the viewer) take great responsibility in ensuring so. An inherent connection to the viewer is thus established through a sense of duty.

(Image 4 – ‚Frame 2 Video EGL 2')

This illustrates the relevance of the issue at hand and is further signified by a man walking up to the men in suits and taking one of their toys away before walking to a crowd of people. This again represents the citizens as in charge, empowered by the cooperative and movement (symbolised through the protest crowd) in redirecting power to themselves.

The crowd is formed by a small number of casually dressed people, reminiscent of a demonstration. It represents the citizens, the cooperative and more abstractly also the ED movement. They are depicted as diverse, down to earth, and include children, all of which is very much in line with ED's ideas. The signs they hold portray both their protest for the promotion of renewables and their opposition to nuclear energy (which could also signify fossil fuels generally). Their local connection to Leipzig is also expressed through the city signs, which are resemiotised. They are the citizens wanting to make a difference, advocating for a different energy system in which they have the power, taking it back from the corporations. The frustration and also confrontational attitude are further symbolised by them carrying scythes and pitch forks, which also allude a little to the stereotypical image of the 'angry rural people', observable in cartoons, for instance. This image humorously plays on the idea many have of citizen involvement, and the notion of the uninformed, backwards citizen. Mattiza walking in front of the crowd further symbolises their connection, while them walking towards the viewer could imply the wish of garnering their support too, including them in the crowd. The demonstration walking on the path can also be seen as symbolising that they, unlike the businessmen, are on the right way ahead, seemingly paving the way. The advantages of the cooperative are further explained by Mattiza, describing involvement as possible 'from the comfort of your own home'. Thus, involvement is presented as easy, making it more accessible and convincing to interested people. He further expresses the unique possibility of long-term local contributions, appealing to people rooted in the region, providing additional arguments to convince viewers.

Frame 3

Frame	Content
3 – office	Scene description: Office room, white walls, printer and folders in the background, whiteboard with three signs (members → board). Green line rising from floor across wall in the background. Desk with phone, lightbulb, laptop, mini fan and multiple plates with various pieces of cake on them

Spoken language: And why a cooperative? So that you retain control. As a member, you can directly influence the important decisions of the company. And in the end, your cooperative share is also a sensible investment. Of course, you can decide for yourself how many shares you want to subscribe to. |

(Graph 7 – 'Frame 3 EGL')

The next frame is set in an office, likely to represent the cooperatives' one. Its interior creates an easy and down-to earth character, implying that is the nature of the cooperative as well. Mattiza asks a rhetoric question, connecting to the viewer and their possible perspectives by showing understanding. He subsequently pitches the idea of the cooperative through the members 'retaining control' and being able to 'directly influence the important decisions'. 'Retaining control' establishes the members being in power as natural state, further ensuring them of their power in the venture. This again alludes to notions of ED as run by and for citizens, instead of private shareholders. The cooperative is not a big cooperation, but instead one in which members 'directly', so themselves shape the course and have influence in important decision-making processes. All this emphasises the cooperatives' particular affordance and attractiveness to the citizens, inherently also representing the appeal of the ED movement.

(Image 5 – 'Frame 3 Video EGL 1')

This notion is further supported through the whiteboard in the background, showing that members can directly influence the board. Their pressure is symbolised by arrows which directly 'hit' the board without additional decision makers in-between. Becoming a member by buying shares is also illustrated to be a 'sensible investment', which is symbolised by a green line rising along the wall in the background. This line represents the rising value of the shares, similar to stock lines, connoting the cooperative as not only morally good but also lucrative. The green colour too refers to its being a share in green energy production, providing a positive, clean meaning and connotation. All this works to convince people of them and their cause.

Lastly, Mattiza expresses the ability to obtain as many shares as 'you' (the directly addressed and thus personally connected viewer) wants. The shares are followingly symbolised through pieces of cake on the desk, a different amount of which is on each plate.

(Image 6 – 'Frame 3 Video EGL 2')

Through their representation as pieces of cake, the cooperative shares are assigned a positive, desirable meaning. Choice is also provided, further empowering the citizens and possible future members. This way, membership in the cooperative, and abstractly the social movement it represents, is depicted as an easy-to-do, appealing and even gratifying undertaking. 'A piece of cake' further is an expression for something being easy, also alluding to the notion above.

Frame 4

Scene	Content
4 – Park	Scene description: Park with green gras and trees, blue sky, decorative butterflies, and birds on sticks held into frame, children running into frame in the background. They are playing. Laptop and printer held into frame. Speaker types on laptop and takes piece of paper from printer, then gives it outside of frame, in the background we can again see the high building, recognising this to be Leipzig, microwave with cup of coffee held into frame, microwave makes sound, speaker takes and drinks coffee, walks out of the frame. Spoken language: By becoming a member of EGL, you are investing in clean and sustainable energy for Leipzig and the region. Because it is our responsibility towards future generations to protect the environment and preserve our livelihood. Becoming a member is child's play. Download the application, fill it in and send it in. And wait. My name is Matthias Mattiza and I wish you another pleasant day.

(Graph 8 – 'Frame 4 EGL')

The second last frame is set in another park setting, this time with better weather though and thus also an inherently more positive framing. Mattiza again explains that investment in the cooperative means 'clean' and 'sustainable' energy for Leipzig and the region. 'Clean' and 'sustainable' serve as synonyms, both expressing the same and thus emphasising it. 'Leipzig' and 'the region' function the same way, contextualising the investment and charging it positively through a local, emotional appeal. The emphasis on regionality is also a prime characteristic of ED, echoing its character here again. The image of sustainability is further illustrated by various decorative figures of butterflies and birds being held into the frame. In combination with the good weather and green setting, these serve to create the idea of an idyllic surrounding, to which the cooperative contributes through the increase in green electricity.

(Image 7 – 'Frame 4 Video EGL 1')

Mattiza then appeals to 'our' (connecting the viewer and the cooperative) responsibility for future generations, to 'protect the environment' and 'preserve our livelihood'. The notion of responsibility appeals to the viewer's moral compass and further emphasises the need for action This need is additionally confirmed and emotionally charged through children running into the frame, who are laughing and playing. It is these children for which action needs to be taken, to enable them to play in a safe and healthy environment. The mission of the cooperative is thus given a righteous image, attempting to appeal to many people through the protection of children. Connecting further to the image of playing children, Mattiza explains the process of becoming a member as 'child's play'.

Its easiness is underlined by the visuals in which he randomly types on a laptop, draws a sheet of paper from a printer and hands it out of the frame. The process is depicted as very easy and quick, serving again to convince those interested in joining.

(Image 8 – 'Frame 4 Video EGL 2')

The last scene provides additional support to this claim, as he takes a cup of coffee from a microwave to symbolise the short waiting process and inherent relaxation when wanting to become a member. Mattiza ends the frame by repeating his name, reminding people of who he is, who they need to contact and to enable a more personal conclusion of the video, wishing the viewer a pleasant day before walking out of the frame. The Uniriese building can be in the background, serving as a reminder of the local connection to Leipzig. This sums up the video, ending the visuals on a very positive and polite note, which further contributes to the image of the cooperative.

Frame 5

Frame	Content
5 - Outro	Scene description: green background in colour of the cooperative. Changing motion picture writing Written Language: cooperative logo, "And suitable for at home: **our citizen's electricity!**" Get more information on www.energiegenossenschaft-leipzig.de/buergerstrom. "Switch to You!"

(Graph 9 – 'Frame 5 EGL')

The last frame of the video serves as outro, merely showing a green background on which, we have some written language in the form of motion graphics and even a hyperlink.

(Image 9 – 'Frame 5 Video EGL 1')

In the outro we are provided with some more information. The predominant mode used is written language, informing the viewer of the cooperatives' 'Bürgerstrom', which is the energy generated and sold by the cooperative for which also non-members can sign up for. Another motion graphic informs the viewer of where to find more information. Although not clickable, the graphics show a hyperlink to the website of the cooperative, thus redirecting them to it when more information is needed. This may serve to provide information and convince interested people of joining. The last slide, shown when the music ends, is the most relevant of the outro, as it states, 'Switch to you!'. Firstly, through the exclamation mark this can be understood as a directive, though it should rather in this case be understood as an emphasis to gain the viewer's attention in the final moments of the video. The actual statement signifies the own energy production and supply but should also be understood as motivation to take back power and putting oneself in a position of making-decisions – as could be done through a membership in the cooperative, and more abstractly the ED movement.

5.3 Leipziger Stadtwerke GmbH

The third actor to be analysed is the Leipziger Stadtwerke GmbH, the municipal energy provider in the city of Leipzig.

Their data comes in the form of a 2021 article from the company published magazine 'Leipziger Leben' on the 'Bürgersparen' project of the Stadtwerke, in which citizens could invest in renewables through investing into the company.

28 ENERGIEWENDE

„Ich investiere in den Klimaschutz."

Elke Willmann blickt vom Balkon des Europahauses über die Dächer der Stadt: Auf einigen von ihnen sollen Solaranlagen zur Gewinnung erneuerbarer Energien entstehen – mit Unterstützung der Summe, die beim Bürgersparen zusammengekommen ist

⌐ Bei Kohleausstieg, Klimaschutz und Energiewende ist mit Blick auf die jüngsten Ereignisse dringendes Handeln geboten. Und dass sich auch in unserer Stadt etwas ändern muss, darüber besteht weitgehend Einigkeit. Gemeinsam anpacken: Das wollen Stadt Leipzig und die Leipziger Stadtwerke zusammen mit den Bürgern der Stadt. Dafür wurde das Projekt „Bürgersparen" entwickelt. Ein Modell, bei dem alle Partner und vor allem die Umwelt gewinnen können.

Gewiss, eine eigene Biogasanlage bauen oder einen Windpark errichten, ist ganz schön groß gedacht. Doch dass ein Umdenken bereits vor der eigenen Haustür stattfinden kann, zeigt ein Beispiel in Thüringen. Dort haben mehrere Bürger aus dem Bioenergiedorf Schlöben in eine Biogasanlage investiert und profitieren nun doppelt: von der Wärmeversorgung und vom Gewinn der Anlage. Und ebenso in Sachsen gibt es schon das ein oder andere Beispiel: wie in Lommatzsch, wo mehr als 20 Bürger in einen Wind- und Solarpark investiert haben. Die Gelegenheit, die Energiewende auch in Leipzig gemeinsam voranzutreiben, bietet das „Bürgersparen". Von Oktober bis Mitte Dezember hatten die Kunden der Leipziger Stadtwerke die Möglichkeit, ihr Geld in erneuerbare Energien anzulegen und damit einen Beitrag fürs Klima zu leisten sowie selbst Zinsen zu erwirtschaften. Über 100 Bürger hatten dabei mitgemacht.

Sinnvoll investieren

Eine, die nicht lange überlegen musste, ist Elke Willmann: „Ich habe für das Bürgersparen in Leipzig gezeichnet. Ich parke damit mein Geld nicht nur verlustarm, sondern auch sinnvoll", erklärt die 63-Jährige, die seit mehr als 20 Jahren für die Leipziger Stadtwerke arbeitet. Mit dem Geld, das sie investiert hat, soll der Ausbau von Solaranlagen auf den Dächern von Schulen und Kindergärten der Stadt sowie auf dem Dach des neuen Heizkraftwerks Süd gefördert werden. „Ich tue mit dieser Geldanlage mehrfach Gutes: Ich investiere in den Klimaschutz, in den regionalen Geldkreislauf, in die Zukunft meines Arbeitgebers und in mein eigenes Vermögen", weiß die Betriebswirtschaftlerin. Deshalb war es ihr auch so wichtig, ihren Mann und ihren Sohn mit ins Boot zu holen. „Wir haben extra unseren schweren 17-Zoll-Laptop mit in den Urlaub an die Ostsee genommen, um die Zeichnungsfrist nicht zu verpassen", lacht Willmann. Und dass sie in Zukunft das Ergebnis des Bürgersparens auch auf den Dächern Leipzigs sehen wird, macht sie besonders stolz.

„Unsere Kunden haben damit die Chance, sich bei einem attraktiven Zinssatz von 1,5 Prozent pro Jahr an unserem Investitionsprogramm finanziell zu beteiligen und erneuerbare Energien in Leipzig und der Region voranzubringen. Das nützt dem Einzelnen – und der Gesellschaft."

Dr. Maik Piehler, Geschäftsführer der Leipziger Stadtwerke

LEIPZIGER LEBEN · 04–2021

(Image 10 – 'Data Stadtwerke')

As in much of my other data, two modes were particularly utilised in this multimodal text: written language and imagery.

The first mode analysed is imagery. Situated at the top of the page we can see an urban land-scape, shown from a roof. The weather seems to be nice with the sun shining and blue, although a little cloudy skies. On the left side of the picture, we can see a woman with grey hair, a black coat, blue sweater, and glasses leaning against a wall. She is looking directly at the camera, and thus us. As the magazine is predominantly about the region of Leipzig, we can assume that the urban landscape is the city as well, contextualising the text and its message in this environment. The weather is utilised to convey a generally positive mood of the text. The bright sun may also symbolise a light ahead, acting as a goal to reach for. Importantly though, the image seems highly edited, from which we may take that this messaging is indeed what is supposed be con-veyed according to the creator. The woman is looking smilingly into the camera, positioning herself in an open stance. This seems inviting, projecting the image of being approachable and nice, further adding to the mood of the text. This way, a connection between the viewer and her is established, with power relations seemingly not being of importance, as we are somewhat on the same height. Her stance could also be understood as act of pride, as she seems pleased with something. The background's large size could support this notion by portraying the scale of their undertaking. Both her grey hair, her thus supposed age, and her glasses further project an image of experience and also trustworthiness, adding to the credibility of the text's content.

On the bottom of the picture and underneath it we find the headline of the article, stating "I invest in climate protection". Due to its close positioning to the woman in the image we can assume that 'I' refers to her. The usage of quotation marks further establishes that this is quoted direct speech. This enables a more personal connection between the reader and the woman, as we know exactly what she said. This more personal relationship may serve to convince us of her action and her reasoning for it. Its position at the centre of the page as well as its size emphasises its relevance, relegating the other modes to supporting the expressed statement.

Before coming to the big paragraph underneath, I want to deal with the small paragraph to the right side of the image, as it contextualises it. The woman shown is Elke Willmann, who is standing on the balcony of the Europahaus, which is the headquarters of the Leipziger Stadtwerke GmbH. The background is thus confirmed to be Leipzig. The text further informs us that on some roofs, solar panes shall be built. Most importantly though, it states that this may happen 'with the support of the sum raised during the Bürgersparen (Citizens saving scheme)'. We are thus made aware that it was citizens, like Elke Willmann, that participated in the project and provided an amount of money to be invested into renewables. The here already presented idea is a core notion of ED, as investment is made by many into more renewable energy.

Although it seems contradictive at first as they invest into a bigger company, the Stadtwerke is municipally owned. It is thus citizens investing into their municipal energy provider, enabling it to increase renewable energy generation and more green energy to them as citizens.

The major written language paragraph is located in two columns. The left one begins with the yellow L shaped pictograph. This is the logo of the Leipziger Stadtwerke turned sideways, acting through its colour to gather attention of the reader, while also informing them of the beginning of the paragraph. It begins by expressing that 'recent events' (to which we have no reference) prove that 'urgent action' is needed in phasing out coal, climate protection and the energy transformation. 'Urgent' underlines the necessity of action. The three areas of urgency are all contained in primary ED claims, although it is not referenced here as such. The paragraph continues, by stating that 'something must also change in our city'. 'Our' establishes a connection between the writer, implicitly the company, and the reader and assumes they all are situated in Leipzig. The writing thus appeals to a personal connection to city and region. This sense of community is further underlined by the statement of 'Working together'. The usage of ':' provides reference as to how, introducing new information. Through the project, the Stadtwerke and the city want to work together with citizens. Citizens are thus, to a degree at least, portrayed as empowered as they are understood as more than consumers. Instead, they are asked to make an active difference. The project, which is conducted by the Stadtwerke and thus can be seen as an outright manifestation of ED, is presented as a model 'in which all partners and, above all, the environment can win'. This connection between 'partners' and 'environment' can almost be seen as a personification of the environment, as another winning partner in the project. It also serves to remind people of the overall aim of it.

The paragraph continues by addressing worries of citizens: that building up infrastructure like a biogas plant seems too big to realize. Through the provision of a local example from Thuringia, these issues are dealt with. Citizens invested into a biogas plant and are now "benefiting twice over' through heat supply and revenue. These 'hard fact' benefits are used to convince people of the project's sensibility and the citizen's choices. They may prove that 'a change of mind can already take place on one's own doorstep'. The doorstep image functions to situate the changes in the daily lives and homes of citizens, linking the large-scale infrastructure projects to the small contributions and changes each citizen can make. Another example from Saxony is also provided. Both serve to illustrate the projects feasibility and outcome, functioning as convincing arguments to the approach taken by the Stadtwerke. This way, the company and the project are given justification and credibility as a reliable partner.

The rest of the paragraph explains the modalities of the project, as it was conducted from October to mid-December and about 100 citizens invested, not only 'contributing to the climate' but also to 'earn interest themselves'. Both are thus inherently connected in the project, again outlining its purpose. The citizen too is again stated to be empowered, both through a morally but also financially good choice.

The second paragraph is found under the smaller headline 'investing sensibly', which immediately introduces us to the general notion of it and reminds us of the financial benefits of the project. The paragraph relates to the previous, referring to 'one who did not have to think long'. 'One' refers to the citizens here, more specifically the above introduced and shown Elke Willman. She is now quoted again, saying she 'parks' her money with 'little loss' but also 'sensibly'. Parking is used here to refer to investing but means more. After all, parking something somewhere means getting it back. She therefore states that she gets a return from her investment, simply by leaving money with the Stadtwerke for a while. She also considers it sensible, as investing the money is presented as better than leaving it with the bank and possible negative interest rates. The quote is meant to provide further credibility to the project and the company by bringing in a sort of personal voice from a participant. The direct speech also allows a better understanding of her thought process, enabling readers to follow her logic. We are then also informed of her age and her working for the Stadtwerke for more than 20 years. This provides additional credibility, as she is indeed portrayed as experienced and the Stadtwerke as a good employer. Both sympathise the project and the company, garnering support for their cause.

It is further added that the money she invested will be used for solar panels on schools and kindergartens in the city. Both are very positively charged through the idea of protecting the environment for children in the long term as well as actively providing energy to these places, thus reducing their costs. Institutions such as these are great to market, as everyone agrees on the good in such actions. Another quote of Mrs Willmann is included, stating that she does 'several good things'. The quote is again fulfilling the same function as the previous one. Her actions are thus assigned the label of 'good'. As stated previously, both in financial and in moral terms. She then lists these goods, which include investing in 'climate protection, in the regional money cycle, in the future of my employers and in my own assets'. This quote contains many of EDs core elements and lists further arguments for the sensibility of the investment. It appeals to all those wanting to protect the climate or strengthen their region by either providing more green energy or supporting the municipally owned company, while at the same time enabling them to benefit from it directly through revenue.

It presents the citizen as further empowered by a better environment, more money in the bank, an overall more attractive region and an enhanced municipal company that is under democratic control through the city and its shareholders.

The mentioning of Mrs. Willmann being a business economist provides justification to all these statements, which is why it is placed directly after them. It also strengthens all her previous quotations through trustworthiness based not only on age but on expertise. It is then explained that this is exactly why it was very important to her to get her husband and son 'on board'. This portrays the project as being sensible to the entire family and to other families more generally, providing further attractiveness to participation. The boat image depicts the project, and on a grander scale the protection of the climate and investment in renewables, as a communal task. In a boat, everyone needs to be paddling in order to move forward, just as it is in the energy transition. Their statement is added to by another quote from Mrs Willmann, expressing that they took their 'heavy 17-inch laptop on holiday' so that they would not miss the deadline. The detail of the heavy and big laptop being taken into vacation illustrates the seriousness of the issue, making the family go through additional struggle just to ensure participation. The project is thus also assigned further significance, for which people might even be willing to do uncomfortable things. This humorous story also functions to lighten the mood, drawing the text to a positive closing. We are ensured of the story being funny by her laughing. The paragraph ends with exclaiming that she is also 'particularly proud' to see the result of her action on the roofs of Leipzig in the future. The participation is thus given an even better connotation, as evoking pride. This way the results of the project are also presented as very manifest, being able to see the solar panels one day. The regional context is again mentioned, repeatedly drawing on feelings of an emotional regional connectivity.

The last mode analysed is the written language in the yellow circle to the right of the main paragraph. In connection with the little sun next to it, both can be understood to symbolise the sun and solar radiation which will be collected through the panels. The circle also functions to separate the statement from the rest of the text, giving further emphasis through its colour. As the colour of the Stadtwerke it also directly connects the statement to the company, a notion further supported through the two-white logos at the top of it. Contained within is a quote from Dr. Maik Piehler, who is introduced as the director of the company. Both the doctor title as well as the given information on his job serve to outline his authority and thus the credibility of his statement. Additionally, it constitutes a connection between the top management of the Stadtwerke and the reader, enabling a feeling of relevance.

The quote states that 'customers' have the 'chance' to invest at a '1,5 percent interest rate per year' to 'advance renewable energies in Leipzig and the region'. Firstly, citizens are understood as costumers here. This is more formal, again referring to the power difference here but also to the kind of relationship engaged with. Participation is described as 'chance', giving it even more positive connotation and one that is fleeting, thus motivating faster engagement. The interest rates are hard facts, meant to convince people particularly through their supposed attractiveness. Lastly, the regional connection is again emphasised for the same purpose as before.

The last sentence of this paragraph sums up the essence of this text: the project is said to 'benefit the individuals – and society'. The relationship is again drawn between benefits for everyone involved but also for society as a whole. This way, the reader is given more reason to follow suit and get involved with the company or other projects alike.

5.4 Die Linke. Stadtverband Leipzig

The last actor I have analysed is the political party 'Die Linke'. In this case, the collected data depicts a screenshot, taken on the 7th of May 2023, of a campaign website related to the party.

As is the title of the campaign, the website's name is 'energy prices down'. At the top of the page, we can find a banner with a variety of different pictographs and boxes, containing various statements. Underneath, the website holds an image. On it, we find a wide red screen with different images and written language. In front, we can see 9 people of various genders sitting on cubes in a circle. The people in the circle are wearing different clothes, ranging from both formal attire (suit jackets and white shirts) to more informal one (shirts and jeans). One is holding a microphone, which seems to be connected to a speaker in the background. The people are looking at one another while they remain in differing poses. In the background we can also see a building, trees and a number of people passing by, some of which are looking at the people in the circle. Beneath the picture, writing in black font states "the social energy transition". Further down white writing in a red box states "this is our energy transition". Under this title we find a bigger paragraph, which is interrupted by three red bullet points followed by more writing. The paragraph continues underneath. At the end of it, we have two more lines of writing which are separated from the others.

As the website is a multimodal text, I now want to come to the analysis of the various modes utilised in it. These are: imagery, written language and hyperlinks. To do so, I will follow the structure of the website, as it represents the natural reading flow of a viewer and enables understanding of how the party intends to convey a message naturally.

Die soziale Energiewende

das ist unsere Energiewende

Es war ein großer Fehler, den Ausbau der erneuerbaren Energie in Deutschland auf die lange Bank zu schieben und weiter auf Kohle und Erdgas zu setzen. Die steigenden Energiepreise zeigen: richtig teuer wird der Strom nicht durch die Energiewende, sondern dann, wenn man die Energiewende verpennt.

Unsere Energiewende setzt auf saubere Energie und Gemeinwohlorientierung. Unsere Plan für eine soziale Energiewende basiert auf drei Säulen:

- **kommunal:** Statt auf Shell & RWE setzen wir auf kommunale Energieunternehmen.
- **dezentral:** Energiegewinnung auch vor Ort durch Bürgerinnen und Bürger.
- **in öffentlicher Hand:** Energie ist Grundversorgung und gehört – wie Straßen, Schienen oder Schulen – in öffentliche Hand.

Wir müssen uns von Öl und Gas unabhängig machen, deren derzeitigen Weltmarktpreise für die gestiegenen Energiepreise verantwortlich sind. Wind- und Solaranlagen müssen schnell ausgebaut werden. Insbesondere im Schlusslicht-Land Sachsen bei der Nutzung erneuerbarer Energien braucht es einen ambitionierten Ausbau unter Beteiligung und finanzieller Teilhabe der Menschen vor Ort. Wir wollen deshalb den Ausbau erneuerbarer Energieträger in Sachsen zur Strom- und Wärmeerzeugung massiv fördern. Hierfür setzen wir auf Sonne, Wind, Biomasse, Wasser und Erdwärme, um den Energieträger Kohle rasch abzulösen. Ziel ist es, dass der sächsische Bruttostromverbrauch vollständig von diesen Energieträgern gedeckt werden kann. Wir wollen einen ökologisch sinnvollen Mix verschiedener Energieformen erreichen, mit dem wir die Stromversorgung sicherstellen und der Strom bezahlbar bleibt.

Die Bundestagsfraktion von DIE LINKE hat ein **Sofortprogramm Energiesicherheit, Energiesouveränität und ökologische Transformation aufgelegt**.

☑ zum Sofortprogramm Energiesicherheit

(Image 11 – ,Data Die Linke')

First, the banner. The banner of the website is a combination of two semiotic resources or modes: imagery and written language. The pictographs utilized depict logos of various webpages and social media platforms. From left to right these are: Facebook, Flickr, Instagram, Telegram, Twitter, Youtube, and an arrow. These symbols function as hyperlinks to the social media channels and platforms utilised by the party.

As is their semiotic function, hyperlinks connect the website to these other platforms, allowing users to quickly move between them and gain access to further information. They also allow 'Die Linke' to redirect users to their other channels, enabling them to further spread their messages.

The banner depicts an electricity meter, which is held in a light blue colour. This colour allows contrasting against the other components of the banner but also, in terms of salience, drawing attention of the viewer . Further, the image serves to convey the topic of energy, which is central to the campaign. We can also see the last number of the meter changing. This indicates a rising amount of energy being consumed, further alluding to the central messages of the campaign being energy consumption and the need to do something about it. This way, the following parts of the composition are given a connotation of urgency. The white box serves to highlight its content, which is written in black to contrast against the background. 'Energy prices down!" is the central message of the campaign, and the aim presented here. The usage of an exclamation mark further underlines this, directing attention to what is written. It also functions to indicate an order or imperative, thus alluding to the statement being a demand towards political decision makers. The red box also serves to highlight its contained message and states "for a social energy transformation". The word "social" is in fat white font, emphasizing its importance to the message expressed. Through it, the image of people is created and connected to the issue presented above, thus contextualising rising energy prices as an issue of the people. Due to its close proximity to the white box, the relationship of the two is indicated, linking both statements into a cohesive message. The green circle with a white arrow further alludes to this message. The arrow symbolises the prices going down. The green coloured circle serves to contrast but also to convey a positive connotation through its colouring. Placed at the top of the page, the banner alone already conveys the central meaning of the website: those actors running it demand a decrease in energy prices, making the transformation of the energy sector more social and thus just.

The logo of the party following immediately beneath it indicates that the actor behind the campaign is the political party 'Die Linke'. The red font used throughout the website is in line with the colour scheme used by the party, expressing the relation between the two. Red is also a colour typically associated with social democratic, socialist, and even communist political movements, tracing the origin of the party in question. It also appeals to the narrative commonly presented by these political parties, of standing up for worker's demands and needs.

In combination, these modality markers serve to underline the role of the party, justify their cause, and provide credibility through an appeal to party and movement identity.

Going further through the website, the next utilized mode is imagery, which is separated from the rest of the composition through a white line. Banner and image are connected though through the party logo, again expressing that the depicted is a party action. The image used here, supposedly, shows a discussion round between various people. As has been indicated by the logos spread on both the cubes and the screen in the background, the depicted event is conducted by the party. The background positions the discussion round in an urban context, which is recognizable as Leipzig. The woman holding the microphone is likely a speaker, either interviewing other participants or giving a statement herself. As stated previously, the varying attire, age and gender of the participants indicates a degree of diversity, both in terms of socio-economic status, perception regarding the relevance of the event or job occupation. Due to their poses, and the direction of their gazes, it can be argued that they seem to listen to one another, further underlining the claim that what we see is a discussion round. The camera is positioned on their level, establishing that we as a viewer I am equal and have similar power. We do not know however whether these people were selected prior to the event or whether they joined spontaneously. As there are at least two empty cubes though, I personally suspect the latter. This further adds to the notion of the event (and the party) being inclusive, directed at those 'ordinary people' passing by in order to enable them to share their opinion. Of the people passing by, some are looking at the discussion round, further supporting this idea.

Of great relevance to the picture is the screen in the left background. Its semiotic function is to position the discussion round in front of it in a specific context. We cannot see the entire statement written on it. Judging by the context, however, the statement likely reads 'Energy companies are making really fat profits'. The word 'profits' is written in the biggest size and placed at the centre of the screen, making it the central message. Both 'really' and 'fat' emphasize the severity of the statement. Further, 'fat' is a rather derogatory term, giving the statement's meaning and subsequently energy companies a negative connotation.

To the left of 'profits' we find various dollar bills, which add to the idea that these companies are making substantial yields. These could also be conceived as an expression of excess in the form of a show-off, providing another negative image to energy companies. However, the most relevant aspect justifying the statement at hand, are the numbers. In four differently coloured circles, serving to contrast them against the background, the screen lists the revenue increase of three of the four major energy companies in Germany.

They are E.ON, RWE and Vattenfall. It also lists the increase in electricity prices, compared between 2020 and 2021. E.ON's yield increased by 81%, RWE's by 25%, Vattenfall's by 21% and energy prices overall rose by 41%. These numbers, likely taken from the companies' own reports, are recontextualised and resemiotised, charged with new meaning through the new context and their usage. This way, the screen's major statement is that these companies massively increased their revenue between 2020 and 2021, meaning during the Covid-19 pandemic. Lastly, the screen contains another white box in which we find more writing in black font. Although not entirely readable, the context suggests it says "Crisis winners to the checkout! Tax additional profit". The former of the two statements in fat font, emphasizing it. 'Crisis winners' indicates that these companies took advantage of the crisis by increasing their prices, further adding to their negative image. The exclamation mark again expresses a strong demand. Lastly, we are being told that these additional revenues should be taxed, alluding to them being unfair and again contributing to the negative connotation assigned to the companies.

At the bottom right corner, we can also find what seems to be a hyperlink to the party's website, again connecting this event to them and enabling the reader to visit their online platform.

The last major mode utilised here is also the most relevant of the multimodal text: written language in the form of a major paragraph. In terms of composition, its close proximity to the other modes establishes a connection. Overall, it contains the majority of information presented here. To begin with, the title states 'The social energy transition'. This links the following text to the previously expressed messages of the energy transition needing to be social. Following a white line which separates and emphasises the following, a red box underneath states 'This is our energy transition'. In connection, this conveys that the social energy transition presented here is the energy transition wanted by the party. The usage of 'our' creates a metaphoric connection between the party and the reader, alluding to their similar way of understanding the required energy transition and garnering sympathy for the claims at hand.

Further information is added in the paragraph underneath. To begin with, the delay of an increase of renewables as well as the continued usage of coal and natural gas are described as 'a big mistake', giving both statements a negative connotation. 'Big mistake' is also a rather childlike expression, making it both easier to understand and thus more appealing to readers, while also portraying the party as down-to-earth. It also presents these mistakes as obvious, almost assigning an aura of stupidity to them. It may thus also point to the 'naïve' decisions made by previous politicians.

The following sentence states that the rising energy prices prove, that energy is not this expensive due to the energy transition but when the energy transition is being 'slept in on'. This does two things: firstly, it justifies an energy transition through renewables right now. Secondly, it assigns blame to the big energy companies and the political decision-makers responsible previously. As energy is a highly national issue, the blame is likely directed at the parties previously in power, those being the CDU (centre-right) and the SPD (centre left), governing over 12 years together. As the previous expression, sleeping in on something is again a childlike expression with the same function.

The next paragraph is made up of two lines of written language, followed by three red bullet points. The first line states that 'our' energy transformation is based on 'clean' energy and is 'oriented towards the common good'. 'Our' directs the reader again to the party, but also serves to create a connection between the party, its statement, and the reader in a possible attempt to convince. Renewables are described as 'clean', providing them with further, positive connotation. The reference to the common good serves as justification for the claims made, directing the notion that these actions are good for everybody in the end while also assigning the label of morally good. The second line introduces us to the content of the following three bullet points, as it explains that the party's plan for a social energy transformation is based on three aspects. In terms of salience, the red again connects the statement to the party but also serves to garner the reader's attention. This is further supported and emphasised by the usage of bullet points, separating their content from a continuous paragraph. The first word of each bullet point is in fat font to emphasize it, while the following written language provides further context for the first statement.

The first bullet point states 'municipal: instead of Shell and RWE, we rely on municipal energy companies.' This connects the role of municipal energy providers for a social energy transition. Shell, a huge fossil fuel conglomerate, and RWE serve as examples of those energy providers profiteering from crises.

They are juxtaposed by municipal companies, rooted in the region and closer to the people. The party presents them as organisations through which the energy transition may take place in a social way, thus assigning positive meaning.

The second bullet point states 'decentralised: energy production also locally through citizens'. This expresses that energy production should not be conducted by these few, major companies in big plants only but instead in smaller plants in combination with production means owned by citizens, thus creating an energy system that is decentralised. Centralisation is thus also presented again as something with negative meaning.

The last bullet point states 'in public hands: energy is a basic supply and belongs - like roads, railways, or schools - in public hands'. There is a variety of aspects here. Firstly, 'public hand' signifies the state or municipality, so actors which undergo democratic control. Energy is thus understood as something that should also be democratically controlled. Secondly, energy is described as a basic supply, catering to the basic needs of people. This creates a narrative of energy being a necessity to which everyone should have access, like clean water. It is further contextualized by its comparison to other things, namely 'streets, railways, or schools'. These are infrastructure of great relevance to people, which the party thus illustrates as negative to be privatized. This appeals to the negative effects of privatization (thus giving it an inherently negative connotation) and may also be understood to extend the demand made by the party. Lastly, 'belong' also expresses that ownership and governance through the public sector are the natural state of things, compared to the unnatural privatization. In total this paragraph serves to express the energy transition proclaimed by 'Die Linke' which very much adhere to and depict notions of ED.

The last major paragraph begins by stating that an independence from oil and gas is required, as it is their prices on the global market that increases energy costs domestically. Wind and solar plants should be built quickly. In order to do so, the party presents an 'ambitious' expansion plan 'with participation and financial sharing of local people', which they describe as particularly relevant to Saxony which 'brings up the rear'. These statements contain a lot. Firstly, Saxony is described as trail light in terms of renewables. This alludes to the slow increase in renewables in Saxony and could also be understood as critique of the political decision-makers (which have mostly been CDU), justifying the proposed plan. Further the party reemphasises the notion of participation of citizens in this transformation, through financial ownership and political participation. This connects the statement to the previously expressed 'social' character of the energy transformation. It also can be understood as empowerment of citizens.

The text continues by expressing the 'massive support' for the expansion of renewables in Saxony. 'Massive' like 'ambitious' underlines the severity of their aims and seriousness of their approach. The party explains that it will utilize Solar, wind, biomass, and thermal energy to 'replace coal quickly'. An expansion of renewables is thus connected to a rapid phase-out of coal, which is therefore contrasted as dirty compared to the 'clean' renewables. The plan is to cover the entire Saxon energy consumption through renewables. Lastly, the party aims to reach an 'ecologically sensible mix of various energy forms' with which they want to 'ensure energy distribution and electricity that remains affordable.' Both statements underline the major messages of the multimodal text, as they concern the affordability of energy and security in terms of its production and distribution. They also link the notion of renewables and their affordability in contrast to expensive and dirty fossil fuels.

The last component of the text are two lines separated from the rest of the paragraph and a grey box. The separation works to emphasise the relevance of these last sentences, stating that the parliamentary faction of the party has proposed an 'immediate programme for energy security, energy sovereignty and ecological transformation'. The party thus positions itself further as able and ready to kickstart the aforementioned transformation. Crucially, the party outright refers to energy sovereignty here. As we established, the term is predominantly used in postcolonial contexts, referring to the party's proletariat and egalitarian ideas. As the last quoted line is in fat font, the reader is informed of its importance. The grey box beneath it contains written language stating 'to the immediate programme' as well as an arrow. The box, highlighted against the white backdrop, functions as hyperlink to the immediate programme. The arrow further underlines this notion. Through their spatial proximity, the immediate programme is presented as an answer of the party to the above presented issues and aims, expressing their plan through which they aim to achieve the formulated goals.

6. Discussion

Despite two of the same modes being used in almost every set of data, my analysis provides great insight into how differently these modes were utilised by the respective actor. Each employed the modes in varying ways, charging them with specific messages and connotations to construct an affirmative but differently centred and specifically curated discourse and narrative on energy democracy.

To begin with, the Konzeptwerke utilised both written language and imagery to narratively describe the situation around Pödelwitz and the connected protests around the village.

The modes were also used to generate a utopian outlook on the situation in 2025, in which energy democracy is presented both as solution to the issue as well as an outcome of increased engagement. This refers back to notions presented in my theory section on the varying understandings of ED. Importantly, the Konzeptwerke were the only actor to directly name ED as such, referring to it twice and thus paying specific emphasis on the communication of the social movement, its aims, and claims. Particular emphasis was given to the decentralised energy production through the usage of renewables. Sensible in itself for climate protection, this decentralisation is portrayed as an empowering act for citizens and one that can revitalise Pödelwitz and its region in opposition to the coal pit.

The Konzeptwerke illustrates the further empowerment of the citizens through the formation of a cooperative, which is understood as central and well-functioning organisation form of ED. Democratic control is portrayed as hugely relevant, enabling decision making processes as well as consequences and costs of decisions to be split equally among members.

ED's attractiveness is further strengthened through a critique of the fossil fuel industry, expressed in the demand for a coal phase-out and the possible destruction of the village. The village serves as regional anchor point in their narrative, appealing to regional sentiments of protesters and citizens wanting to protect the village or strengthen their region through engagement in ED. The social movement is directly portrayed in the images utilised, showing multiple occasions of protest and crowds of people. Generally, these images serve to support the major statements and claims made through written language. Through their visuality they are afforded a more illustrative quality than the written language only.

Importantly, direct connections are drawn to related social movements such as climate justice. By doing so, the Konzeptwerke also attributes an international quality to the issue and ED movement outside of the regional context predominant in their text. Climate protection is thus also once again emphasised and made central. The thus created discourse portrays ED as characterised by its efforts for climate protection through renewables as well as empowered citizens that democratically organise and operate a decentralised energy production that enables the protection and strengthening of the region.

As stated in the beginning though, their brochure is formulated as a utopian outlook. Much of their writing thus is hypothetical and not necessarily based on the actual developments. This is not directly acknowledged in the data set other than in the title of the brochure itself, which could thus be misleading to readers and cause critique, providing a possible starting point for further analysis.

Although utilising many of the same motives, the narrative and discourse generated by the Leipziger Energiegenossenschaften differ substantially in their emphasis and aim. The usage of a video to present themselves entails very different affordances for the communication of their cause. Central to their video is information regarding their message and the possibility to garner support for the cooperative, increasing its number of members and thus also its ability to promote renewable energy production. The cooperative and ED are portrayed as easy-going, down to earth, and democratically operated organisation, dramatically contrasting it to big cooperations dominating the energy sector. They are humorously critiqued and portrayed as disruptive and uninterested in promoting a sustainable energy system and its transformation. Instead, the cooperative presents the solution to lie in citizens themselves, which are empowered through their membership in the cooperative and thus abstractly the ED movement.

Through their membership they can collectively finance more decentralised renewable energy production while at the same time gaining revenue from it. The financial aspect is utilised as convincing argument for membership but also for the feasibility of ED as such. This notion is also mirrored in the increased accessibility of green electricity generated by the cooperative, making energy more affordable for all.

Choice and democratic participation in decision-making are central to the discourse generated here and are presented as major advantages to other forms of organisation. The narrative constructed is also characterised by calling on emotional attachments of various forms. Through its strong relation to the region and membership of locals, the cooperative presents itself as emotionally rooted in the environment of Leipzig with a responsibility to contribute to its development and the well-being of its citizens. They further appeal to emotional sentiments of responsibility for future generations. Enabled through the usage of the video, the sympathetically depicted speaker can convey these feelings more effectively through body language, appearance, the frame setting as well as direct speech. This way, the cooperative also portrays membership as easy and quickly achievable, making engagement more attractive. The cooperative directly links to the ED social movement and its promoters through the depiction of a demonstration for increased renewables and less nuclear energy.

However, they never name ED directly, instead opting for a communication of the movement through themselves as a manifestation of it. The depicted protest could also be seen as a link to social movements such as climate justice, although these and the international quality of these social movements are not directly expressed.

Importantly, the price of shares and the necessity to buy a specific amount of them is not given in the video, which could be misleading to viewers. Not naming ED could also have specific implications with its effects being questionable in terms of positive or negative impact. After all, the usage of the term could be confusing to some, while the model of a cooperative is well accepted, particularly in East Germany. An analysis of sentiments towards ED and the communication of it could be of relevance for further research. The here-created discourse portrays ED through the example of the cooperative as centred around an easy and rewarding character, citizen empowerment, sensible investment, and a democratically controlled, decentralised energy system through renewables.

The application of a specific, sympathetic personality is also central to the discourse generated by the Leipziger Stadtwerke. The text is a narrative description of their 'Bürgersparen' project, which saw investment by citizens into the company for the sake of more renewables. The utilised modes of imagery and written language work similarly to the case of the Konzeptwerke, with imagery taking a supportive but important role in illustrating the information conveyed in the written language. The project's cause and development are exemplified on the case of a specific person, which takes on a sort of spokesperson role.

The given information is thereby personalised, conveying a sympathetic and knowledgeable motive for the justification and credibility of the company and their project, while also establishing a personal relation to the reader. This way, motives of ED such as the reduction of fossil fuels, more renewables, environmental protection, and a degree of citizen empowerment, are conveyed as sensible in a number of ways, despite never naming ED as such. These core claims are particularly supported by the repeated notion of financial revenue stemming from engagement in the project, making the financial argument a central convincing idea of the text. The thus generated feasibility, underlined through examples of other local manifestation of ED, is positioned as another convincing argument for readers. The generated discourse also appeals to emotional attachments to the region and the city of Leipzig through the heavily regionalised character of the Stadtwerke: Thus the 'Bürgersparen' is presented as a case of ED that supports the region's development sustainably.

Other emotions appealed to include a sense of pride in making a seemingly smart investment choice, the support of children both through the protection of the environment and a secured green energy supply, as well as the ability to personally observe the development of the project.

Although containing some degree of citizen empowerment, the narrative constructed does not emphasise it as much as those of the other actors, merely referencing it through the direct engagement of citizens in the project. The same applies to decentralised energy production, which is not mentioned at all. That is not surprising in the context of the Stadtwerke as an actor, which is a municipally owned but nevertheless in itself centralised energy company that looks to broaden its own energy production and appeal to possible customers. The thus created discourse is not as direct in its communication of ED and rather utilises components of it to garner support for the company. However, the company itself is an organisation form prioritised in ED due to its democratic control and non-profit character. A discourse strengthening the role of the Stadtwerke as a manifestation of ED, through citizen engagement and investment is thus inherently, though indirectly, centred on the applicability of ED's notions. Importantly, this discourse is devoid of connections to other social movements and the notion of social movement itself.

Like the rest of the actors, Die Linke predominantly utilises the modes of imagery and written language, with imagery providing supportive context to the information conveyed in the written language. However, their approach to ED is different compared to the other actors, despite picking up many of the already mentioned aspects of it. At the centre of their narrative are social aspects, particularly affordability. They criticise rising energy prices, thus inherently referring to issues of energy poverty, as presented in my theory. Along this issue, their discourse is heavily characterised by a critique of the current sector and private companies, which they describe as crisis winners. This demonisation of private, multinational companies makes sense, considering the party's background in the worker's movement and socialism. Particularly in relation to another social movement mentioned, namely energy sovereignty, this postcolonial and worker-focused notion is underlined. Their critique is expanded to political decision-makers, both on the regional and national levels. The party thus presents itself as more concerned and able to deal with the issue of energy poverty, attempting to provide a range of convincing arguments.

ED, despite not being named, is followingly presented as the party's answer to the issues at hand, with a strong emphasis on many of its core sentiments, like an expansion of renewables, decentralised energy production by citizens as well as support for organisation forms like Stadtwerke and cooperatives. In line with the social character mentioned, energy is portrayed as a basic need for people, thus criticising an attempted privatization of it. This thought continues with its comparison to crucial infrastructure like roads and further emotionally charged ones such as schools.

This way, the party pays particular relevance to public ownership, again disregarding privatization. Thus, citizens are implicitly empowered, both as energy producers and through the ability of democratic control of the public sector. Their financial engagement is mentioned, but only secondary to their participative function. Importantly, the regionality also plays a distinct role, with frequent mentioning of Saxony's lack of renewables. However, unlike other actors, Die Linke does not charge this regional, local relationship with specific connotation and emotional value. The created discourse is a confrontational one, centred around critique of political rivals and large-scale companies, with an undeniable focus on more democratically functioning organisations, increased renewables and thus decreased energy prices. Although referred to, climate protection is not made very explicit in the here created narrative, relegating it to secondary importance, instead focusing on the social consequences of rising prices due to fossil fuels. This way, the party could want to gain support for their approach in bringing about a social energy transition, very in line with EDs aims.

These are the various ways my actors utilise their respective modes and the diverse discourses they produce around ED. Although all supportive of it, they manifest ED and its aspects in differing form, often in connection to additional focuses such as increased public support or investment. However, ED is inherent in all the data collected, with communication of it ranging from very directly and for its own purpose, to rather implicitly and in connection with other messages. This is a crucial notion to consider, as it illustrates that these actors, although to differing degrees, consciously create and influence the ED discourse, generating specific narratives and publics around it. While the Stadtwerke only touches the topic, bringing up ED very indirectly, the Konzeptwerke or the cooperative convey its' message very directly. This has predominantly local implications, thus illustrating that when wanting to properly understand ED and its actors, a local focus is required.

Importantly, this research has its limitations, particularly concerning the selection of actors and incredibly wide scope of available data, from which only some has been purposely selected. More research is required in differing local contexts to provide a better insight into the likely varying practices actors in other places apply in curating discourses around ED. Further, data structured differently could also present an interesting starting point to additional research, examining how other modes might be utilised. As a global social movement, ED has to be understood as such. However, it is the local and sometimes even national manifestation that already exist, that provide insights into how ED can shape social practice, the meaning it is assigned to, and the construction of a social reality around it.

7. Conclusion

Coming to the end of this thesis, I want to again pose the question on which it is based on: How do different local, energy democracy-endorsing actors promote ED and shape the (local) discourses surrounding the issue?

In this work, I have presented an overview of the developing and dispersed literature on ED, its related social movements as well as the term social movement itself. Connecting the topic to notions of discourse and multimodality, I then conducted a multimodal discourse analysis on a set of data taken from four different actors operating in the city of Leipzig. These actors are constituted by a wide range of different organisation forms, including a political party, a think tank and association, a cooperative and a company. From these actors, a diverse range of data has been collected, carefully singling out data dealing with energy democracy more implicitly. Along the framework of multimodal discourse analysis, the varying semiotic resources, mostly written language, speech, and imagery, but also hyperlinks have been analysed, for instance in relation to their wording or grammar, composition, salience and framing. Their analysis thus illustrates the conscious choices made by actors regarding their modes and the subsequent generation of varying discourses on the issue. All observable discourses support core claims of ED, with many actors including notions such as citizen empowerment, decentralised energy production and an increase in renewables, also for the sake of climate protection. However, their focuses differ substantially, with many particularly functioning by creating a narrative in which ED is related to other issues. These include social issues such as (energy) poverty, the question of sensible investment, emotional sentiments connected to the local context or the presented character of an organisation, as well as critique of political decision makers and the current energy sector. This way, the actors promote ED by presenting both immediate actions to deal with wider societal issues as well as by illustrating a possible outcome of engagement with its central ideas.

My research illustrates the relevance that should be attributed to the local context of ED, as it heavily shapes how these actors curate their discourses and how well ED may already have been manifested. This again poses implications for how actors may or may not communicate it. This idea can be applied to various other context around the globe, with different practices and thus resulting narratives likely to be found. As a global topic, such research needs to be done in time. After all, energy is an issue concerning all of us now and in the future, prompting people all over the globe to ultimately demand 'Power to the People!'

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