

# **Teenagers' Guide to Climate Crisis: Climate Policy and Action Frames of German Fridays for Future Activists**

By

Sunna Laura Maaren Kokkonen

Submitted to

Central European University

Department of International Relations

*In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts*

Supervisor: Prof. Michael Merlingen

Word Count: 16 375

Budapest, Hungary

2020

## Abstract

Fridays for Future (FFF) is a youth climate movement, initiated by the Swedish activist Greta Thunberg, protesting insufficient climate action and policies around the world. So far, research and media have concentrated on describing the movement as youth, but not their political messages. This thesis will examine and analyze climate policy and action frames presented by German FFF participants, drawing from activist interviews and protest images on Instagram as research data. The material shows that FFF is not home to anything resembling a uniform worldview, but instead, features very pluralistic frames, suggesting a high level of ideological fragmentation typical to 2010s social movements. There is immense variation within all types of frames addressed in this thesis: the causes and the victims of climate crisis, how FFF participants view societal inequalities in connection to climate crisis, and the actions they regard as effective for climate change mitigation. The frames presented by FFF participants touch upon topical discussions in climate movement and climate policy literature, for instance, debates about antropocentrism and biocentrism, climate inequality between the Global North and the Global South, and taking action within existing political institutions or against them. The data also indicates that FFF participants are able to engage with both micro- and macro-level frames of action and policy: everyday actions and a big picture of the political systems.

## Acknowledgements

Before we dive into the world of climate activism, I would like to make stop to thank those who made this thesis come true. Vielen Dank, my supervisor, professor Michael Merlingen, who has made us supervisees his top priority. Be it in person or online, in Budapest or in Vienna, Michael was always there for me giving advice, inspiration and constructive feedback. Thanks to him, my messy thoughts and notes are now neatly packaged in the form of this dissertation. I also want to thank Vera Eliasova and Zsuzsanna Tóth for their relentless fight for the readability of this thesis – as well as Freya, my inofficial but just as talented writing instructor. Furthermore, I will be forever grateful to the CEU professors who have taken me for a two-year ride to the wonders and the grievances of the world.

Köszönöm and thank you, my dear CEU friends – it is you that I've learned the most from and who have brought me the most joy during our rocky ride through protests in Budapest, the endless hallways of the new Vienna campus and a global pandemic. And Matze, you and your love kept me sane and well fed, even when the lockdown stripped us from all other social contacts but each other, and from all other hobbies but table tennis in Mariannenpark.

In a way, this thesis is an ode to Mother Earth, compiled from a choir of young voices. Even though she does not speak Human, I would still like to express my endless gratitude to the planet we have the privilege to reside on, and to my incredible human parents who taught me to appreciate the Earth in everything I do.

# Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
1. Literature review.....	5
1.1. The past and the present of climate movements.....	5
1.2. Framing as a tool for studying social movements.....	9
2. Fridays for Future as a social movement.....	12
2.1. Fridays for Future in Germany.....	15
3. Methodology.....	17
3.1. Interviews.....	19
3.2. Digital ethnography on Instagram.....	22
4. "Climate activism is connected to global justice": frames of climate inequality.....	24
4.1. Climate crisis creating and strengthening inequalities.....	25
4.2. Positionality and privileges home and abroad.....	30
5. The villains and the victims of climate crisis.....	34
5.1. Identifying the villains.....	35
5.2. Humans and nature, humans within nature.....	39
5.2.1. Humans suffering from environmental degradation.....	41
5.2.1. "Eco instead of ego" – Mother Earth as climate crisis victim.....	44
6. Plans for a better world: frames of dissenting action.....	46
6.1. "I trust in politics in the first place": a dutiful way forward.....	47
6.2. Dangerous dissent: refusal and other-doing.....	51
Conclusions.....	58
Bibliography.....	60
Annex I: Examples of interview questions.....	69

## Introduction

On a Friday in August 2018, the then 15-year-old Greta Thunberg sat down in front of the Swedish parliament for the first time, skipping school in order to protest the government not taking sufficient climate action.<sup>1</sup> Soon, other youngsters joined her protest, creating the Fridays for Future (FFF) movement from the recurring Friday school strikes. By the end of the 2018, the novel movement was covered in the media internationally, spreading the emerging loose movement further. In spring 2019, young activists had taken their climate frustrations to the streets around the world from Brussels to Nairobi – the organizers of the first ever global strike in March claim that more than 1.4 million people around the world took part in the event.<sup>2</sup> As 2019 rolled on, FFF climate protests continued to grow, and the December demonstration attracted a global participation of over 4 million, making it the "largest climate protest in history".<sup>3</sup>

The core message of the youth protestors is as follows: to apply pressure on decision-makers to listen to the scientific community and to rapidly mitigate climate crisis by decarbonizing global political and economic structures. The impact of FFF is already remarkable, as "never before have so many young people taken to the streets to demand climate action". The movement has attracted unprecedented international media coverage, sparking both positive and negative responses from wider audiences. Nevertheless, there are as many takes on

---

<sup>1</sup> David Crouch, "The Swedish 15-year-old who is cutting class to fight the climate crisis," *The Guardian*, September 1, 2018.

<sup>2</sup> Damian Carrington, "School climate strikes: 1.4 million people take part, say campaigners," *The Guardian*, March 19, 2019.

<sup>3</sup> Grace Hauck, "Friday's global strike was likely the largest climate rally ever," *Usa Today*, December 15, 2019.

the argument as there are protestors, something which has been largely ignored both by the media and the emerging research on the movement.

FFF has been largely personified into its figurehead, Greta Thunberg, who has become an icon for demanding urgent climate change mitigation measures: she has delivered speeches in top-level international summits, such as the UN COP 2019 and the Davos summit. The iconization of Greta not only puts immense pressure on Thunberg herself, but also simplifies the whole FFF movement into one, rather privileged individual. By paying attention to Thunberg only, media, politicians and regular people all over the world ignore the millions of other voices within the FFF movement calling for climate action. Their worldviews, hopes and fears go unnoticed as Thunberg alone has been shoved into the spotlight. As the German protest researcher Simon Teune has stated, the gigantic wave that FFF has grown into in Germany has not been caused by Thunberg: the dissenting potential of climate-conscious youth has been brewing for years, if not decades. The FFF strikes have sparked both positive and negative responses: it has encouraged other groups to found satellite movements of support, such as Scientist for Future.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, political actors have attempted to invade the movement to advance their own interest or to argue against the FFF agenda(s) by appealing to the protestors' insufficient maturity and knowledge about the issues they discuss.<sup>5</sup>

In the few existing piece of research, in the media and from decision makers, there is a tendency to focus on the components of FFF and not its messaging.<sup>6</sup> The participants' age,

---

<sup>4</sup> Scientists for Future website, <https://www.scientists4future.org> (accessed June 4, 2020).

<sup>5</sup> Sanna Ukkola, "Ilmastoliikkeen pitää jättää lapset rauhaan – nyt kiusaajat ahdistivat 17-vuotiaan aktivistin tauolle," *Iltalehti*, May 14, 2020.

<sup>6</sup> Mattias Wahlström, Piotr Kocyba, Michiel de Vydt and Joost de Moor, "Protest for a future: Composition, mobilization and motives of the participants in Fridays for Future climate protest on 15 March, 2019 in 13 European cities", [https://protestinstitut.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/20190709\\_Protest-for-a-future\\_GCS-Descriptive-Report.pdf](https://protestinstitut.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/20190709_Protest-for-a-future_GCS-Descriptive-Report.pdf) (accessed May 8, 2020); Florence Schultz, "Fridays for Future Germany struggles with growing media attention," *Euractiv*, April 24, 2019.

gender and lack of political experience, together with the iconization of Greta Thunberg, divert attention away from the FFF participants' arguments.<sup>7</sup> Instead of looking at these reflections on the movement as produced by non-members, my thesis places the young strikers back into the spotlight and pays attention to their own framings of climate crisis: its causes, its victims and how to solve it. Even though they may not be academically trained about the technicalities of the Paris Agreement or biocentrism, many of them seem to want to convey strong messages about the future: their own and of the planet.

My thesis approaches the subjective views held by FFF participants by examining and analyzing the frames which they use to describe different international and political aspects of the climate crisis, for example, what or who is to blame for the crisis, the social inequalities it creates and the solutions to it. The frames FFF participants apply provide access to the values and ideologies possessed by the participants: what they view as undesirable or desirable, and why. I will discuss the different climate crisis frames presented by FFF participants and relate them to relevant body of research, varying from environmental philosophy to neo-marxism depending on the ideological implications of the frames. The scope of the research will be limited to German FFF participants, and my data consists of two sources: visual analysis of 117 Instagram photos submitted to the FFF online climate strike in German on the weekend of April 24-26, and qualitative Skype and phone interviews conducted with six 14–26-year-old German FFF activists.

---

<sup>7</sup> Elizabeth Dirth, "Responding to Fridays for Future and the Youth Movement for Climate Justice," Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies Potsdam blog post, September 19, 2020, <https://www.iass-potsdam.de/en/blog/2019/09/responding-fridays-future-and-youth-movement-climate-justice> (accessed June 8, 2020).

There is novelty value to addressing and analyzing the climate crisis frames presented by FFF activists, as their values and ideologies have not been researched before. In addition, as FFF is the largest and the most famous contemporary climate mobilization<sup>8</sup>, studying how they frame climate crisis causes, solutions and action contains important information about critical climate discourse today. The plurality of framings in the research data provide valuable insight to how the next generation of German climate activists understand one of the most pressing and global issues of humankind (and the Earth). Some of the most recent studies on social movements have suggested that in the last decade, movements have become both internally more ideologically diffuse and more intersectional with each other.<sup>9</sup> My research will provide insight into those notions in the context of FFF in Germany.

The thesis begins with a literature review and a background chapter on FFF as movement, before exploring the methodological approach taken and how it will be applied. These are followed by three analytical chapters; Chapter 4 focuses on social inequalities of climate change (climate justice), Chapter 5 is dedicated to frames of blame and victims, and Chapter 6 addresses the frames of proposed action to halt the looming climate emergency.

---

<sup>8</sup> Matthew Taylor, Jonathan Watts, and John Bartlett, "Climate crisis: 6 million people join latest wave of global protests," *The Guardian*, September 27, 2020.

<sup>9</sup> Dana Fisher, *American Resistance: From the Women's March to the Blue Wave* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019); B. Klandermans et al., "Mobilization Without Organization: The Case of Unaffiliated Demonstrators," *European Sociological Review* 30, no. 6 (December 1, 2014): 702–16, <https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcu068>.



# 1. Literature review

This thesis builds on two different strands of social movements literature: the tradition studying the external characteristics and impacts of environmental and climate movements, and research on frames applied by social movements and their participants, ones that shed light on their values and ideologies. The first one is necessary for understanding the history and background of climate movements. However, it does not pay attention to addressing the ideological and normative messages of these movements sufficiently but rather focuses on their output and interaction with other political actors. This is why I have chosen to approach the ideological dimensions residing within FFF through climate action and policy frames presented by its participants. The literature about framing will provide the theoretical understanding and practical tools necessary for analyzing frames and their implications arising from the research data. By looking at the critical bottom-up frames presented by regular FFF participants, I also attempt to access and understand the assumed certainties and blind spots hidden in those frames, still without generalizing these statements or to erase their differences.<sup>10</sup>

## 1.1. The past and the present of climate movements

Social movements are defined as a dynamic where "single episodes of collective action are perceived as components of a longer-lasting action".<sup>11</sup> They aim to spark societal change and

---

<sup>10</sup> Judith Williamson, *Decoding Advertisements: Ideology and Meaning in Advertising* (London:Marion Boyars, 1994).

<sup>11</sup> Donatella Della Porta and Mario Diani, *Social Movements: An Introduction*, 2nd ed (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006).

offer social functions, such as feelings of unity and solidarity, for their participants.<sup>12</sup> Social movements surfaced into the social sciences research agenda in the late 1960s when groups such as environmentalist or LGBTQ+ activism emerged in the Global North.<sup>13</sup> Previously, civil society actors had mainly addressed economic topics, but the so called new social movements raised concerns about cultural and social issues cultural and social issues, as well.<sup>14</sup> According to Dietz and Garrelts, the climate movement can be considered as a social movement as it fits most criteria for being one: it has a political objective, which it advances most prominently through protests, and it has been existed long enough to become established.<sup>15</sup>

Large-scale environmental movements are considered to originate from the publication of Rachel Carson's book, *Silent Spring*, about the devastating environmental impacts of pesticides in 1962.<sup>16</sup> Environmentalist ideas not only gained popularity in the United States, but also elsewhere, mostly in the Global North. In Germany, ideas of environmental protection have been presented by organized civil society actors for over a century, but they increased immensely in popularity in the 1980s: NGOs, activists groups and alternative consumerism patterns lead to electing the first Green members of parliament and incorporating environmentalist thinking into state-level decision-making.<sup>17</sup> The climate movement has become its own strand of

---

<sup>12</sup> Della Porta and Diani.

<sup>13</sup> Nelson A. Pichardo, "New Social Movements: A Critical Review," *Annual Review of Sociology* 23 (1997) 411-430.

<sup>14</sup> Della Porta and Diani, *Social Movements: An Introduction*; Pichardo, "New Social Movements".

<sup>15</sup> Matthias Dietz and Heiko Garrelts, "Introduction," in Matthias Dietz and Heiko Garrelts, eds., *Routledge Handbook of the Climate Change Movement*, Routledge International Handbooks (London: Routledge, 2014).

<sup>16</sup> Britain A. Scott et al., *Psychology for Sustainability*, 4th edition (New York, NY London: Routledge, 2016).

<sup>17</sup> Axel Goodbody, *The Culture of German Environmentalism: Anxieties, Visions, Realities* (New York, Berghahn Books, 2002); Frank Uekötter, *The Greenest Nation? A New History of German Environmentalism*, History for a Sustainable Future (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2014).

environmental movements after the creation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).<sup>18</sup>

However, one cannot talk about one climate movement only: it is an umbrella term describing a myriad of different social movements calling for climate action, which also can be understood very differently, varying from social justice to the protection of the biosphere. The different strands of the movement can focus on different issues, for example, the North-South disparity, age and gender.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, Fridays for Future is the successor of numerous environmentalist and climate movements before it or parallel to it, and it can draw from the experiences and the struggles of the ones before it.

The rapid spread of FFF has been influenced by the immense change brought to the realm of social movements by the internet, especially by social media. In addition to creating whole new platforms for organization and action, social media has also expanded the reach of social movements geographically and temporally.<sup>20</sup> As Shirky notes, communication technology has made it easy for individuals to find like-minded company, organize and plan collective action, and create and spread appealing messages with virtually no costs. Participants of a movement can engage with each other and create communities of learning, advice and encouragement online.<sup>21</sup> Perhaps the most global example of this is #metoo, which emerged in 2017 raising awareness of sexual abuse present in the American society but spread quickly worldwide.<sup>22</sup> In a

---

<sup>18</sup> Matthias Dietz and Heiko Garrelts, "Introduction".

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> Clay Shirky, *Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing without Organizations* (New York: Penguin, 2009).

<sup>21</sup> Shirky, *Here comes Everybody*.

<sup>22</sup> Rituparna Bhattacharyya, "#Metoo Movement: An Awareness Campaign," *International Journal of Innovation, Creativity and Change* 3:4 (2018) 1-12.

way, FFF bears resemblance to #metoo with its prominent online presence, low-cost but large-scale action and its extremely swift global spread.

The social media age has changed social movements in two major ways: they seem to have more cross-pollination with each other and more internal ideological diversity than ever. Dana Fisher, who has observed the recent social movements in the United States, argues that people dedicate themselves to a single movement less than before but rather support different movements on an *ad hoc* basis.<sup>23</sup> This creates intersectionality between movements, causing climate issues to emerge in movements beyond those labelled as climate movements, and other societal questions surfacing in climate movements.<sup>24</sup>

Another significant change taking place since 2010 is the rising proportion of unaffiliated participants in protests: people with less protesting or organizational experience are taking part in mass protests, such as climate demonstrations.<sup>25</sup> Participants no longer share a complete ideology but possess diverse views, united in the event by "a diffuse search for common denominators".<sup>26</sup> The plurality of participants from different backgrounds, views and opinions coming together under a loose umbrella makes it interesting to examine and analyze the ideological elements found within a single movement. My research will provide an example of this in regards to German FFF participants.

---

<sup>23</sup> Fisher, *American Resistance*.

<sup>24</sup> Donatella Della Porta, ed., *The Global Justice Movement: Cross-National and Transnational Perspectives* (Boulder: Paradigm Publ, 2007).

<sup>25</sup> Klandermans et al., "Mobilization Without Organization."

<sup>26</sup> Klandermans et al.

## 1.2. Framing as a tool for studying social movements

Framing is a concept developed by Erving Goffmann in the late 1970s, which refers to the signifying process of presenting an issue or a phenomenon,<sup>27</sup> expressing what makes it relevant and important and what should be done about it.<sup>28</sup> Frames are ever-changing interpretive products and processes of meaning-making taking place in a socially constructed world: they appear, change and shift in social interaction.<sup>29</sup> Manifesting or applying a frame tells a tale of its presenters' subjectivity, for example their values, beliefs and goals and thus, is connected to ideology.<sup>30</sup> In short, ideologies help their holder to make sense of themselves and the world, signalling their holder what is possible and impossible, or good or bad.<sup>31</sup> In the context of this thesis, I refer to personalize ideologies: the FFF participants' everyday reflections and conceptions, which still touch upon their structural understanding of the world.<sup>32</sup> Frames serve as normative or ideological statements, communicated in societies by various actors, including social movements.

Frames entered into the study of social movements in the late 1970s and early 1980s, initially through identifying conflicts between issue frames presented by the media and a

---

<sup>27</sup> Erving Goffman, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1974).

<sup>28</sup> Hank Johnston and John A. Noakes, "Frames of Protest: A road Map to a Perspective" in eds., *Frames of Protest: Social Movements and the Framing Perspective* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc, 2005).

<sup>29</sup> David Snow, "Framing Processes, Ideology, and Discursive Fields," in David Snow et al., *Blackwell Companion to Social Movements* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004).

<sup>30</sup> David Snow and Robert D. Benford, "Ideology, Frame Resonance and Participant Mobilization," in Bert Klandermans, ed., *From Structure to Action: Comparing Social Movement Research across Cultures*, International Social Movement Research 1 (Greenwich, Conn. u.a: JAI, 1989).

<sup>31</sup> Göran Therborn, *The Ideology of Power and the Power of Ideology*, 4th impression, 1999, Verso Classics ed (London New York NY: Verso, 1999).

<sup>32</sup> Everyday manifestations of ideology are addressed by eg. Xavier Guillaume and Jef Huysmans, "The Concept of 'the Everyday': Ephemeral Politics and the Abundance of Life," *Cooperation and Conflict* 54, no. 2 (June 2019): 278–96, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010836718815520>.

movement.<sup>33</sup> Social movements present frames in order to express their "ideological elements and value orientation", thus showing their normative ideas for action.<sup>34</sup> Frames communicated by and about social movements express some core elements of ideologies: they diagnose an issue, present a solution to it and motivate people to bring the desired change about. Snow and Benford identify these three functions of frames as diagnostic, prognostic and motivational framing.<sup>35</sup> Hence, studying frames help make sense of the normative and ideological content presented by social movements through them. Social movements use frames in various ways: to counter their ideas with actors or movements disagreeing with their normative views, communicate their ideas to current or future members, or to influence other actors, such as the media or decision-makers.<sup>36</sup> Usually frames are made and communicated by the movement leadership and directed at their constituents or potential constituents, which is not the case in my thesis. Instead, I will look at the framings communicated by FFF participants and examine their ideological, social and political backdrop and implications.

Some research has already been conducted on the frames presented by the different strands of the climate movement, and my work will address and add to these previous findings.<sup>37</sup> The common frame uniting the climate movement is the narrative of a human-inflicted climate change requiring urgent mitigation actions.<sup>38</sup> However, there are also internal conflicting frames between different climate movements and even within them. Della Porta and Parks introduces

---

<sup>33</sup> Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World Is Watching: Mass Media in the Making & Unmaking of the New Left* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003).

<sup>34</sup> Snow and Benford, "Ideology, Frame Resonance and Participant Mobilization".

<sup>35</sup> Snow and Benford, "Ideology, Frame Resonance and Participant Mobilization".

<sup>36</sup> Snow and Benford, "Ideology, Frame Resonance and Participant Mobilization"; Johnston and Noakes, "Frames of Protest: A road Map to a Perspective".

<sup>37</sup> See eg. Donatella Della Porta and Louisa Parks, "Framing processes in the climate movement: From climate change to climate justice," in Dietz and Garrelts, *Routledge Handbook of the Climate Change Movement*.

<sup>38</sup> Donatella Della Porta and Louisa Parks, "Framing processes in the climate movement".

some of the most divisive ones: the radical frame blames capitalism for climate crisis, a moderate frame focuses on common responsibility and adaptation, climate justice stresses the North-South divide in the causes and impacts of climate change, and yet another frame highlights the intergenerational injustice created by climate change.<sup>39</sup> These, together with other frames raised by FFF participants, will be addressed in my analysis. Finally, it has been suggested by Fuster Morell that the advanced technologies, such as internet and especially social media, may accelerate the exchange of frames between movements.<sup>40</sup> Combined with the notions of increased interaction between movements and diversified ideological commitments within a single movement, my approach of examining the mosaic of frames inside FFF becomes even more relevant and justified.

---

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> Mayo Fuster Morell, *An Introductory Historical Contextualization of Online Creation Communities for the Building of Digital Commons: The Emergence of a Free Cultural Movement* 7th International Conference on Internet, Law and Politics online publication, [http://ceur-ws.org/Vol-739/paper\\_7.pdf](http://ceur-ws.org/Vol-739/paper_7.pdf) (accessed June 5, 2020).

## 2. Fridays for Future as a social movement

In just two years, Fridays for Future has grown from a one-girl protest into a truly global movement, mobilizing millions of protestors to the streets. What started as a teenager's appeal to decision-makers has become a loose, pluralist umbrella for mainly young individuals concerned about the climate. According to the FFF website, the main aim of the movement is awareness of the urgent need of adopting more ambitious climate policies on all levels of governance.<sup>41</sup> More specifically, the website appeals to Paris Agreement as a binding baseline for climate action and policies: governments should stick to the 1,5° C temperature increase trajectory in order to cause "fewer climate-related risks for natural and human systems".<sup>42</sup> Based on the FFF official statements, such as those made on their website and social media channels, the movement criticizes climate policies and action taken (or not taken) by national governments and international bodies and appeals to science as a guideline for formulating new policies in two ways. Firstly, scientific information about climate emergency and its impacts should be trusted as an authority.<sup>43</sup> Secondly, thanks to science and technology, solutions for reaching a low-emissions society already exist – it is only the political will and commitment that does not.

The most visible form of action taken by FFF is its Friday strikes, varying from small local protests to the large global demonstrations, breaking it to the headlines around the world. In addition to the traditional street protests, Fridays for Future also organizes other forms of action,

---

<sup>41</sup> Fridays for Future website, "Reasons to strike," <https://fridaysforfuture.org/take-action/reasons-to-strike/> (accessed May 19, 2020).

<sup>42</sup> Fridays for Future website, "Reasons to strike".

<sup>43</sup> See eg. Fridays for Future website, "Reasons to strike".



eg. online protests and educational events.<sup>44</sup> What has made the global spread of the movement possible as well as planning and executing all its action is its online presence, especially on social media.<sup>45</sup> As stated by Shirky, social media enables larger groups than ever to come together to plan and coordinated action with very low costs or for free<sup>46</sup>, as is the case of organizing the large FFF street demonstrations.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, social media serves as a platform for sharing information: a function widely used by FFF to spread emotionally appealing images and videos, either from collective FFF accounts or by individuals.<sup>48</sup> Most importantly, social media is used as a channel between individuals who already know each other: for example, the majority of the young Friday climate strike participants identify friendship or family ties as their reason to take part in the protest.<sup>49</sup> Much like in the #metoo-movement, many of those engaged with FFF activities do not view their participation as organized or membership-like but instead, see each action as an individual manifestation of what matters to them.<sup>50</sup> These loose movements take off fast, as #metoo and FFF have done, but they also face the risk of drying out quickly due to the participants' low engagement level and the quick-paced life cycle.<sup>51</sup>

---

<sup>44</sup> Examples of events available on the FFF calendar, <https://fridaysforfuture.org/take-action/calendar/> (accessed June 6, 2020).

<sup>45</sup> Felix Brünker, Fabian Deitelhoff and Milad Mirbabaie, "Collective Identity Formation on Instagram: Investigating the Social Movement Fridays for Future", *Australasian Conference on Information Systems 9* publication (2019) 304-310.

<sup>46</sup> Shirky, *Here Comes Everybody*.

<sup>47</sup> See eg. Steffen Lüdke, "So planen die Schülerinnen und Schüler den Mega-Klimastreik," *Bento*, March 3, 2019, <https://www.bento.de/politik/fridays-for-future-so-planen-schueler-den-mega-klimastreik-a-f1698531-d0f9-4b2a-a9c7-62524a0cdb7c> (accessed May 19, 2020).

<sup>48</sup> As an example, see the "Our House is on Fire" -campaign video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eT32UFzA7E8> (accessed May 18, 2020).

<sup>49</sup> Klandermans et al., "Mobilization Without Organization."; Fisher, *American Resistance*.

<sup>50</sup> Carmen Leong et al., "Social Media Empowerment in Social Movements: Power Activation and Power Accrual in Digital Activism," *European Journal of Information Systems* 28, no. 2 (March 4, 2019): 173–204, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0960085X.2018.1512944>.

<sup>51</sup> See eg. TAZ, "Erst Hype, jetzt Demopause" *TAZ online*, <https://taz.de/Ein-Jahr-Fridays-for-Future/!5645996/> (accessed May 18, 2020); Annette Bruhns, Helke Klovert, France Quecke and Andreas Wassermann, "Fridays for Future is About to Turn One," *Spiegel International*, August 1, 2019.

Typically to a loose, internet-based 2010s social movement described by Fisher and Klandermans, FFF does not have a hierarchical structure or clear leaders<sup>52</sup>. The persons presented as leader figures in the media, most importantly Greta Thunberg but in Germany, but also the 24-year-old student Luisa Neubauer, serve more as examples or idols.<sup>53</sup> People participating in FFF are often not very politically engaged or organized, but rather encouraged by the example of public figures like Thunberg, or their friends and family.<sup>54</sup> Thunberg's influence to her fellow protestors is clear: according a study on European FFF protestors, a significant part of young protest-goers name Thunberg as an inspiration for getting involved in the movement.<sup>55</sup> Research even suggests that Thunberg may have encouraged especially young females to participate, resulting in their high share in FFF protests.<sup>56</sup>

As FFF is a recent movement – initiated less than two years ago – very little academic research has been conducted on it so far. The existing research on FFF concentrates on describing the movement and its participants and not their views. A group of European researchers published the first report about FFF as a social movement in summer 2019, and a follow-up report followed in late 2019.<sup>57</sup> They conducted surveys and short interviews in Fridays for Future climate strikes in thirteen European cities, two of which are in Germany (Berlin and Bremen). Their mission was to discover participant profiles of climate strikers: their age, gender

---

<https://www.spiegel.de/international/growing-pains-fridays-for-future-is-about-to-turn-one-a-1279544.html> (accessed May 19, 2020).

<sup>52</sup> Klandermans et al., "Mobilization Without Organization."; Fisher, *American Resistance*.

<sup>53</sup> Klandermans et al., "Mobilization Without Organization."; Haase, "Proteste brauchen keine Anführerin – aber sie hilft".

<sup>54</sup> Wahlström et al., "Protest for a future".

<sup>55</sup> Mattias Wahlström et al., "Protest for a future".

<sup>56</sup> Wahlström et al., "Protest for a future".

<sup>57</sup> Wahlström et al., "Protest for a future"; Joost de Moor, Katrin Uba, Mattias Wahlström, Magnus Wennerhag and Michiel de Vydt, *Protest for a future II: Composition, mobilization and motives of the participants in Fridays for Future climate protests on 20-27 September, 2019, in 19 cities around the world*.

and education, and attitudes towards politics and protesting in general. According to the reports, the average climate striker would be a 14–19-year-old female from a highly educated family.<sup>58</sup>

For a large share of the protestors interviewed by the research group, a FFF strike is their first touch to political participation, and the researchers go as far as suggesting that FFF could function as an incubator of climate activism and political action.<sup>59</sup> The closest their study comes to ideology is a couple of survey questions on the protestors' trust in different political and economic institutions. The results show that the young (less than 20 years old) participants have very little faith in states' and companies' capacity to address climate change to a sufficient extent, but the report does not proceed on answering why the participants feel this way, let alone attempt to provide information about the protestors' ideologies. I will address this gap by looking at the climate action and policy frames presented by German FFF participants.

## 2.1. Fridays for Future in Germany

Although FFF is a global movement, my work is limited to FFF activism in Germany. The movement spread from Sweden to Germany quickly as the country already was fertile ground for climate activism and dissent towards environmental and climate policies.<sup>60</sup> The first German Friday strike took place in Berlin in September 2018. The protests spread and local FFF teams or associations popped up across the country and in September 2019, "an estimated 1.4 million

---

<sup>58</sup> Wahlström et al., "*Protest for a future*".

<sup>59</sup> Wahlström et al., "*Protest for a future*".

<sup>60</sup> Till Haase, "Proteste brauchen keine Anführerin – aber sie hilft," *Deutschlandfunk* radio show 1.3.2019. Available online at <https://www.deutschlandfunknova.de/beitrag/protestforschung-bewegungen-brauchen-keinen-anfuhrer-aber-er-kann-nuetzen> (last accessed 14.5.2020).

people participated in actions across the country”<sup>61</sup>. As the movement has grown, researchers have noted that the average participant age has also increased in Germany<sup>62</sup>: the movement has apparently succeeded at spreading their message outside of the initial target group. As in other focus countries, politically inexperienced and unaffiliated participants form the majority of German FFF protest population.<sup>63</sup> The young protestors have received support from many directions, including the scientific community, student organizations and parents, and gained extensive coverage in various media.<sup>64</sup>

However, also concerns have appeared: Luisa Neubauer has been framed as the figurehead by media against her own will and that of the movement as a whole, and the increasing difficulties with event coordination, administration and logistics due to the participants’ low commitment level and exponentially growing protest sizes.<sup>65</sup> The current COVID-19 epidemic has cancelled all physical FFF protests from March on but the movement has organized large action online instead by encouraging individuals to share their unhappiness with the current climate policies on April 24th, 2020, by sharing images of themselves with protest signs on social media, or by sending their signs to Berlin, where local activists compiled them into a temporary artwork on the lawn in front of the Parliament.<sup>66</sup>

---

<sup>61</sup> Michael Neuber and Beth Charrity Gardner, “Germany,” in Joost de Moor, Katrin Uba, Mattias Wahlström, Magnus Wennerhag and Michiel de Vydt, *Protest for a future II: Composition, mobilization and motives of the participants in Fridays for Future climate protests on 20-27 September, 2019, in 19 cities around the world*.

<sup>62</sup> Neuber and Gardner, “Germany”.

<sup>63</sup> Wahlström et al., “*Protest for a future*”; Neuber and Gardner, “Germany”.

<sup>64</sup> Bruhns et al., “Fridays for Future is About to Turn One”.

<sup>65</sup> Bruhns et al., “Fridays for Future is About to Turn One”.

<sup>66</sup> ZDF Heute editors, “Klimastreiks kehren zurück – ‘Fridays for Future’: Protest jetzt digital” *ZDF Heute*, April 24, 2020, <https://www.zdf.de/nachrichten/panorama/fridays-for-future-digitalstreik-corona-100.html> (accessed May 19, 2020).

### 3. Methodology

Fridays for Future has two main forms of action: the globally spread climate strike demonstrations and a strong online presence. These two forms are addressed in my thesis by adopting two interpretive research methods: interviews and digital ethnography. The geographical scope of my research is limited to Germany (and in the case of digital ethnography, posts made in German) due to several factors, such as the following: Germany has seen large FFF strikes within the last year, it has regional variety of societal, cultural and economic conditions, the country has a relatively long history of politicizing environmental concerns, and finally, I am somewhat familiar with the language and the country's political history and situation but still outsider enough to maintain some distance to them. After gathering the data, I have examined it and identified the main frame themes present in both the data and previous research on framing done by climate movements<sup>67</sup>, and structured the thesis according to these themes.

Online participation and networking are not only important to FFF because of the spring 2020 restrictions caused by COVID-19: social media has formed an integral part of FFF activities from the beginning. In addition to posting about protests online, a large share of the FFF activism has taken place in social media only. Individuals have, for example, participated in online campaigns by sharing information to their friends and appealed politicians and corporations who they call out for climate inaction<sup>68</sup>. These strategies are used by several climate

---

<sup>67</sup> Della Porta and Parks, "Framing processes in the climate movement".

<sup>68</sup> The coal plant Datteln 4 has been protested in the early months of 2020 in various ways: on-site protests, street protest, online campaigns and contacting stakeholders. Source: Oliver Pieper, "Protest gegen Datteln 4: Für die Gegner is kein Turm zu hoch," *DW*, February 2, 2020.

movements, such as Extinction Rebellion and green parties, but also by FFF.<sup>69</sup> It is also vital to note that without social media, movements such as FFF would not have gained popularity as fast as they have: technology has "radically altered old limits of the [group] size, sophistication, and scope of unsupervised effort".<sup>70</sup> As messages are faster and less costly to spread than ever before, the cost of group action has sunk, making it easier for individuals to meet and to attempt to change their societies.<sup>71</sup>

The results of my research do not represent an average protest-goer as the interviews are conducted with individuals are active participants of the movement. Existing research on both online and traditional social movements has shown that only a fraction of the total number of participants are responsible for the vast majority of the action, and this imbalance, in fact "drives large social systems rather than damages them".<sup>72</sup> The digital ethnography exploring the same themes that arise from the interviews may end up balancing out some of the devotedness of the interviewed activists as the threshold to spend 15 minutes drawing a sign and uploading it to a popular social media platform requires less effort and courage than answering to a foreign student's questions in one's freetime.

Finally, I strive for uncovering my own biases, acknowledging my sympathy with young activists promoting a cause I also personally believe in, but will still fail to understand my positionality completely. As I have chosen to study subjective views and not to formulate a universal FFF ideology *per se*, I believe I have a better chance of keeping my preferences

---

<sup>69</sup> Both have engaged with this strategy in opposition to the new coal power plant 'Datteln 4' in Germany, see *Spiegel Wirtschaft*, "Aktivistinnen blockieren Zentrale von Energiekonzern," February 14, 2020; Grüne NRW website, "Kohleausstieg & Datteln IV," <https://gruene-nrw.de/kohleausstieg-datteln-iv/> (accessed June 7, 2020).

<sup>70</sup> Clay Shirky, Chapter 1, *Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing without Organizations* (New York: Penguin, 2009).

<sup>71</sup> Shirky.

<sup>72</sup> Shirky.

somewhat separate from those who this study focuses on. Especially interviews are sometimes perceived as reinforcing existing power structures and dichotomies between the individuals participating in the practise: the researcher and the interviewee (a dichotomy of its own!).<sup>73</sup> I may have entered this project with the unconscious assumption that the interviewees and the individuals uploading protest signs on social media share my worldview to a great extent, and the encounters with the data might, in fact, highlight my positionality in unexpected ways. My "insideness"<sup>74</sup> with climate activists should be taken with caution: unexpected processes of othering in the form of resentment or disappoint, for example, can take place during the data gathering and analysis.

### 3.1. Interviews

I have interviewed six Fridays for Future activists: young (14-26-years old) people who actively participate in the climate strike movement in Germany. The interviewees have been chosen by selecting individuals that are willing to share their personal stories and views, and have gained experience with the FFF movement. Selection, rather than sampling, is a well-suited choice for research that does not aim at formulating a picture of an average member of a group but rather to collect meaningful data from active members.<sup>75</sup> Therefore, the interviews do not represent a random sample of protest participants but devoted members. The interviewees reside in different

---

<sup>73</sup> Julia Gallagher, "Interviews as Catastrophic Encounters: An Object Relations Methodology for IR Research," *International Studies Perspectives* 17 (2016) 445-461.

<sup>74</sup> In "Interviews" (Gallagher), the author uses this term to describe the binary revolving around division and interaction between the researcher and the researcher subjects.

<sup>75</sup> Lee Ann Fujii, *Interviewing in Social Science Research: A Relational Approach*, 1 Edition, Routledge Series on Interpretive Methods (New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2018).

parts of Germany, from the industrial east to the traditional south, hopefully diffusing the impacts of regional differences in the results.

The interviews are be semi-structured: I had a list of questions ready for guidance<sup>76</sup>, but I let the interviewee elaborate on what is meaningful to them without them or following a strict interview protocol. In the light of the current global pandemic affecting my and the interviewees' personal health and restrictions on movements, the interviews were conducted on Skype and on the phone. The interviews began with inquiring about the interviewee's background, for instance, how they have become interested in climate action, proceeding towards more complex topics and personal topics, depending on the person's interest and experience.

In some ways, gathering material by interviewing is a dive into the unknown for me as an inexperienced academic. There are numerous pitfalls with working with feeling, thinking and talking fellow humans, especially when addressing sensitive topics as subjective hopes and fears. I have paid attention to three main concerns regarding data collection: the interviewees' unfamiliarity with International Relations, my own shortcomings in German language and culture, and calling instead of in-person communication as a potentially distancing factor. In addition, I need to recognize my inability to assess all the risks and limitations of my own capabilities and the chosen methodology: there unknown mistakes I may have made unconsciously, altering the data and its analysis.

The intervirewees are not professionals of international affairs, domestic policies, environmental philosophy or economics, but then again, they were not chosen because of their expertise or knowledge but because of their conviction. By examining frames, I am delving into

---

<sup>76</sup> See the list in Annex I.



the world of the subjective: ideological, personal, and normativity. However, the interviewees' lack of experience with the global or domestic power structures forces me to pay special attention to question formulation. I systematically avoid using academic or technical terms such as climate change mitigation measures or anthropocentrism, and instead, ask more open-ended questions (eg. Who or what does climate emergency endanger?).

The second concern lies in the limits of my own German language and cultural skills. The risk of misunderstanding or missing these important linguistic and cultural markers persists and cannot be erased. However, by revealing my limited skills to the interviewees I might encourage them to explain their views in more detail, providing useful data for analysis. More importantly, the researcher's imperfect command of the language of the interview may shift the power dynamic between the interviewer and the interviewee, emancipating the research 'subject' and making them, too, feel in control of the situation.<sup>77</sup>

The rising amount of interview data collected through online call services, such as Skype, has been subject to methodological scrutiny in the recent years. Skype has been criticized for the lack of non-verbal signals in communication, technical and connection disruptions and an emotional distance between individuals.<sup>78</sup> Some researchers, such as Seitz<sup>79</sup>, conclude that personal and in-depth topics should be avoided in online interviews, whereas others, such as Adams-Hutcheson and Longhurst<sup>80</sup> view the online softwares as beneficial due to the feelings of comfort and relative anonymity obtained through Skype interviews. Since the global situation

---

<sup>77</sup> Michaela R. Winchatz, "Fieldworker or Foreigner?: Ethnographic Interviewing in Nonnative Languages," *Field Methods* 18, no. 1 (February 2006): 83–97, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X05279902>.

<sup>78</sup> Hannah Deakin and Kelly Wakefield, "Skype Interviewing: Reflections of Two PhD Researchers," *Qualitative Research* 14, no. 5 (October 2014): 603–16, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794113488126>.

<sup>79</sup> Sally Seitz, "Pixilated Partnerships, Overcoming Obstacles in Qualitative Interviews via Skype: A Research Note," *Qualitative Research* 16, no. 2 (April 2016): 229–35, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794115577011>.

<sup>80</sup> Gail Adams-Hutcheson and Robyn Longhurst, "'At Least in Person There Would Have Been a Cup of Tea': Interviewing via Skype," *Area* 49, no. 2 (June 2017): 148–55, <https://doi.org/10.1111/area.12306>.

erases the option of in-person interviews, video calls are currently the only option for data gathering by interviewing. It may have an effect on the way people are willing to share their personal experiences and views, or it may not: previous research has not found a conclusive answer to the impacts of video calls as a method. Resorting to technology is perhaps easier for young research subjects as they are familiar with different applications and softwares and use them regularly.

### 3.2. Digital ethnography on Instagram

Instagram is a well-known social media application for sharing visual content by users, mostly private persons. The application has gained particular popularity among the young age groups: in 2018, it was the most popular social media platform among German teenagers.<sup>81</sup> As Utekhin notes in his paper about applying ethnographic methods to study visual material on Instagram, the users of the platform represent "their social world and themselves" as well as voice out their opinions on the service.<sup>82</sup> There are several ways of conducting research on social media platforms, such as Instagram, and the one applied to this study on the Fridays for Future is the so-called small data method, which pays attention to the users' voices, such as "values, attitudes and meanings".<sup>83</sup> Small data allows for a close, personal examination of subtle patterns arising from the electronic material.

The research material studied in my thesis is limited to public Instagram images, uploaded under the hashtag #netzstreikfürsklima during the official online strike Friday (April

---

<sup>81</sup> Statista online statistics, "Welche Socia-Media-Apps benutzt du am häufigsten?," (accessed April 20, 2020).

<sup>82</sup> Ilya Utekhin, "Small data first: pictures from Instagram as an ethnographic source," *Russian Journal of Comunication* 9:2 (2017) p. 185.

<sup>83</sup> Utekhin, "Small data first" p. 187.

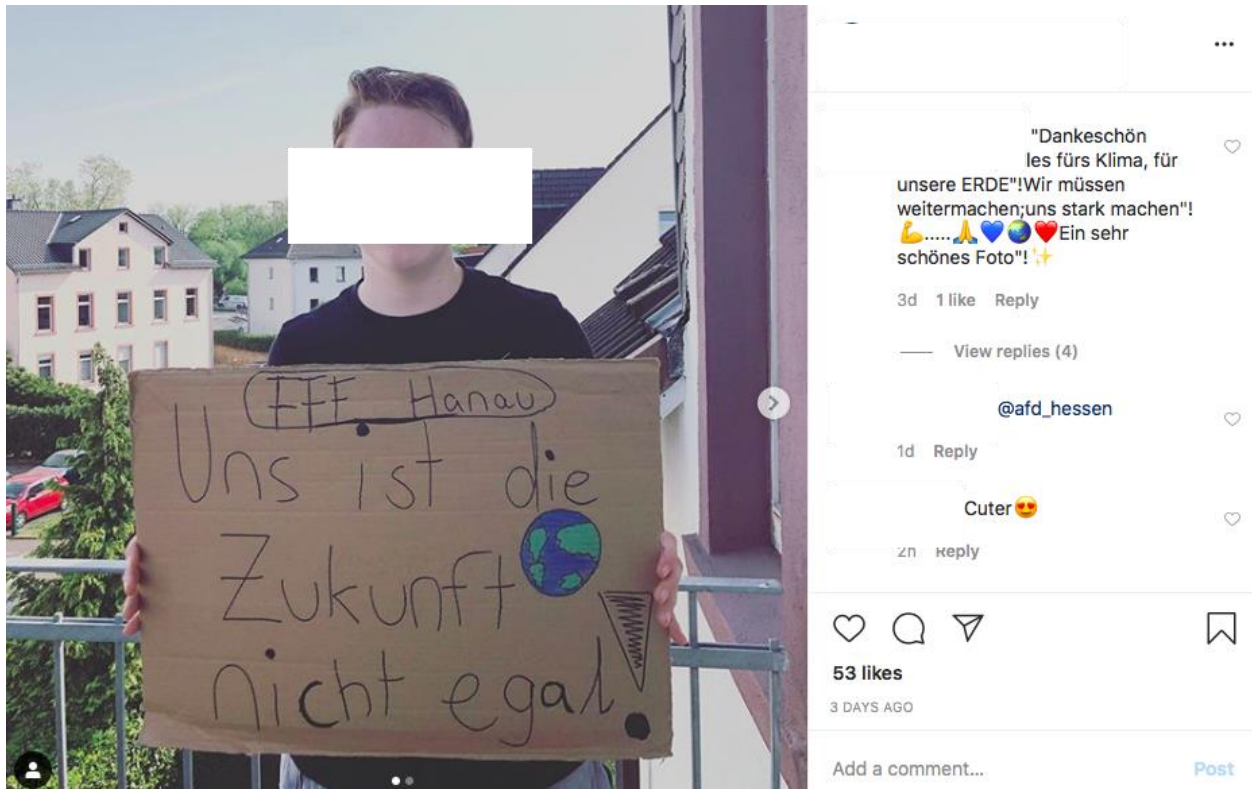
24, 2020) and weekend after it. The hashtag is a German-speaking modification of the global #climatestrikeonline, which has become a substituting way of expressing climate concern since on-site protests have been largely banned due to the COVID-19 pandemic in spring 2020.<sup>84</sup> It is not possible to differentiate between German-language entries made in Germany or by German citizens, which means a diffusion of the scope of the research. I have included only pictures of demonstration signs (with or without people in the picture) and excluded all other images uploaded under the #netstreikfürsklima hashtag as their core message is not as concisely expressed. The entries that are of interest to this thesis research need to touch upon the research question, in other words, express a political framing of climate crisis. Saturation, not the number of entries has the number of photos admitted as research data: as arguments began to repeat themselves, a sufficient level of saturation was reached at 117 images.

In order to call an event a protest, it needs to be public.<sup>85</sup> In a way, street demonstrations and the Instagram platform resemble one another. Both are performed in the public space, be it physical or electronic. It could be argued that Instagram protests are limited to a smaller group of people as individuals have the choice to only receive content from the users or topics they have chosen to follow, but on the other hand, street demonstrations are also constrained by their location. It is only the medium that has changed, not the message: if it was not for the restrictions on freedom of assembly in Germany in time of my research, the very same signs could have been spotted in a demonstration. Participant observation in the Instagram online platform operates on the juncture of the personal and the public as it ensures the observation of the plurality of frames within a large, loose movement.

---

<sup>84</sup> Emily Chudy, "Greta takes climate strikes online," *Ecologist*, March 16, 2020, <https://theecologist.org/2020/mar/16/greta-takes-climate-strikes-online> (accessed April 19, 2020).

<sup>85</sup> Shirky, *Here Comes Everybody*.



Picture 1: Instagram strike participant holding a self-made sign saying "The future matters to us!".

#### 4. "Climate activism is connected to global justice": frames of climate inequality

The common portrayal of Fridays for Future is rather simple: young people concerned about their own future or that of their generation making noise about the intergenerational inequality caused by climate crisis. This narrative is presented by both media outlets and the first academic studies about the movement.<sup>86</sup> The research data quickly shows the common portrayal about how FFF frames of climate inequality is insufficient since, in fact, German FFF participants are

<sup>86</sup> Wahlström et al., "Protest for a Future"; from the media, see eg. Taylor et al., "Climate crisis: 6 million people join latest wave of global protests," and Jens Rosbach, "Fridays for Future: Zwischen Rebellion und Kooperation," *Deutschlandfunk*, May 26, 2020.

concerned about others than themselves and their peers, too, and are aware of their privileges as citizens of a wealthy, Western democracy.

The research material is abundant with frames of human inequality presented by the interviewees and the Instagram data. Their presence does not come as a surprise, since perspectives of human rights and social inequality have penetrated into mainstream climate movement discourse following the failed UN climate summit in Copenhagen in 2009.<sup>87</sup> By inequality, I refer to groups of people being particularly disadvantaged by the direct or indirect effects of the changes in climate, or groups that do not have access to decision-making tables in order to get their voice heard. In climate policy literature, striving to abolish these patterns of inequality and hierarchy is referred to as climate justice.<sup>88</sup> The findings of this chapter resonate with the existing research about the FFF participants as politically left-leaning<sup>89</sup>, as well as the notions about increased mobility between movements for social justice.<sup>90</sup> All in all, my data suggests that FFF participants very often frame climate crisis as a social and structural problem: as an interviewee sums it up: "climate activism is always connected to global justice".<sup>91</sup>

#### 4.1. Climate crisis creating and strengthening inequalities

Both the interviews and the Instagram images of my research data send the same, clear message: German FFF participants are worried about their own future and the future of their generation, but they are also concerned about other groups than their own peers.

---

<sup>87</sup> Della Porta and Parks, "Framing processes in the climate movement".

<sup>88</sup> Della Porta and Parks, "Framing processes in the climate movement"; Henry Shue, ed., *Climate Justice: Vulnerability and Protection* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

<sup>89</sup> Mattias Wahlström et al, "Protest for a future".

<sup>90</sup> Fisher, *American Resistance*.

<sup>91</sup> Interview 28.4.2020.

Several critical theories have engaged with different climate inequalities, including feminism, postcolonialism and marxism.<sup>92</sup> All these theories highlight that some groups or communities are hit harder by the climate crisis: either directly by the extreme weather events or their indirect effects.<sup>93</sup> All the theories can be bundled up under the umbrella of social ecology, which, recognizes the disproportionate effects of climate emergency to disadvantaged groups but also claims that these inequalities are reproductions of human hierarchies.<sup>94</sup> As examples, social ecology mentions favoring profit and productivity over well-being or males over females, in the way humans operate in the natural environment.<sup>95</sup>

Still, this chapter needs to begin with engaging with the FFF participants' worry on behalf of their own generation as it is strongly present in my research material. Several Instagram images slogans, for example, "we are young and need the Earth", "For THEIR future! [pointing at a baby's toys]" and "You will die of old age, we will die of climate change".<sup>96</sup> All interviewees are concerned about either the future of their generation, or the future of the generations yet to come: as one of them sums it up, climate change will affect "my generation, my children and all the generations after us".<sup>97</sup>

The youth's concern about their own generation appears to have two faces. Firstly, similarly to the Instagram material, the interviewees are concerned about the uneven distribution

---

<sup>92</sup> For feminism, see eg. Val Plumwood, "Nature, Self, and Gender: Feminism, Environmental Philosophy, and the Critique of Rationalism," *Hypatia* 6:1 (1991) 3-27; for ecosocialism Michael Löwy, "What is ecosocialism?," *Capitalism Nature Socialism* 16:2 (2005) 15-24; for postcolonialism Anne Maxwell, "Postcolonial criticism, ecocriticism and climate change: A tale of Melbourne under water in 2035," *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 45:1 (2009) 15-26.

<sup>93</sup> Shue, "Climate justice".

<sup>94</sup> Murray Bookchin, *The Ecology of Freedom: The Emergence and Dissolution of Hierarchy* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2005).

<sup>95</sup> Bookchin, *The Ecology of Freedom*.

<sup>96</sup> Although all the Instagram images are public, I will not provide direct links to the images due to the young age of some users. I can provide anonymized screenshots of the images upon request.

<sup>97</sup> Interview 3.5.2020.

of responsibility and natural resources between generations. The earlier generations were not limited by resource scarcity, whereas the young and future generations will have to solve vast structural issues caused by the emissions released decades or even centuries earlier. In climate change policy literature, this inequality is referred to as intergenerational justice (or lack thereof).<sup>98</sup> Secondly, young people are generally underrepresented among stakeholders: in Germany, the average age of a MP is almost 50 years<sup>99</sup>, and citizens under 18 cannot even influence political decisions by voting. As another interviewee puts it: "I somehow always had the feeling that my opinion would be all that important or even count at all."<sup>100</sup> Therefore, the participants feel the need to appeal to decision-makers by protesting as the other participation channels for the young and politically inexperienced are limited.

Interestingly, my data shows that FFF do not regard themselves as the most powerless and vulnerable group to suffering from climate injustices and without access to decision-making arenas: the interviewees unanimously name the divide between the Global North and the Global South as the most significant climate inequality. According to one respondent, Europe and North America have caused a lion's share of the accumulated global greenhouse gas emissions as "the people living in the Global South have contributed the least but suffer the most [from the consequences]".<sup>101</sup> Another respondent states that many countries in the Global South "are still being damaged by colonialism, social inequalities, and the impacts of multinational

---

<sup>98</sup> For further reference, see eg. Axel Gosseries, "Theories of Intergenerational Justice: A Synopsis," *S.A.P.I.EN.S. Surveys and Perspectives Integrating Environment and Society*, no. 1.1 (November 26, 2008), <http://journals.openedition.org/sapiens/165>.

<sup>99</sup> Deutscher Bundestag Parlamentarchiv, "3.2. Durchschnittsalter," [https://www.bundestag.de/resource/blob/272474/4a216913aff5f5c25c41572257a57e4a/Kapitel\\_03\\_02\\_Durchschnittsalter-pdf-data.pdf](https://www.bundestag.de/resource/blob/272474/4a216913aff5f5c25c41572257a57e4a/Kapitel_03_02_Durchschnittsalter-pdf-data.pdf) (accessed May 28, 2020).

<sup>100</sup> Interview 7.5.2020.

<sup>101</sup> Interview 9.5.2020.

corporations”.<sup>102</sup> One of the interviewees had spent a year in Kenya, and says, “that’s where I became interested in the connection between global justice and climate change”.<sup>103</sup> These frames are not new to international climate discussion as the states that are already facing grave challenges because of climate emergency have attempted to appeal to the biggest polluters. People in Least Developed Countries “live in more dangerous location, have fewer assets, skills and access to basic services to cope with climate change”.<sup>104</sup> Indeed, a decades-long disagreement has been taking place in the United Nations UNFCCC COPs<sup>105</sup> between the industrialized states of Global North, who are calling for similar mitigation targets for all countries, and the states of Global South that have contributed considerably less to the global emissions but are hit harder by the extreme weather events caused by climate emergency.<sup>106</sup>

A number of respondents identify the structural causes they think are accountable for the existing climate hierarchies: the imbalance between those who have contributed to the atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> concentration the most, and those who will experience its impacts first and the hardest – or already have. Some FFF participants approach the topic without referring to certain ideologies. For instance, an interviewee notes that “business always comes first in politics”<sup>107</sup>, implying that the well-being of humans and nature is simply of secondary importance for political bodies. A similar notion is made by the creator of an Instagram sign demanding “political change, not climate change”. Others, on the other hand, give the ideological origin of climate injustices names: many of them call it capitalism but some, as seen earlier in this chapter,

---

<sup>102</sup> Interview 7.5.2020.

<sup>103</sup> Interview 28.4.2020.

<sup>104</sup> Cécile Barbieri, “Prakash Mathema: Poorest countries have the most to lose at the UN climate talks,” *Euractiv*, October 21, 2014.

<sup>105</sup> Conference of the Parties.

<sup>106</sup> Lukas H. Meyer and Dominic Roser, “Climate Justice and Historical Emissions,” *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 13, no. 1 (March 2010): 229–53, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13698230903326349>.

<sup>107</sup> Interview 30.4.2020.



also add colonialism to the structural mix. Anti-capitalist Instagram entries include the following messages: "Planet over profit!", "climate protection instead of greed for profit" and "The Earth is burning... when will the banks burn?" These frames resemble ecosocialism; a neomarxist school of thought suggesting that capitalism does not only exploit people but also the Earth, treated as an endless source of natural resources.<sup>108</sup>

The respondents are concerned about cleavages and hierarchies in societies in general, not only between the regions of the world. Several interviewees point at structural sexism and racism taking place within states, cities and other communities, and their connection to climate justice. An interviewee states that there are "many social inequalities, for example, [that] between men and women or well, those who identify as female or male, and these inequalities will only sharpen [in the future]".<sup>109</sup> The interviewee does not elaborate on how these injustices are connected to climate crisis, but another respondent offers insight to that question. They say that all political action reflects the core values of the society, and that disadvantaged groups should be taken into account in all decision-making, especially "paying attention to racism and misogyny". This is, again, an ambiguous statement and can be understood either as endorsing political action that would even out the existing equality gaps, or to endorse the political participation of the allegedly disadvantaged groups. Some of the inequality frames presented by the interviewees are undoubtedly genuine, but there is a possibility that the respondents are attempting to be "woke" in their statements and sprinkle politically correct terms into the interviews, trying to signal their goodwill and knowledge about the topic.

---

<sup>108</sup> Michael Löwy, "What is ecosocialism?".

<sup>109</sup> Interview 7.5.2020.

All in all, the climate justice frames indicate that FFF participants understand of the impacts of climate crisis in structural terms. They are not only occupying streets and online platforms to attract attention to inequalities they or their reference group claim to experience, but also raising their voices for others. They may have no personal encounters with the population they regard as disadvantaged, which means they are not trying to simply win themselves an advantage but also to address inequalities that do not affect their own lives. In addition to expressing their opinion and understanding about climate crisis on societal and global macro levels, as discussed in this chapter, they also address everyday climate inequalities on the micro level too, which will be discussed further in Chapter 6.

#### 4.2. Positionality and privileges home and abroad

The research data contains numerous ways, in which the FFF activists reflect on their own positionality as spokespersons for climate justice. They possess views – at least to some extent – of the role they are taking as climate activists, either for themselves, or on behalf of other groups that they regard as disadvantaged or underrepresented in the society. They also hold views of the people or groups that oppose the idea of climate action. This time, I will stick exclusively to the interviews as the Instagram material does not provide self-reflections on positionality or activist privilege as they do not fit the purpose of raising climate awareness to external audience. The frames portrayed by German FFF activists of the role of their own country or themselves as societal actors tell a tale of responsibility: they are in an influential position to demand more stringent climate action both at home and abroad.

Many interviewees acknowledge that being able to protest is a privilege on its own. Firstly, one needs to be educated about climate change and its effects. An interviewee recognizes

they have "a university degree, a safe job and no fear about speaking their mind".<sup>110</sup> Secondly, climate activism or even small everyday actions require time and resources. A respondent mentions "a vegan diet and a plastic-free life" as choices not everyone can afford.<sup>111</sup> Another activist notes that the freedom of speech functions well in Germany, and that speaking one's mind without fear is a right that should be used.<sup>112</sup> These statements enforce the idea of FFF regarding themselves as spokespersons for more stringent climate policies as well as for a more just society.

How the activists relate to persons, who feel threatened or discriminated by climate change mitigation action (eg. closing coal mines) splits the group of interviewees into two. Some respondents are very understanding towards people who disagree with the FFF messages as they might feel more comfortable not thinking about the looming threat<sup>113</sup> or feel restricted or threatened by the demand to change their lives<sup>114</sup>. However, not all the interviewee activists are tolerant towards those who disagree with them. "They are either bad people or simply stupid", a respondent states, and another agrees.<sup>115</sup> Another activist feels empathy towards average citizens who do not sympathize with the climate cause but has no mercy towards "politicians neglecting [...] climate crisis."<sup>116</sup> The responses suggest, again, that some actors, such as states, are considered more responsible for tackling climate change – a topic that will be discussed in more detail in chapter 5.1.

---

<sup>110</sup> Interview 28.4.2020.

<sup>111</sup> Interview 9.5.2020.

<sup>112</sup> Interview 3.5..2020.

<sup>113</sup> Interview 3.5.2020.

<sup>114</sup> Interview 28.4.2020.

<sup>115</sup> Interviews A and B 30.4.2020.

<sup>116</sup> Interview 9.5.2020.

Finally, the interviewees emphasize that Germany as an influential EU member state and industrialized democracy has a privileged position in climate leadership – and that they, as German citizens, share this responsibility to raise awareness of climate crisis and its effects in other parts of the world than their home country, too. According to a respondent, "Germany has a way larger influence than many [people] say"<sup>117</sup>. They regard the state's pledge of carbon-neutrality by 2038 as not ambitious enough, and point out that Germany still is one of the largest coal producers in the world. According to another interviewee, Germany cannot only focus on mitigating climate emergency within its own or the EU borders "in the spirit of 'America first'" but should also assist others, since countries like Germany "are the ones who have caused [climate change]"<sup>118</sup>. A third respondent criticizing Germany's actions also stresses the importance of German FFF activists: they should understand that they are not only for themselves, but also on behalf of others, who do not enjoy the same civil rights.<sup>119</sup> None of them happen to mention that FFF protests have been held at least in 169 countries, or to acknowledge the work done by their FFF peers in the Global South.<sup>120</sup> The notion is compatible with the enormous media attention that FFF has been subject to, in Germany and in Europe in general. The FFF appears to be aware of the media attention it has attracted and also intend to use in their favor, my data suggests.

It appears that FFF participants justify their demands directed at politicians and the general public through the frames of self and their own community. Many of them aim at raising awareness of different climate inequalities, most notably those between generations, the global

---

<sup>117</sup> Interview 3.5.2020.

<sup>118</sup> Interview 28.4.2020.

<sup>119</sup> Interview 3.5.2020.

<sup>120</sup> About the global reach of the movement, see Liam Gould, "How Greta Thunberg's climate strikes became a global movement in a year," *Reuters*, August 20, 2019.

distribution of wealth and resources, and gender – without forgetting to reflect on their own positionality and privileges. The image of the young man holding a sign with the text "The future matters to us!" is not that easy to decipher after because of all the cleavages present in the research data. The frames of inequality lead deeper into the climate crisis problematique: questions of cause and effect, which will be discussed in the next chapter as the existing inequalities and hierarchies have been created somehow.



Picture 2: An online strike participant holding a self-made sign saying "don't go breaking my Earth".

## 5. The villains and the victims of climate crisis

Identifying the causes for climate crisis is a common framing presented by climate movements.<sup>121</sup> My research data contains numerous frames blaming an agent or a structure for climate crisis, and in a similar fashion, frames of its victims, as well. Therefore, this chapter will delve into the FFF activists' framings of the undesirable: what they hold accountable for causing climate crisis, and who and/or what suffers from it the most. Negative climate policy frames have been introduced into the movement by Greta Thunberg from the beginning, making statements like "I don't want you to be hopeful" and "How dare you! [talk about money and fairy tales of eternal economic growth]", but the FFF official communication materials do not

<sup>121</sup> Della Porta and Parks, "Framing processes in the climate movement: from climate change to climate justice".

participate in naming and shaming of those whose actions have caused the climate emergency.<sup>122</sup> They also appear vague with identifying victims, mentioning several varying from "the poorest and youngest people" to "200 species [that] are disappearing every day from the face of the earth". Officially, the movement seems to oppose human activities causing emissions, not willing to point fingers at the culprits.<sup>123</sup>

I will contest the movement's official vague presentation of the causes and the sufferers of climate crisis and argue that in fact, Fridays for Future is home to several different villain and victim frames. The research data does not only reject the idea FFF as an ideologically coherent actor, but it also suggests that some of the frames openly conflict with each other. The findings resonate with the recent literature on 2010s social movements as wide umbrellas for non-committed participants, each with their own normative views and ethical commitments.<sup>124</sup> If FFF was a political party or another body required to have a programme with sound theoretical foundations, it could be facing a split into disagreeing camps due to its mosaic of diverse and incoherent frames. However, as a loose, one-issue movement, it seems capable of hosting a variety of views and ideologies – so far.

### 5.1. Identifying the villains

In this sub-chapter, I will delve into who or what German FFF activists frame as guilty for causing climate emergency. Even though the Fridays for Future official statements do not single

---

<sup>122</sup> Greta Thunberg's speech at the Davos Economic Forum 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wLW4Tk8PwDg> (accessed May 26, 2020); Greta Thunberg's speech at the United Nations Climate Action Summit 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KAJsdgTPJpU> (accessed May 26, 2020); Fridays for Future website, "Reasons to strike".

<sup>123</sup> Fridays for Future website, "Reasons to strike".

<sup>124</sup> Klandermans et al., "Mobilization Without Organization."; Fisher, "American Resistance".

out 'climate villains', war analogies are often present in climate change discourse and framings.<sup>125</sup> Identifying enemies is a common practice among climate movements since frames create coherence in groups and operate as a motivating force.<sup>126</sup> In Snow and Benford's typology of different frames<sup>127</sup>, identifying the causes of climate change represents prognostic framing, revealing what the German FFF activists in the research data view as problematic.

All six interviewees were asked about the cause(s) of the climate crisis in a way that left it up to the respondent to decide who or what the changes originated from, be it individuals, political structures, ideologies, or something else. All activists regard the changes as human-inflicted, which is a very unsurprising answer for members of a movement highlighting the importance of trusting climate scientists. However, there is tremendous variation between the different human "climate villain" framings. The main divide lies between individual and structural responsibility as some activists point fingers at every single individual taking high-emitting choices in their everyday life, whereas others regard the causes as structural, embedded in the logic by which the economic and political systems operate.

Few voices from the research data hold individuals accountable for climate emergency. An interviewee blames individuals, who "rather live comfortably and do what they want instead of taking other people and the environment into account."<sup>128</sup> Another interviewee finds that perhaps "even universities and researchers are partly responsible" but does not elaborate on how: perhaps science has failed its watchdog function? Similarly, some Instagram images also reflect

---

<sup>125</sup> Rupinder Mangat and Simon Dalby, "Climate and Wartalk: Metaphors, Imagination, Transformation," *Elem Sci Anth* 6, no. 1 (August 2, 2018): 58, <https://doi.org/10.1525/elementa.313>.

<sup>126</sup> Mangat and Dalby.

<sup>127</sup> Snow and Benford, "Ideology, Frame Resonance and Participant Mobilization".

<sup>128</sup> Interview A 30.4.2020.



on people's ignorance towards climate issues: one sign, for instance, encourages the public to open their eyes.

A way stronger tendency among the respondents is blame to structural causes, mainly the capitalist logic. The interviewees present several sides and versions of structural frames : the market logic encourages companies to ignore environmental problems in order to increase their profit or to hold on to their favorable position in the global market, states are more interested in upholding good market conditions rather than making long-term climate plans, and climate issues go ignored by political bodies as they do not bring in financial gains.<sup>129</sup>

The structural, anti-capitalist frames resonate with ecosocialist literature, which regards the logic of perpetual growth and maximization of profit as connected to environmental destruction.<sup>130</sup> A group of Earth Systems scientists led by Johan Rockström have identified nine planetary boundaries, the crossing of which could set unpredictable changes in motion in the biosphere.<sup>131</sup> They state that already in 2009, the amount of greenhouse gases had already reached the tipping point in the atmosphere.<sup>132</sup> The ecosocialist John Bellamy Foster draws a connection between the capitalist commodification of nature and relabeling it as natural resources have, leading to crossing the planetary boundary on atmospheric carbon dioxide concentration.<sup>133</sup> Similar notions are made by several interviewees. One, for example, says that "the capitalist system believes in the endlessness of resources and [...] does not see that in

---

<sup>129</sup> Interviews 28.4.2020, 3.5.2020, 7.5.2020 and 9.5.2020.

<sup>130</sup> Michael Löwy, "Ecosocialism: A Radical Alternative," in *Reflections on Socialism in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Claes Brundenius (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2020), 199–210, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-33920-3\\_10](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-33920-3_10).

<sup>131</sup> Johan Rockström et al., "Planetary Boundaries: Exploring the Safe Operating Space for Humanity," *Ecology and Society* 14:2 (2009) 32.

<sup>132</sup> Johan Rockström et al., "Planetary Boundaries".

<sup>133</sup> John Bellamy Foster, Brett Clark, and Richard York, *The Ecological Rift: Capitalism's War on the Earth* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2010).

nature, exponential growth does not in fact exist”.<sup>134</sup> Second respondent adds: “resources are limited, I mean, the earth sets the limits but they are ignored in order to increase profit”.<sup>135</sup>

The ‘villain’ framings are closely connected to who or what the respondents think should alter their behavior in order to mitigate climate crisis. The research material suggests abandoning the capitalist logic in state decision-making as a solution to the damage done: “system change, not climate change”, as several Instagram signs say. According to an interviewee, the change should stem from the “state, which should set the boundaries to what corporations can and cannot do”.<sup>136</sup> Another one specifies that states should be responsible for making sure that “not every individual or company can do what they can or want” but that they need legally binding ethical guidelines.<sup>137</sup> In other words, the holders of this view have trust in political decision-making but not its current preference for profit over the well-being of citizens or ecosystems. Therefore, the frame is not the most radical it could be: it is expressed through mostly lawful channels and modes of protesting, and it does not disregard the current political system as such, but simply its alleged preference for ensuring the functioning of the free market.

The dividing lines between different ‘villain’ framings addressed in this chapter are nevertheless fluid and not always very carefully thought out. An interviewee first identifies multinational corporations as responsible, but a couple of minutes later goes on to blame ignorant individuals.<sup>138</sup> On the other hand, another interviewee describes the responsibility for causing climate change as a sliding scale: they view large corporations as main culprits but also

---

<sup>134</sup> Interview 28.4.2020.

<sup>135</sup> Interview 9.5.2020.

<sup>136</sup> Interview 28.4.2020.

<sup>137</sup> Interview 3.5.2020.

<sup>138</sup> Interview B 30.4.2020.

hold "governments that have done nothing and all citizen"accountable to some extent.<sup>139</sup> Some framings are also ideologically inconsistent as the same interviewee can first condemn the market logic altogether, and proceed to suggest carbon taxes or a restructuring of state subsidies as effective mitigation strategies – signaling their trust to markets after all.<sup>140</sup>

To conclude, most of the research data regards structural causes, mainly capitalism as the primary cause of climate emergency. However, the data contains several opposite frames as well: some believe in atomistic and others in structural causes, and some regard abandoning the capitalist system as a solution whereas others believe in the capacity of its state-regulated version to halt the crisis. Furthermore, ideologies behind the frames may be internally inconsistent too, as sometimes the same person could refer to mutually exclusive theories.

## 5.2. Humans and nature, humans within nature

The war or battle analogies of climate change also include victims. All the participants of FFF are taking a stand 'for Future', and this sub-chapter will explore whose future exactly is endangered by climate crisis. As chapter 4 has shown, there is a tremendous variation among German Fridays for Future participants regarding to whom they view as disadvantaged by the management or effects of climate crisis. However, Chapter 4 only focused on the human side of the victim frames, but in the big picture, some of the activists regard humans as the primary sufferers whereas others view climate emergency harmful to the planetary ecosystem, above all. The division between the anthropocentric (human-centered) and non-anthropocentric victim framings is crucial as it reveals a fundamental cleavage between these two kinds of worldviews.

---

<sup>139</sup> Interview 3.5.2020.

<sup>140</sup> Interview A 30.4.2020.

This ontological difference may result in disagreements within the movement itself, and hints at vastly different ideological paths are heading towards with their political lives.

The 'victim' frames are addressed in two subchapters: one on anthropocentric and another on biocentric frames. Anthropocentrism portrays humans as separate from and superior to the non-human nature, which they pin an instrumental value on.<sup>141</sup> Biocentrism or deep ecology refer to the ontological assumption of placing intrinsic value to non-human nature: it is valuable for itself, regardless of its usefulness to humans.<sup>142</sup> Since the two theories have completely different ontologies, enacting of which would lead to conflicting priorities. Anthropocentrism(s)<sup>143</sup> would prioritize human security as the climate crisis advances, attempting to ensure equal opportunities for humans to satisfy their basic needs. The preservation of non-human nature would continue to serve human purposes only. Biocentric framings, on the other hand, would strive for preserving the planetary ecosystem to the greatest possible extent for its own sake and not for its utility for humans. Following a biocentric ethic could lead to drastically limiting human usage of the biosphere, and place the planetary ecosystem's preservation above the internal hierarchies and inequalities of human societies.

The wide variety of framings of the human place within nature serves as an excellent example of how ideologically pluralistic FFF is. They serve as an indicator of what kinds of climate action FFF participants would like to advance in the world. Especially the biocentric

---

<sup>141</sup> Bryan G. Norton, "Environmental Ethics and Weak Anthropocentrism," *Environmental Ethics* 6:2 (1984) 131-148.

<sup>142</sup> Biocentric ideas have been explored by numerous writers, eg. Arne Næss and George Sessions. A comprehensive overview of the philosophy is provided in Freya Mathews, "Deep Ecology," in D. Jamieson "A companion to *Environmental Philosophy* (Malden, MA:Blackwell) 2001.

<sup>143</sup> There are countless versions of anthropocentrism, varying from viewing nature as pure material for human use to preserving nature because of its beauty.

frames provide valuable information about the alternative ideologies present in FFF since it has traditionally not been a prominent human-nature narrative in the Global North.

### **5.2.1. Humans suffering from environmental degradation**

Anthropocentrism is deeply embedded in the Western construction of nature and the relationship between humans and the non-human, which is why it is crucial to first understand and dissect its conceptual origins and characteristics before examining the FFF frames revolving around it. It originates from a number of cultures and ideologies, such as Judeo-Christian religions, ideas of modernity, capitalism and colonization, and is embedded political and economic practises as well the worldview of most people living in the Global North.<sup>144</sup> In addition to the idea of human superiority, the Western view of nature also regards that nature should be controlled in order to maximize economic gains, growing progressively over time. <sup>145</sup> This chapter will shed light on the anthropocentric framings of climate crisis present my research data, and their connections to different political and environmentalist schools of thought, revealing ideological diffusion also within the human-centered framings even in my very limited research data.

The visual Instagram data boasts numerous entries highlighting the human entitlement to the planet and the instrumental value of the non-human nature:

” I don’t know which day it is but I do know that we only have this Earth.”

”Don’t go breaking my Earth”

”Our one & only – care for it”

---

<sup>144</sup> Anthony Burke, “Blue Screen Biosphere: The Absent Presence of Biodiversity in International Law,” *International Political Sociology* 13, no. 3 (September 1, 2019): 333–51, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ips/olz015>.

<sup>145</sup> Scott et al., *Psychology for Sustainability*.

These framings include a depiction of humans as indirect victims of the climate crisis as their security and well-being are compromised by side effects. As described in Chapter 4, there are German FFF activists regard several different groups as disadvantaged by climate emergency, and some of the framings are expressions of pure fear instead of mild concern. An interviewee is afraid that "people will die" and that "our children and grandchildren will be faced with war".<sup>146</sup> Several interviewees even express unwillingness to have children of their own as life may not be worth living for future generations. Indeed, the concern for young and future generations is strong in the public core message of the whole Fridays for Future movement, and discovering its manifestations in the research data is far from surprising.

However, not all anthropocentric frames automatically imply an environmental degradation – not even all instrumental understandings of nature do. For example, there are critical theorists that view the exploitation of the non-human as a reproduction of human hierarchies<sup>147</sup>, such as those between males and females<sup>148</sup> or the haves and the have-nots,<sup>149</sup> who suggest removing these human hierarchies would improve the way humans consume natural resources. These scholars do not oppose framing nature as a resource as such but the misogynist or capitalist logic by which it allegedly operates today. Their suggested solution would be changing the logic of the distribution and usage of natural resources in a way that would treat humans more equally. In the research data, this view is present as rejecting of the logic of perpetual growth and unlimited natural resources, and endorsing of increased equality among humans instead. For instance, a respondent regards proper nutrition as a common good that should be accessible to all

---

<sup>146</sup> Interview B 30.4.2020.

<sup>147</sup> Bookchin, *The Ecology of Freedom*.

<sup>148</sup> Karen J. Warren, "The Power and the Promise of Ecological Feminism," *Environmental Ethics* 12:2 (1990) 125-146.

<sup>149</sup> Michael Löwy, "What is ecosocialism?".

humans.<sup>150</sup> These frame still views non-human nature as a resource, and relies on the separation between the human and the non-human but acknowledges the limits of what the Earth can provide.

The data also contains frames of interdependence between humans and nature that still point at humans as the main victims of climate crisis. Two protest signs in particular fit this hybrid frame: a picture of a girl and a cow with the text "killing them kills us all" and a drawing of a burning planet with "environmental destruction = self-destruction". These views contest(s) some of the tenets of the Western outlook to nature – the human superiority and freedom to exploit the non-human– but conform with others, such as the human-nature dichotomy and the concern for human survival.

Anthropocentrism and the understanding of non-human nature as resources with instrumental value are two interconnected concepts but it is possible to decouple the human-nature dichotomy from the material exploitation of the non-human. Not all anthropocentric environmental philosophies are based on the instrumental value of biodiversity, in other words, natural resources.<sup>151</sup> The research material suggests that some FFF activists separate humans from nature because they are the only species that has both caused climate crisis and has the capacity to mitigate the damage done. This is what Norton refers to as weak anthropocentrism.<sup>152</sup>

---

<sup>150</sup> Interview 28.4.2020.

<sup>151</sup> Norton, "Environmental Ethics and Weak Anthropocentrism".

<sup>152</sup> Norton, "Environmental Ethics and Weak Anthropocentrism".

### 5.2.1. "Eco instead of ego" – Mother Earth as climate crisis victim

Some individual frames in my research data contain concern for the Earth or nature for its own sake, hinting at a biocentric worldview. The concept differs completely from the dominant anthropocentric paradigm as it places humans *within* the biotic community consisting of delicate, ever-changing webs of life.<sup>153</sup> This absence of human superiority and the recognition of non-human agency is sometimes referred to as flat ontology.<sup>154</sup>

Biocentric framings constitute a minority of my research material, albeit a loud and convinced one. A group of them focus on the intrinsic value of natural beings. They are concerned about the planetary ecosystem or parts of it for its own sake, not as a commodity for humans: for example, a young woman holds a sign calling for the protection of trees, whereas another sign sums up the biocentric message into three words: "eco instead of ego!". Two interviewees mention biodiversity loss as their fears for future: "many species of animal are threatened with extinction [by climate crisis]", as one of them puts it.<sup>155</sup> The second interviewee states that functional ecosystems are based on diversity, and "if an organism disappears, it will affect the ecosystem as a whole".<sup>156</sup> Thus, they regard humans disqualified for determining how an ecosystem should function.

The biocentric framings engage with the anthropomorphizing 'Mother Earth', which could strike as anthropocentric. In fact, they still think see as the victim of climate change, simply disguised in a human figure as a rhetorical device. The Instagram protestors appeal to abandoning the human superiority by stating "Respect your mom" with the letter 'o' painted as

---

<sup>153</sup> See eg. Paul Taylor, "Biocentric Egalitarianism," in in Louis Pojman and Paul Pojman, *Environmental Ethics: Readings in Theory and Application*. 7th edition (Boston: Cengage Learning, 2015) 100-111.

<sup>154</sup> Manuel De Landa, *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy*, Transversals (London ; New York: Continuum, 2002).

<sup>155</sup> Interview 28.4.2020.

<sup>156</sup> Interview 9.5.2020.



an aerial depiction of the planet Earth. Another Instagram image consists of a young man holding a sign with the lyrics of Stevie Wonder's song "Isn't she lovely?" with, again, a drawn image of the planet.

Some of the material is directed rather against the Western capitalist narrative of human superiority and its devastating consequences to the planet than placing nature into the victim role.<sup>157</sup> For instance, an Instagram image consists of a photo of a tree trunk with a place stating "we were not gods, WE FAILED" at its roots, whereas another stars an oil rig on a drawing of the Earth's silhouette, saying "Let me [try], I can... oops, [it's] broken!"

This chapter has shown how wide the gaps between different victim and villains frames can be, even in my limited data. These radical frames addressed last in are ideologically very far apart from the green capitalist optimism presented by some interviewees earlier in this chapter. The spectrum varies from anthropocentric frames, believing from changing the political and economic system from within to radically alternative views completely disregarding the current system's capacity to deal with climate crisis. These fundamental differences walk us into the last analytical chapter, which focuses on the FFF frames about desirable climate action.

---

<sup>157</sup> This logic has been explained in eg. Anthony Burke, "Blue Screen Biosphere"; Britain A. Scott et al., *Psychology for sustainability* and John Bellamy Foster et al., *The ecological rift*.



Picture 3: An online strike participant holding a self-made sign saying "We are world saviours".

## 6. Plans for a better world: frames of dissenting action

This final chapter leaves fear behind and focuses on the FFF participants' hopeful frames of action: what they think necessary changes are and how to bring them about. I will detect and analyze frames of action and other-doing in the research material, elaborating on what actions they are taking or think should be taken by them and why. The sub-chapters borrow their themes from the typology of youth climate dissent created by O'Brien et al., covering mainly two out of three dissent types – dutiful and dangerous – but the research material also includes

manifestations of disruptive dissent. The disruptive type, focusing on criticizing instead of action, is simply outside of the chapter's scope.

The most prominent frames of action presented by FFF participants are not new but are applied by other actors, too, such as green parties. For example, many activists appeal to international institutions, such as the Paris Agreement, as guidelines for action. In addition, their ideas of action do not present a very radical branch of climate activism: the other recent international climate movement, Extinction Rebellion, presents more critical arguments and actions.

### 6.1. "I trust in politics in the first place": a dutiful way forward

The research data shows that numerous FFF participants regard politics an effective and suitable way to advance climate action. They are not necessarily happy with the way climate crisis is being addressed by the German government, the EU or the international community, but they still believe in these institutions' capacity to make functioning climate policies in the future – with some pressure from the civil society, including themselves. According to O'Brien et al., dutiful dissenting refers to "youth activists work with existing systems to express their discontent with business as usual and to promote alternative responses to climate change".<sup>158</sup> Many FFF frames fit this description. Furthermore, the dutiful frames of action presented by several FFF participants resemble those of green parties to a great extent, suggesting that there is ideological

---

<sup>158</sup> Karen O'Brien, Elin Selboe, and Bronwyn Hayward, "Exploring Youth Activism on Climate Change: Dutiful, Disruptive, and Dangerous Dissent," *Ecology and Society* 23, no. 3 (September 21, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.5751/ES-10287-230342>.

convergence between the youth movement and the already institutionalized and hierarchic political party structures.

Even the FFF website appeals to the Paris Agreement 1,5°C mitigation goal as desirable.<sup>159</sup> As an interviewee puts it: "I trust in politics in the first place as responsible, then [private] companies and then people".<sup>160</sup> This view is reciprocated by several Instagram signs, for example: "forward with climate protection", "climate protection now – 1,5°C" and "For a green investment programme!!!". One interviewee mentions that "making politicians aware of [climate change] is the main aim of the FFF climate strikes", and another one backs their statement.<sup>161</sup> These frames entail two embedded dutiful notions. Firstly, they signal trust towards the current political system as capable of addressing climate crisis. Secondly, the Paris Agreement goal is partly based on the IPCC climate change reports, which both the FFF official statements and some of the participants involved in this thesis seem to regard as a trustworthy authority to base their arguments on. The faith in political institutions and international climate change mitigation instruments is also conveyed by mentioning them as legitimate guidelines to be followed. The interviewees appeal to, for instance, the Paris Agreement, the EU Green Deal, the United Nations and its Sustainable Development Goals and the IPCC.<sup>162</sup>

To illustrate the similarity of preferred climate action between FFF and green parties, I have consulted the European Greens statements and the German green party (Die Grüne) programmes for the 2017 parliamentary elections and the 2019 European Parliament (EP) elections. The three main goals of Die Grüne for the parliamentary election 2017 were

---

<sup>159</sup> Fridays for Future website, "Reasons to strike".

<sup>160</sup> Interview 7.5.2020.

<sup>161</sup> Interviews A and B, 30.4.2020.

<sup>162</sup> Interviews A and B, 30.4.2020; interview 3.5.2020, interview 7.5.2020.

introducing a binding climate change act, raising the prices for companies emitting large quantities of CO<sub>2</sub> and phasing out coal Germany-wide.<sup>163</sup> All these have been mentioned by FFF participants in my research material. The social justice concerns presented by the data resemble the social justice claims made by die Grüne in their EP programme: climate action should always improve the well-being of people suffering from racism and sexism.<sup>164</sup> The very same programme also calls for EU climate leadership, especially for assisting the Global South<sup>165</sup> – exactly as several FFF participants also emphasized in Chapter 4. Nevertheless, the dutiful FFF participants disagree with a well-known feature of politics: making compromises.<sup>166</sup>

In fact, the interviewees do not disregard traditional party politics as a method to bring change about: one of them is even a member of die Grüne, the German green party.<sup>167</sup> Another one states that they ”have good experiences with people from green and socialist parties” but that they simply do not have the time to engage with party politics in addition to activism.<sup>168</sup> The rest of the respondents either share the time constraint, are too young to join a political party or cannot find a party they would agree so much with that they would become a member.

A lot of the everyday non-political climate action framed as desirable by FFF participants also fits the description of dutiful dissent by O’Brien et al. as they perfectly legal, socially accepted and even endorsed by political entities. Some Instagram entries promote cycling as a mode of transportation ( eg. ”bike now or swim later” and ”ride your bikes”), and

---

<sup>163</sup> Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, *Zukunft wird aus Mut gemacht – Bundestagswahlprogramm 2017* (Leck: CPI Books GmbH, 2017).

<sup>164</sup> Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, *Europas Versprechen erneuern – Europawahlprogramm 2019* (Berlin:Druckhaus Berlin Mitte, 2018) 16.

<sup>165</sup> Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, *Europas Versprechen erneuern 20*.

<sup>166</sup> Eg. Interviews A and B, 30.4.2020, 3.5.2020.

<sup>167</sup> Interview 3.5.2020.

<sup>168</sup> Interview 28.4.2020.

several interviewees state that they prefer public transportation to using cars and airplanes.<sup>169</sup> The German state has recently created policies improving the low-carbon transportation infrastructure by, for instance, building more bike lanes and decreasing train ticket taxation, encouraging residents to choose less polluting modes of transportation.<sup>170</sup> Another frequently emerging everyday climate action encouraged by FFF participants is following a vegetarian or vegan diet – which all the interviewees do. The topic also appears in the Instagram material with signs like “Go vegan – your carbon footprint will decrease by 50%”. According to a recent survey, over 6 million out of 83 million Germans identify as vegetarians, and vegan and vegetarian food is easily available throughout the country.<sup>171</sup>

To sum up, biking and vegetarianism are common and law-abiding ways of climate action, and cannot be considered as very alternative. They present climate action as making lifestyle adjustments that do not contest everyday neoliberalism: one can and is still encouraged to material consumption and to strive for wealth and success, albeit in sustainable manner. Perhaps the holders of these frames cannot extend their horizon of possibilities beyond minor adjustments, such as city biking and munching on organic carrots.

---

<sup>169</sup> Eg. Interviews A and B 30.4.2020; 3.5.2020.

<sup>170</sup> Götz Gringmuth-Dallmer, “Wie sich der Berliner Radverkehr in Corona-Zeiten entwickelt,” *RBB24* May 9, 2020; *Die Zeit*, “Deutsche Bahn senkt Preise um zehn Prozent,” December 20, 2019.

<sup>171</sup> Statista online statistics, “Anzahl der Personen in Deutschland, die sich selbst Vegetarier einordnen,” <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/173636/umfrage/lebenseinstellung-anzahl-vegetarier/> (accessed May 2, 2020).

## 6.2. Dangerous dissent: refusal and other-doing

Even though FFF is portrayed by the media and decision-makers as a positive and encouraged initiative<sup>172</sup>, not all frames stemming from the research material fall under the dutiful umbrella. The research material also contains frames of other-doing. O'Brien et al. calls the type dangerous dissent as it defies "business as usual by initiating, developing and actualizing alternatives that inspire and sustain long-term transformations".<sup>173</sup> Dangerous frames do not adopt or comply with existing institutions and hierarchies but contest them and create alternative ways of organizing the society.<sup>174</sup> In my research data, entries and statements on coming up with alternatives and encouraging into collective other-doing can be understood as dangerous dissent. Dangerous framings, such as endorsing civil disobedience or alternative consumption patterns, are present (albeit not as much as dutiful frames) in the FFF participant data contrary to its public image.

According to O'Brien et al., dangerous dissent begins with youth realizing their "values and worldviews diverge from those holding power".<sup>175</sup> My research data offers numerous expressions of this first step: refusal of the existing power structures. Many Instagram signs sport slogans like "system change, not climate change" and "change the world, not the climate", which signal distrust in the way climate emergency is currently being addressed. However, they remain very vague as they do not suggest *what* exactly should change and how. Furthermore, many of these catchphrases might simply be reciprocated by protestors who have seen or heard them elsewhere. For example, "system change, not climate change" is the slogan of an anticapitalist,

---

<sup>172</sup> See eg. Welt Politik editors, "Merkel stellt sich hinter demonstrierende Schüler," *Welt Politik*, March 2, 2019.

<sup>173</sup> O'Brien et al., "Exploring Youth Activism on Climate Change" p. 47.

<sup>174</sup> O'Brien et al., "Exploring Youth Activism on Climate Change".

<sup>175</sup> O'Brien et al., "Exploring Youth Activism on Climate Change" p. 48.

ecosocialist network from the United States.<sup>176</sup> It remains unclear whether the sign creators are aware of the ideological connection they are making, but nevertheless, the refusing sentiment is present in the material and also taken further by other Instagram images and interviewees. Some Instagram "artists" take a subjective turn in their framing, suggesting that all humans – individuals and communities – should prepare and make systemic changes in their thinking and behaviour, as signs like "climate can change – can we?" and "what are YOU doing?" show. They appeal to the spectator as a benevolent person that would do the right thing, once informed about the severity of climate crisis, and serve the purpose of raising awareness of an emergency ignored by the masses.

Mere refusal to comply with the existing power structures is not enough to constitute a dangerous frame: an other-doing is also necessary. The basic idea of displaying climate dissent with the FFF main way of protesting – participating in mass demonstrations or online action – can be argued two ways: as peaceful and conventional or rebellious and disruptive. On the one hand, participating in a non-violent, legal demonstration is an institutionalized and widely accepted way of displaying dissent, but on the other, most of the underage participants are rejecting their duty to partake in state-organized school education. In Germany, the obligation to attend school is codified in the national legislation<sup>177</sup>, making striking an act of rebellion.

According to an interviewee (and Greta Thunberg) they are acts of civil disobedience since "on Fridays, we don't go to school [but strike instead]".<sup>178</sup> Another interviewee had made the choice

---

<sup>176</sup> System Change not Climate Change website, "About Us: Points of Unity," <https://systemchangenotclimatechange.org/about> (accessed June 3, 2020).

<sup>177</sup> Sebastian Haunss, Dieter Ruch, Moritz Sommer and Sabrina Zajak, "Germany" in Mattias Wahlström, Piotr Kocyba, Michiel de Vydt and Joost de Moor (eds), *Protest for a future: Composition, mobilization and motives of the participants in Fridays for Future climate protest on 15 March, 2019 in 13 European cities* (accessed May 8, 2020).

<sup>178</sup> Interview 9.5.2020.



to abandon the idea of a political career and slow down their studies in order to dedicate themselves almost full-time FFF to activism.<sup>179</sup> Third respondent strengthens the message by stating that FFF *is* an alternative form of education, where one can learn to ”mobilize, develop ideas about action, protest, paint signs... it’s creative action”.<sup>180</sup> In FFF, no grown-up is showing how to manage the movement. In Germany, FFF groups are self-organized and claims to have no leaders.<sup>181</sup>

Another prominent other-doing emerging from the data is favoring local agriculture instead of the products of monoculture farming. An Instagram sign appeals to the viewer by asking them to switch to ”nature gardens and local, fair organic products”. Two interviewees mention the idea in particular: one of them tells they would like others to consume local and organic products too, if their financial situation allows.<sup>182</sup> The other one is a member of a ”community-supported agricultural group, which means we grow our own food within the region”.<sup>183</sup> Supporting organic and local producers is, however, not a very rebellious act as in 2019, 6% of all groceries bought in Germany were labelled as organic and the sector is supported by an umbrella organization.<sup>184</sup>

Not all dangerous frames appear alternative at the first glance. Climate change mitigation measures are often presented as letting go of everyday practices people feel entitled to, such as eating meat, enjoying the swift travelling by airplane or living in large apartments. What makes

---

<sup>179</sup> Interview 3.5.2020. No direct quote can be provided as details could compromise the interviewee’s anonymity.

<sup>180</sup> Interview 7.5.2020.

<sup>181</sup> Till Haase, ”Proteste brauchen keine Anführerin – aber sie hilft”.

<sup>182</sup> Interview 28.4.2020.

<sup>183</sup> Interview 7.5.2020.

<sup>184</sup> Statista online statistics, ”Anteil von Bio-Lebensmitteln am Lebensmittelumsatz in Deutschland in den Jahren 2010 bis 2019”, <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/360581/umfrage/marktanteil-von-biolebensmitteln-in-deutschland/> (accessed June 3, 2020); Website of Lebensmittelverband, <https://www.lebensmittelverband.de/de/lebensmittel/nachhaltigkeit-und-umwelt/bio> (accessed June 3, 2020).

this view special is its narrative of mutual benefit instead of humans letting go of what belongs to them. The view has also been introduced into the climate policy discourse by eg. Brown et al.<sup>185</sup> An interviewee presents the idea this way: "the lifestyle we have in Germany is simply not good for the climate".<sup>186</sup> Several interviewees regard the Western consumerism as unfair in the light of climate justice, introduced in the Chapter 4 of this thesis, but do not take their arguments into the direction of correcting the global skew with redistribution of material and political resources.

Some of the FFF interviewees do not share the common "cost" framing of climate change mitigation actions, but regard them as beneficial for humans, as well. "Consuming less meat is good for the health, and so is physical movement by biking or walking", a respondent states.<sup>187</sup> Another one thinks humans have lost their connection with nature, which should be rebuilt: "I would like to see every child being born into this world have the experiences I had [with playing in the nature], so that she would not reject or feel threatened by it".<sup>188</sup> The previous reply ontologically disagrees with the view of nature embedded in legal and political structures<sup>189</sup> as the interviewee does not regard nature as a resource but rather as a home shared by *homo sapiens* and countless other species.

A quick look at another recently emerged climate activist group, Extinction Rebellion (XR), reveals that the dangerous frames of the FFF data prove to be rather mild. XR gained momentum and visibility after the publication of the 2018 IPCC report, to which they reacted by

---

<sup>185</sup> Katrina Brown, W. Neil Adger, and Joshua E. Cinner, "Moving Climate Change beyond the Tragedy of the Commons," *Global Environmental Change* 54 (January 2019): 61–63, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2018.11.009>.

<sup>186</sup> Interview 9.5.2020.

<sup>187</sup> Interview 2.5.2020.

<sup>188</sup> Interview 7.5.2020.

<sup>189</sup> Burke, "Blue Screen Biosphere."

blocking bridges in London in late 2018.<sup>190</sup> Actions of civil obedience have spread across the globe by 2020, still concentrating on Europe.<sup>191</sup> XR openly opposes the authority of governments, claiming that they have failed to protect their citizens and the planetary ecosystem from climate emergency.<sup>192</sup> National governments should declare "a climate and ecological emergency" and strive for zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2025<sup>193</sup> – a goal considerably more stringent than those set by the EU policies or the Paris Agreement, both of which are guidelines backed down by many FFF groups and participants. Governments alone cannot be trusted to implement these changes, which is why a citizens' assembly should be created to lead the transformation.<sup>194</sup> XR shows dangerous dissent and other-doing in both theory and practise: they apply illegal methods of civil disobedience, such as getting arrested on purpose<sup>195</sup>, and it also contests the current political and economic systems in their whole.

Until now, I have shown that FFF does not present the most alternative frames of desirable climate action – but perhaps their most dangerous idea is volume and connectivity, not radicalism. All the interviewees and dozens of Instagram signs appeal to the importance of collective refusal and other-doing as presented throughout this thesis. An interviewee puts it this way:

---

<sup>190</sup> BBC News, "What is Extinction Rebellion and what does it want?" *BBC News*, October 7, 2019.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>192</sup> Extinction Rebellion website, "Our Demands", <https://rebellion.earth/the-truth/demands/> (accessed June 4, 2020).

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>194</sup> Extinction Rebellion website, "Our Demands".

<sup>195</sup> Georg Fahrion, "A New Kind of Climate Protest Movement," *SPIEGEL International*, August 23, 2019.

”We need good people everywhere, in every profession. When they are looking for solutions in their work, they always think about climate first. [...] There can be activism everywhere: in economy, in medicine, in engineering.”<sup>196</sup>

The collective, cooperative cells of everyday refusal and other-doing resembles the idea of ‘cracking capitalism’ by the sociologist John Holloway, who emphasizes small-scale grass-roots activism.<sup>197</sup> The individual ‘cracks’ or alternative actions resonate with each other, slowly eroding the power of economic and state institutions.<sup>198</sup> Not all the frames in the research material are anti-capitalist, but a significant amount of them are, which justifies the comparison to Holloway’s theory. In a similar manner, two interviewees consider cooperation and networking between different climate and environmental movements and groups as mutually beneficial, amplifying all their voices. ”Ende Gelände, Fridays for Future, the transition movement and the permaculture movement [...] function better [...] together”, the first one says.<sup>199</sup> The second one mentions the FFF massive demonstrations as an example of such cooperation of different groups, from students to parents and scientists to agriculture workers.<sup>200</sup> For many interviewees, the mere act of protesting represents constructing an alternative universe where climate action brings people together and creates feelings of unity and empowerment.

To conclude, Fridays for Future appears to be home to rather mild, conventional frames of desirable climate action. It trusts in scientific institutions, cites international treaties as guidelines for political action and shares many goals with green parties. It is not the first large youth environmentalist movement – students across the United States initiated the Earth Day

---

<sup>196</sup> Interview 7.5.2020.

<sup>197</sup> John Holloway, *Crack Capitalism*, 1. publ (London: Pluto, 2010).

<sup>198</sup> Holloway.

<sup>199</sup> Interview 28.4.2020.

<sup>200</sup> Interview 9.5.2020.

movement in 1970, protesting on the streets and educating their peers and elders about environmental destruction in their country.<sup>201</sup> The FFF participants do not suggest as radical and biocentric calls for action as for example Extinction Rebellion. Perhaps thanks to the diversity and inclusiveness of FFF, it has grown to become the largest climate movement in history, and its significance is further amplified with cooperation with a large amount of other actors siding with them.

---

<sup>201</sup> Earth Day website, "The History of Earth Day," <https://www.earthday.org/history/> (accessed June 2, 2020).

## Conclusions

This thesis has walked us through a mosaic of climate policy and action frames presented by German FFF participants. They have revealed feelings of anger, hope and fear, but also structural understanding of the world and their holders' roles in it. One cannot draw any other generalized conclusions from the journey but this: FFF does not provide any coherent framing on the causes of climate crisis, those who are hurt by it or how the crisis could be solved. What has emerged from the data is a diverse group of voices, some of them even in disharmony with each other.

The findings resonate and add to the previous research on 2010's social movements by eg. Fisher and Klandermans: FFF participants seem to link climate action and policy tightly into other movements, such as feminist and postcolonial mobilization, and FFF serves as a climate-themed umbrella for various personal ideologies.<sup>202</sup> Many FFF frames of climate action also fall into the three-fold typology of youth climate dissent by O'Brien et al.<sup>203</sup>: some believe in change achieved through political institutions and law-abiding everyday actions, whereas others want to abandon the current political and economic system and build alternative solutions instead. In all its diversity, FFF appears to function as one of the first touches into the realm of the political, offering its participant a chance to formulate their understanding of climate crisis and other societal issues, and bring them into action.

Ten years ago, it was radical to frame climate change as an issue of global justice.<sup>204</sup> Today, notions of climate inequality are abundant in my research data: climate justice has perhaps become the new moderate frame. My data may also have made a suggestion about the

---

<sup>202</sup> Klandermans et al., "Mobilization Without Organization."; Fisher, *American Resistance*.

<sup>203</sup> O'Brien, Selboe, and Hayward, "Exploring Youth Activism on Climate Change."

<sup>204</sup> Donatella Della Porta and Louisa Parks, "Framing processes in the climate movement".

new radical as it uncovered some biocentric frames, emphasizing intrinsic value of the planetary ecosystem. Anti-anthropocentrism is perhaps more clearly advocated by another very recent climate movement, Extinction Rebellion, that openly encourages its participants into abandon states as authorities and to resorts to radical acts of civil disobedience to promote their cause.

Finally, the vast plurality of different, even conflicting climate policy and action frames á la FFF serves as a proof of what an enormous and all-encompassing issue climate crisis is. The fact that a person strives for a better climate future does not imply at any worldview, ideology or solution: whose future? how? by whom? After examining all the hundred-and-something frames, I can only recommend to begin understanding climate polices and action as empty signifiers.

## Bibliography

Barbieri, Cécile. "Prakash Mathema: Poorest countries have the most to lose at the UN climate talks."

*Euractiv*, October 21, 2014.

BBC News. "What is Extinction Rebellion and what does it want?" *BBC News*, October 7, 2019.

Bhattacharyaa, Rituparna. "#Metoo Movement: An Awareness Campaign." *International Journal of*

*Innovation, Creativity and Change* 3:4 (2018) 1-12.

Bookchin, Murray. *The Ecology of Freedom: The Emergence and Dissolution of Hierarchy*. Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2005.

Brown, Katrina, W. Neil Adger, and Joshua E. Cinner. "Moving Climate Change beyond the Tragedy of the Commons." *Global Environmental Change* 54 (January 2019): 61–63.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2018.11.009>.

Bruhns, Annette, Helke Klovert, France Quecke and Andreas Wassermann. "Fridays for Future is About to Turn One." *Spiegel International*, August 1, 2019

Brünker, Felix, Fabian Deitelhoff and Milad Mirbabaie."Collective Identity Formation on

Instagram: Investigating the Social Movement Fridays for Future." *Australasian Conference on Information Systems* 9 publication (2019) 304-310.

Burke, Anthony. "Blue Screen Biosphere: The Absent Presence of Biodiversity in International Law."

*International Political Sociology* 13, no. 3 (September 1, 2019): 333–51.

<https://doi.org/10.1093/ips/olz015>.

Bündnis 90/Die Grünen. *Europas Versprechen erneuern – Europawahlprogramm 2019*

(Berlin:Druckhaus Berlin Mitte, 2018).

Bündnis 90/Die Grünen. *Zukunft wird aus Mut gemacht – Bundestagswahlprogramm 2017* (Leck: CPI

Books GmbH, 2017).



Carrington, Damian. "School climate strikes: 1.4 million people take part, say campaigners." *The Guardian*, March 19, 2019.

Chudy, Emily. "Greta takes climate strikes online." *Ecologist*, March 16, 2020,  
<https://theecologist.org/2020/mar/16/greta-takes-climate-strikes-online> (accessed April 19, 2020).

Crouch, David. "The Swedish 15-year-old who is cutting class to fight the climate crisis." *The Guardian* September 1, 2019.

De Landa, Manuel. *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy*. Transversals. London ; New York: Continuum, 2002.

De Moor, Joost, Katrin Uba, Mattias Wahlström, Magnus Wennerhag and Michiel de Vydt. *Protest for a future II: Composition, mobilization and motives of the participants in Fridays for Future climate protests on 20-27 September, 2019, in 19 cities around the world*.

Deakin, Hannah, and Kelly Wakefield. "Skype Interviewing: Reflections of Two PhD Researchers." *Qualitative Research* 14, no. 5 (October 2014): 603–16.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794113488126>.

Della Porta, Donatella, ed. *The Global Justice Movement: Cross-National and Transnational Perspectives*. Boulder: Paradigm Publ, 2007.

Della Porta, Donatella, and Mario Diani. *Social Movements: An Introduction*. 2nd ed. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006.

Della Porta, Donatella, and Louisa Parks, "Framing processes in the climate movement: From climate change to climate justice," in Matthias Dietz and Heiko Garrelts, eds., *Routledge Handbook of the Climate Change Movement*, Routledge International Handbooks (London: Routledge, 2014).

Deutscher Bundestag Parlamentarchiv. "3.2. Durchschnittsalter."

[https://www.bundestag.de/resource/blob/272474/4a216913aff5f5c25c41572257a57e4a/Kapitel\\_03\\_02\\_Durchschnittsalter-pdf-data.pdf](https://www.bundestag.de/resource/blob/272474/4a216913aff5f5c25c41572257a57e4a/Kapitel_03_02_Durchschnittsalter-pdf-data.pdf) (accessed May 28, 2020).

*Die Zeit*. "Deutsche Bahn senkt Preise um zehn Prozent." *Die Zeit*, December 20, 2019.

Dietz, Matthias, and Heiko Garrelts, eds. *Routledge Handbook of the Climate Change Movement*. Routledge International Handbooks. London: Routledge, 2014.

Dirth, Elizabeth. "Responding to Fridays for Future and the Youth Movement for Climate Justice." Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies Potsdam blog post, September 19, 2020, <https://www.iass-potsdam.de/en/blog/2019/09/responding-fridays-future-and-youth-movement-climate-justice> (accessed June 8, 2020).

Earth Day website. "The History of Earth Day." <https://www.earthday.org/history/> (accessed June 2, 2020).

Extinction Rebellion website. "Our Demands." <https://rebellion.earth/the-truth/demands/> (accessed June 4, 2020).

Fahrion, Georg. "A New Kind of Climate Protest Movement." *SPIEGEL International*, August 23, 2019.

Fisher, Dana. *American Resistance: From the Women's March to the Blue Wave*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2019.

Fridays for Future website. "Reasons to strike." <https://fridaysforfuture.org/take-action/reasons-to-strike/> (accessed May 19, 2020).

Foster, John Bellamy, Brett Clark, and Richard York. *The Ecological Rift: Capitalism's War on the Earth*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 2010.

Fujii, Lee Ann. *Interviewing in Social Science Research: A Relational Approach*. 1 Edition. Routledge Series on Interpretive Methods. New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2018.

Fuster Morell, Mayo. *An Introductory Historical Contextualization of Online Creation Communities for the Building of Digital Commons: The Emergence of a Free Cultural Movement*. 7th International Conference on Internet, Law and Politics online publication, [http://ceur-ws.org/Vol-739/paper\\_7.pdf](http://ceur-ws.org/Vol-739/paper_7.pdf) (accessed June 5, 2020).

Gallagher, Julia. "Interviews as Catastrophic Encounters: An Object Relations Methodology for IR Research." *International Studies Perspectives* 17 (2016) 445-461.

Gitlin, Todd. *The Whole World Is Watching: Mass Media in the Making & Unmaking of the New Left*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003.

Goffman, Erving. *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1974.

Goodbody, Axel. *The Culture of German Environmentalism: Anxieties, Visions, Realities*. (New York, Berghahn Books, 2002)

Gosseries, Axel. "Theories of Intergenerational Justice: A Synopsis." *S.A.P.I.EN.S. Surveys and Perspectives Integrating Environment and Society*, no. 1.1 (November 26, 2008). <http://journals.openedition.org/sapiens/165>.

Gould, Liam. "How Greta Thunberg's climate strikes became a global movement in a year." *Reuters*, August 20, 2019

Guillaume, Xavier, and Jef Huysmans. "The Concept of 'the Everyday': Ephemeral Politics and the Abundance of Life." *Cooperation and Conflict* 54, no. 2 (June 2019): 278–96. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010836718815520>.

Gringmuth-Dallmer, Götz. "Wie sich der Berliner Radverkehr in Corona-Zeiten entwickelt." *RBB24*, May 9, 2020

Haase, Till. "Proteste brauchen keine Anführerin – aber sie hilft." *Deutschlandfunk* radio show  
1.3.2019.

Hauck, Grace. "Friday's global strike was likely the largest climate rally ever." *Usa Today*,  
December 15, 2019.

Holloway, John. *Crack Capitalism*. 1. publ. London: Pluto, 2010.

Johnston, Hank, and John A. Noakes, eds. *Frames of Protest: Social Movements and the Framing  
Perspective*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc, 2005.

Klandermans, B., J. van Stekelenburg, M.-L. Damen, D. van Troost, and A. van Leeuwen. "Mobilization  
Without Organization: The Case of Unaffiliated Demonstrators." *European Sociological Review*  
30, no. 6 (December 1, 2014): 702–16. <https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcu068>.

Lebensmittelverband website. [https://www.lebensmittelverband.de/de/lebensmittel/nachhaltigkeit-  
und-umwelt/bio](https://www.lebensmittelverband.de/de/lebensmittel/nachhaltigkeit-und-umwelt/bio) (accessed June 3, 2020).

Leong, Carmen, Shan L. Pan, Shamshul Bahri, and Ali Fauzi. "Social Media Empowerment in Social  
Movements: Power Activation and Power Accrual in Digital Activism." *European Journal of  
Information Systems* 28, no. 2 (March 4, 2019): 173–204.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0960085X.2018.1512944>.

Löwy, Michael. "What is ecosocialism?" *Capitalism Nature Socialism* 16:2 (2005) 15-24.

Löwy, Michael. "Ecosocialism: A Radical Alternative." In *Reflections on Socialism in the Twenty-First  
Century*, edited by Claes Brundenius, 199–210. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2020.  
[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-33920-3\\_10](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-33920-3_10).

Lüdke, Steffen. "So planen die Schülerinnen und Schüler den Mega-Klimastreik." *Bento*, March 3,  
2019.

Mangat, Rupinder, and Simon Dalby. "Climate and Wartalk: Metaphors, Imagination, Transformation." *Elem Sci Anth* 6, no. 1 (August 2, 2018): 58. <https://doi.org/10.1525/elementa.313>.

- Mathews, Freya. "Deep Ecology." in D. Jamieson, *A companion to Environmental Philosophy* (Malden, MA:Blackwell) 2001.
- Maxwell, Anne. "Postcolonial criticism, ecocriticism and climate change: A tale of Melbourne under water in 2035." *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 45:1 (2009) 15-26.
- Meyer, Lukas H., and Dominic Roser. "Climate Justice and Historical Emissions." *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 13, no. 1 (March 2010): 229–53.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13698230903326349>.
- Norton, Bryan G. "Environmental Ethics and Weak Anthropocentrism." *Environmental Ethics* 6:2 (1984) 131-148.
- O'Brien, Karen, Elin Selboe, and Bronwyn Hayward. "Exploring Youth Activism on Climate Change: Dutiful, Disruptive, and Dangerous Dissent." *Ecology and Society* 23, no. 3 (September 21, 2018). <https://doi.org/10.5751/ES-10287-230342>.
- Pichardo, Nelson A. "New Social Movements: A Critical Review." *Annual Review of Sociology* 23 (1997) 411-430.
- Pieper, Oliver. "Protest gegen Datteln 4: Für die Gegner is kein Turm zu hoch." *DW*, February 2, 2020.
- Plumwood, Val. "Nature, Self, and Gender: Feminism, Environmental Philosophy, and the Critique of Rationalism." *Hypatia* 6:1 (1991) 3-27.
- Rockström, Johan et al., "Planetary Boundaries: Exploring the Safe Operating Space for Humanity," *Ecology and Society* 14:2 (2009) 472-475.
- Rosbach, Jens. "Fridays for Future: Zwischen Rebellion und Kooperation." *Deutschlandfunk*, May 26, 2020.
- Scientists for Future website, <https://www.scientists4future.org> (accessed June 4, 2020).

- Scott, Britain A., Elise L. Amel, Susan M. Koger, and Christie M. Manning. *Psychology for Sustainability*. 4th edition. New York, NY London: Routledge, 2016.
- Seitz, Sally. "Pixilated Partnerships, Overcoming Obstacles in Qualitative Interviews via Skype: A Research Note." *Qualitative Research* 16, no. 2 (April 2016): 229–35.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794115577011>.
- Shirky, Clay. *Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing without Organizations*. New York: Penguin, 2009.
- Shue, Henry, ed. *Climate Justice: Vulnerability and Protection*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.
- Snow, David. Framing Processes, Ideology, and Discursive Fields." in David Snow et al., *Blackwell Companion to Social Movements* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004).
- Snow, David and Robert D. Benford. "Ideology, Frame Resonance and Partipant Mobilization." in Klandermans, Bert, ed. *From Structure to Action: Comparing Social Movement Research across Cultures*. International Social Movement Research 1. Greenwich, Conn. u.a: JAI, 1989.
- Spiegel Wirtschaft*. "Aktivistinnen blockieren Zentrale von Energiekonzern." *Spiegel Wirtschaft*, February 14,2020.
- Statista online statistics. "Welche Socia-Media-Apps benutzt du am häufigsten?" (accessed April 20, 2020).
- Statista online statistics."Anzahl der Personen in Deutschland, die sich selbst Vegetarier einordnen." <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/173636/umfrage/lebenseinstellung-anzahl-vegetarier/> (accessed May 2, 2020).
- Statista online statistics. "Anteil von Bio-Lebensmitteln am Lebensmittelumsatz in Deutschland in den Jahren 2010 bis 2019." <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/360581/umfrage/marktanteil-von-biolebensmitteln-in-deutschland/> (accessed June 3, 2020).

System Change not Climate Change website. "About Us: Points of Unity."

<https://systemchangenotclimatechange.org/about> (accessed June 3, 2020).

Taylor, Matthew, Jonathan Watts, and John Bartlett. "Climate crisis: 6 million people join latest wave of global protests." *The Guardian*, September 27, 2020.

Taylor, Paul. "Biocentric Egalitarianism." in in Louis Pojman and Paul Pojman, *Environmental Ethics: Readings in Theory and Application*. 7th edition (Boston: Cengage Learning, 2015) 100-111.

TAZ. "Erst Hype, jetzt Demopause." *TAZ online*, <https://taz.de/Ein-Jahr-Fridays-for-Future/!5645996/> (accessed May 18, 2020).

Therborn, Göran. *The Ideology of Power and the Power of Ideology*. 4th impression, 1999, Verso Classics ed. London New York NY: Verso, 1999.

Thunberg, Greta. Speech at the Davos Economic Forum 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wLW4Tk8PwDg> (accessed May 26, 2020).

Thunberg, Greta. Speech at the United Nations Climate Action Summit 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KAJsdgTPJpU> (accessed May 26, 2020)

Uekötter, Frank. *The Greenest Nation? A New History of German Environmentalism*. History for a Sustainable Future. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2014.

Ukkola, Sanna. "Ilmastoliikkeen pitää jättää lapset rauhaan – nyt kiusaajat ahdistivat 17-vuotiaan aktivistin tauolle." *Iltalehti*, May 14, 2020.

Utekhin, Ilya. "Small Data First: Pictures from Instagram as an Ethnographic Source." *Russian Journal of Communication* 9, no. 2 (May 4, 2017): 185–200. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19409419.2017.1327328>.

Warren, Karen J. "The Power and the Promise of Ecological Feminism." *Environmental Ethics* 12:2 (1990) 125-146.

Wahlström, Mattias, Piotr Kocyba, Michiel de Vydt and Joost de Moor, "Protest for a future:

*Composition, mobilization and motives of the participants in Fridays for Future climate protest on 15 March, 2019 in 13 European cities*", <https://protestinstitut.eu/wp->

[content/uploads/2019/07/20190709\\_Protest-for-a-future\\_GCS-Descriptive-Report.pdf](https://protestinstitut.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/20190709_Protest-for-a-future_GCS-Descriptive-Report.pdf)

(accessed May 8, 2020).

Welt Politik editors. "Merkel stellt sich hinter demonstrierende Schüler." *Welt Politik*, March 2, 2019.

Williamson, Judith. *Decoding Advertisements: Ideology and Meaning in Advertising*

(London:Marion Boyars, 1994).

Winchitz, Michaela R. "Fieldworker or Foreigner?: Ethnographic Interviewing in Nonnative Languages."

*Field Methods* 18, no. 1 (February 2006): 83–97. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X05279902>.

ZDF Heute editors. "Klimastreiks kehren zurück – 'Fridays for Future': Protest jetzt digital." *ZDF Heute*,

April 24, 2020, [https://www.zdf.de/nachrichten/panorama/fridays-for-](https://www.zdf.de/nachrichten/panorama/fridays-for-future-)

[digitalstreik-corona-100.html](https://www.zdf.de/nachrichten/panorama/fridays-for-future-digitalstreik-corona-100.html) (accessed May 19, 2020).



## Annex I: Examples of interview questions

The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner, and I used the list below for constructing each individual interview. Not all interviewees answered each question, and not all questions and themes are included in this list. All questions are in both English and **German**.

### Background questions

- What do you study/what your job is? **Was studierst/wo arbeitest du?**
- How did you become interested in climate topics? **Wie hast du dich fürs Klimathema interessiert?**
- Is your family concerned about climate change, too? **Sorgt sich deine Familie auch ums Klima? Und Freunde?**
- What's your experience and background with FFF? **Was sind deine bisherigen Erfahrungen mit der FFF-Bewegung?**
- Do you support a political party or are you a member of a party? Why, why not? **Unterstützt du eine politische Partei oder bist du Mitglied einer Partei? Warum, warum nicht?**

### Substantial questions

- How do you take climate emergency into account in your everyday life? What are the right everyday actions to take in general? **Wie berücksichtigst du die Klimakrise in deinem Alltagsleben? Welche Klimamaßnahmen sind deine Meinung nach für alle empfehlenswert?**

- What do you think about people who don't care about climate emergency or don't believe in it? **Was denkst du zu Personen, die sich nicht mit der Klimakrise auseinandersetzen oder nicht an den Klimawandel glauben?**
- How do you think climate change affects a) your future b) the future of your city/town c) the future of the planet? How does that make you feel? **Inwiefern beeinflusst die Klimakrise a) deine Zukunft b) die Zukunft deine Stadt c) die Zukunft der Erde? Wie fühlst du dich dabei?**
- What fears do you have when you think about climate emergency and the future? **Welche Ängste hast du zwecks der Klimakrise und der Zukunft?**
- And what hopes? **Und welche Hoffnungen?**
- Who/what has caused climate emergency? How do you feel about that? **Wer/was hat die Klimakrise verursacht? Wie steht ihr dazu/was fühlst du darüber?**
- How do you think Germany is doing regarding to climate emergency? How about international climate action? Are you satisfied with their actions? **Was denkst du, was Deutschland zum Klimanotstand beiträgt? Was ist deine Meinung zum internationalen Umgang damit? Bist du zufrieden mit den aktuellen Maßnahmen?**
- If you are not happy with the current climate action, how do you think it should be protested against? **Wenn du nicht zufrieden mit den aktuellen Klimaschutzmaßnahmen bist, wie sollte man dagegen protestieren?**
- Who is responsible for taking climate action: individuals, states, companies – or all? **Wer sollte verantwortlich für Klimaschutzmaßnahmen sein: Einzelpersonen, der Staat, Unternehmen – oder alle? Warum?**

- Do you think climate crisis is connected to other global problems and if yes, which ones?  
**Findest du, dass die Klimakrise direkt an andere globale Probleme anknüpft und wenn ja, welche?**
- What/who does climate emergency threaten? How? Why would it be bad to lose XX  
[what is threatened by climate crisis? **Wer oder was leidet besonders unter der Klimakrise? Auf welche Art und Weise/Wie? Warum wäre es schlimm, XX zu verlieren?**
- For who should climate action be taken (eg. young generations, future generations, the planet)? **Für wen oder was sollten Aktionen gegen die Klimakrise besonders unternommen werden?**
- Do you think the coronavirus teaches anything about climate change? What? **Findet ihr, dass die Corona-Krise eine Wirkung auf die Klimakrise hat?**