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## Anti-Capitalist Ecology: Are Green Parties Part of a Counter-Hegemonic Movement?

Isa van Schaick

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“**T**he world is our garden.” This phrase guided the exhibition “Garden Futures: Designing with Nature” in het Nieuwe Instituut museum in Rotterdam.<sup>1</sup> It showcased how the natural world should be understood as our communal garden, and how we should treat it mindfully and with the same care we treat our personal gardens with. The exhibition reminds us that the natural world is deeply dependent on the way we interact with it. It is affected by the way we live and how we organize our living environment in accordance with nature, especially in the case of the production systems that run our economy. To care for our personal gardens is to care for the global communal garden we share. Asking too much of our gardens, however, will eventually overburden its resources and lead to its death.

In 1968 the idea of the world being our communal garden and questions of how to communally manage our shared backyard arose amidst social movements pressing for “the search for alternative forms of social and cultural life.”<sup>2</sup> The ecologist thinking that developed in this era argued that we must abandon the thought that the earth is a resource for us to exploit, a “common storehouse” or “gigantic warehouse” that can be used up at our demand.<sup>3</sup> This argument forms the basis of the ‘deep’ ecological philosophy developed by Arne Næss called *ecosophy*. Ecosophy, broader known as *ecocentrism*, is a philosophical approach that attributes

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<sup>1</sup> Het Nieuwe Instituut, “Garden Futures.”

<sup>2</sup> Touraine, “Introduction to Social Movements,” 749.

<sup>3</sup> Tormey, *Anti-Capitalism*, 108-10.

innate value to all species on earth.<sup>4</sup> In his book, *Ecology, community and lifestyle* (1989), Næss displays his concept of ecosophy in the form of a manifesto divided in eight pointers. With this manifesto he argues for nature to be protected from human influence. The short document starts with pointer one: “The flourishing of human and non-human life on Earth has intrinsic value. The value of non-human life forms is independent of the usefulness these may have for narrow human purposes.”<sup>5</sup> Deep ecology opposes a ‘shallower’ version of this ecological approach, *anthropocentrism*. Anthropocentric ecological philosophy is a theory that suggests that nature has value because humans place value on it.<sup>6</sup> Næss describes the latter movement as consisting of those “[who] fight against pollution and resource depletion. Central objective: the health and affluence of people in the developed countries . . .”<sup>7</sup>

The emergence and spread of these eco-philosophies were a reaction to the hyper-industrialist forms of production in both of capitalist and communist societies in the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>8</sup> Grassroots initiatives that first put forward these ideas soon developed into professionally organized organizations,<sup>9</sup> including the politically organized green parties we have today. Given that the ecological philosophies underpinning these parties describe nature as having (innate) value, some political theorists that are highlighted below have suggested that green party policy could be understood as anti-capitalist. Capitalism namely sees the natural world as a resource meant for exploitation, especially for the purpose of private (monetary) gain.<sup>10</sup> In its purest form, capitalism is defined as: “a system wherein all of the means of production (physical capital) are privately owned and run by the capitalist class for a profit, while most other people are workers who work for a salary or wage (and do not

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<sup>4</sup> Burchell, “Challenge to Party Politics?” 8-14; Næss, “The Environmental Crisis,” 29.

<sup>5</sup> Næss, “The Environmental Crisis,” 29.

<sup>6</sup> Burchell, “Challenge to Party Politics?” 8-14

<sup>7</sup> Næss, “The Environmental Crisis,” 28.

<sup>8</sup> Tormey, *Anti-capitalism*, 108-10.

<sup>9</sup> Gladwin, “The Theory and Politics,” 60.

<sup>10</sup> Brand, “Beyond Green Capitalism,” 96; Tormey, *Anti-Capitalism*, 108-10.

own the capital or product).”<sup>11</sup> The means of production are mostly objects coming out of the natural world. In a capitalist system, the value of these objects is determined on their monetary, exchange or trade-value. They are not seen as innately valuable or valued for their contribution to the surrounding habitat.

It is this contradiction in philosophy, the different kind of value nature is deemed to have in a capitalist and ecologist sense, that work from the early 1980s suggests that green parties are anti-capitalist.<sup>12</sup> More recent literature nuances this assumption. Tormey proposed in his book *Anti Capitalism: A Beginner's Guide* (2013) that only ecocentric green parties are often anti-capitalist, anthropocentric parties less so. Ecocentric parties are namely those groupings that are linked with alternative forms of socio-economic organization, such as anarchism and primitivism.<sup>13</sup> Primitivism is defined here as a social movement that wants to return to a pre-industrial society. In another recent article titled “Beyond Green Capitalism,” Brand argues that Greens are at a crucial position to rethink existing modes of production (capitalism) to deal with the global negative effects of capitalism on people and nature, and how they already are a “promotor of . . . initiatives towards a social-ecological transformation.”<sup>14</sup> Although these debates touch upon the idea of green parties being anti-capitalist, the scholarly debate does not fully substantiate these theoretical assumptions with empirical evidence. That is to say, it is difficult to trace in these works how the authors conclude that green parties are anti-capitalist.

In this article I argue that green parties are not *anti*-capitalist, as earlier scholars suggested, but are *pro*-capitalist instead. To make this argument, I have analyzed the content of the election manifestos of fourteen green parties in the Global North. With this I will demonstrate that green parties are in fact accommodating to capitalism, rather than pressuring for its demise. Depth of ecologism is not a factor that influenced this outcome, regardless of what is argued for in earlier work stated above.

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<sup>11</sup> Zimbalist and Sherman, *Political and Economic Systems*, 6-7.

<sup>12</sup> Gill and Law, “Global Hegemony,” 459.

<sup>13</sup> Tormey, *Anti-Capitalism*, 108-10.

<sup>14</sup> Brand, “Beyond Green Capitalism,” 96-101.

The article is divided in three parts. First, the methodology of the project is discussed, as well as the coding scheme that guided this research project. Secondly, the outcome of the analysis will be outlined. Finally, these results will be interpreted and discussed in the final section of this article.

### Methodology

In this article, the content of fourteen election manifestos is analyzed of green parties that competed in lower house parliamentary elections in Western, capitalist, and highly industrialized states. Manifestos for lower houses were specifically considered as lower houses are not only often more powerful than upper houses, but are also more directly elected by the public.<sup>15</sup> Given the aggregative function of parties, which involves translating supporters' interest into policy, manifestos serve as central expressions of party and supporter base positions at a specific moment in time.<sup>16</sup> Since manifestos are designed to engage with the public during elections, and are a result of negotiations with supporters, they are thereby considered as documents that highlight the new ways of thought coming out of the *intellectual-masses dialectic*. Intellectual-masses dialectic is a Gramscian concept for the exchange of thoughts between leaders in society ('intellectuals') and the society at large ('masses') that support them. Out of these interactions alternatives to hegemonic culture in society arise, such as those that challenge capitalism.<sup>17</sup> Studying manifestos offers insight into the outcomes of the intellectual-masses debates between leaders and supporters.

In the case of an active intellectual-masses dialogue, and capitalist sentiments or post-capitalist visions exist within green parties, we should expect to find expressions of this in their manifestos. It is not clear if manifestos reflect the party's 'ideal policy positions,' achievable 'policy forecasts' or 'stated policy positions' that attract greater audiences, or a mixture of these three.<sup>18</sup> With manifestos, however, parties formulate a hypothetical policy

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<sup>15</sup> Hague, Harrop and McCormick, *Comparative Government and Politics*, 133-4.

<sup>16</sup> Janda, "Interest Aggregation and Articulation," 789; Bingham Powell et al., *Comparative Politics Today*, 31-2; Eder et al., "Manifesto functions," 83.

<sup>17</sup> Olsaretti, "Croce, Philosophy and Intellectuals," 342-53.

<sup>18</sup> Laver, "Position and Salience," 67.

position, with which they try to win over an audience. Their manifestos will arguably not include all that green parties strive for when in a governmental role. Despite the above points considered, election manifestos are still the most transparent display of party policy and the most up-to-date version of the total party position on different agendas.

The manifestos selected for this research are chosen through a *diverse case selection* method. This method allows for testability of the effect of size and role in parliament matters regarding radicality of the policy position. The selected green parties show a variety of values; parties are either in parliament (in the lower house) or not, form part of the opposition or perform a governmental role. The analyzed parties are categorized according to the following formula: *Part of parliamentary body (yes/no) + Party size (% seats) + Government/Opposition = Party power potential*.

The party size of political parties is categorized based on a 10% threshold. While there is no well-rounded definition of what constitutes as a 'small party' expressed in a percentage of seats in parliament, this study handles small parties as those with less than 10% of the vote, while large parties are considered those with more than 10% of the vote. This data serves as an added independent variable in this study, as is expected that bigger parties and smaller parties react differently to parliamentary pressures. Bigger parties are expected to be more pressured by the logic of 'electoral competition' to maximalize a supporter base that is less radical than the party top (the pragmatists or Realo's). Smaller parties are expected to be more sensitive to the pressures of 'logic of constituency representation,' meaning that they stay more in line with the radical grassroot members and stay truer to their core principles (the fundamentalists or Fundi's).<sup>19</sup> Pragmatist-fundamentalist debates have been linked with the eco- and anthropocentric debates within green parties, where ecocentrism is linked with fundamentalists and anthropocentrism with pragmatists.<sup>20</sup> As party size and role is expected to influence the amount of fundamentalism and pragmatism in parties, party size was also examined in order to

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<sup>19</sup> Doherty, "The Fundi-Realo Controversy," 96.

<sup>20</sup> Burchell, "A 'New' Challenge," 20.

determine whether party size influences depth of ecocentrism and thereby alter the outcome of anti-capitalist proposals.

The selected parties are all chosen based on their prevalence in advanced industrial societies. This criterion is based on the argument that green parties have the greatest success in societies where there are active post-materialistic debates that are caused by high levels of societal wealth.<sup>21</sup> For comparability, all parties compete in national, lower house parliamentary elections. Lastly, the election manifestos are all written in Germanic languages (Dutch, English and German), which allows for a content analysis of primary materials due to the linguistic capabilities of the researcher. The parties that were considered in this analysis are displayed in Table 1 below.

This research was conducted through a *qualitative content analysis* via a manually developed coding scheme following Schreier guidelines.<sup>22</sup> The content of the election manifestos was analyzed regarding the economic policy positions these parties have focusing on their positions on capitalism and possible anti-capitalistic critique. The unit of analysis were sentence-level text-excerpts. Special emphasis was put upon what kinds of concepts are used to describe alternatives to capitalism, if capitalism is described at all. The coding schemes for this research are stated in the below tables 2 to 4, shown below.

The coding scheme is based on some theoretical expectations that were stated in the introduction of this article. This framework was enhanced by inductively defined categories that were found during a pilot-run with the prototype coding scheme and were shaped by personal evaluation.

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<sup>21</sup>Grant and Tilly, "Fertile Soil," 508.

<sup>22</sup> Schreier, "Qualitative Content Analysis," 121.

Table 1. Overview of the selected cases

State <i>Party</i>	Percentage in parliament (seats in lower house)	Gov./opp./no seat in nat. parl.	Year of election
<b>The Netherlands</b>			
<b>GroenLinks-PvdA</b>	16,67% (25/150 seats)	Opposition	2023
<b>Partij voor de Dieren</b>	2% (3/150 seats)	Opposition	2023
<b>De Groenen</b>	0,0% (0/150 seats)	No seat	2023
<b>Belgium</b>			
<b>Groen</b>	5,83% (8/150 seats)	Government	2019
<b>Germany</b>			
<b>Bündnis 90/Die Grünen</b>	16,03% (118/736 seats)	Government	2021
<b>Ökologisch- Demokratische Partei</b>	0,0% (0/736 seats)	No seat	2021
<b>Klimaliste</b>	0,0% (0/736 seats)	No seat	2021
<b>MUT</b>	0,0% (0/736 seats)	No seat	2021
<b>Austria</b>			
<b>Die Grünen – Die Grüne Alternative</b>	14,21% (26/183 seats)	Government	2019
<b>Ireland</b>			
<b>The Green Party - Comhaontas Glas</b>	7,5% (12/160 seats)	Government	2020
<b>United Kingdom</b>			
<b>The Green Party (of England and Wales)</b>	0,17% (1/573 seats)	Opposition	2019
<b>Australia</b>			
<b>The Greens</b>	2,65% (4/151 seats)	Opposition	2022
<b>Canada</b>			
<b>The Green Party of Canada</b>	0,59% (2/338 seats)	Opposition	2021
<b>New Zealand</b>			
<b>Green party of Aotearoa New Zealand-Rōpū Kākāriki o Aotearoa, Niu Tireni</b>	12,2% (15/123 seats)	Opposition	2023



Table 2. Ideology

Concept	Description	Examples	Rules
<b>Ecocentrism</b> (Deep ecology)	Displays the philosophy that ascribes innate value to the natural world, apart from the value the natural world is deemed by humans.	“Giving animals rights is not enough. In the policy choices we make, we should account for animal welfare.” <sup>23</sup>	Places value on: - non-human objects beyond their utility or profitability in human terms; - health of the planet, biodiversity, animal rights and welfare, etc.
<b>Anthropocentrism</b> (‘Shallow’ ecology)	Displays the philosophy that nature only has value because humans place value on it.	“States in the (Global) South get the chance to process and handle raw materials into products, so that they can earn more themselves.” <sup>24</sup>	Places value on: - non-human objects in terms of utility and profitability to humans; - utility of raw materials that provide in livelihood security, etc.
<b>Combination</b>	Displays both signs of anthropocentrism and ecocentrism.	“We need an extensive biomass strategy so that the production and the import of biomass for energy generation or animal feed does not destruct animal welfare.” <sup>25</sup>	Places value on: - non-human objects beyond and within terms of utility or profitability to humans; - health of planet and animals, as well as objects for human utility.

The election manifestos were analyzed on the type of ecologist perspective that was present in the text and were divided into the categories *deep ecology* (ecocentrism) and *shallow ecology* (anthropocentrism). An additional category of ‘combination’ is added, as per the pilot it became noticeable that parties often merge the two ideologies into one policy that suits both philosophies.

<sup>23</sup> Groen, “Groen: Verkiezingsprogramma,” 10.

<sup>24</sup> GroenLinks-PvdA, “Hoopvolle Toekomst,” 17.

<sup>25</sup> Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, “Unsere Zukunft Wählen?” 42.

*Table 3.* Party stances on capitalism

Concept	Description	Examples	Rules
<b>Criticism</b>	Criticisms on capitalism without a policy proposal on how to alter it.	“It is an assault driven forward by corporations and the privileged few, putting profit over people and the places they love.” <sup>26</sup>	Criticism on economic activity regarding fixation on economic growth despite: - planetary boundaries; - human health; - or, environmental damage, etc.
<b>Endorsement</b>	Statements that endorse the current capitalistic system.	“We advocate good conditions for small businesses and the self-employed so that they have good competition chances.” <sup>27</sup>	Positive mentions of: - economic growth; - enhancement of market position, etc.

*Table 4.* Proposed party policy

Concept	Description	Examples	Rules
<b>Alternative economic system</b>	Policy proposals that present an alternative economic system other than capitalism.	E.g. eco-socialist policies advocating for collective ownership of means of production and ecological rationality.	Proposal of another economic system than capitalism.
<b>Alternatives within the current economic system</b>	Policy proposals that endorse capitalism but propose alternatives to the current system that are more environmentally friendly.  Further separately defined as systemic (macro) and local (micro) proposals.	“A comprehensive development of environmental and resource taxes incl. co2 limit taxes.” <sup>28</sup>	Macro, mentions: - de-growth; - ecological sustainable growth; - circular economies; - alternative measures of wealth. Micro, mentions: - self-governing; - localized solutions; - subsidies for national or regional organizations.

<sup>26</sup> The Green Party of England and Wales, “Our Political Programme,” 7.

<sup>27</sup> Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, “Unsere Zukunft Wählen?” 68.

<sup>28</sup> Ökologisch-Demokratische Partei, “Wahlprogramm zur Bundestagswahl,” 18.

Parties therefore often position themselves somewhere on the spectrum between the two ideologies. Besides determining the place on the ideological spectrum, party size, and position in parliament, the different types of expected anti-capitalistic positions are determined by applying the following criteria. First, the overall party stance on capitalism is determined as either ‘criticism’ or ‘endorsement’. Note that only the overall policy position is stated here, not their specific policy proposals. Second, the material is assessed on whether the proposed policy presents an alternative economic system, or an alternative *within* the current economic system.

## Results

The analysis of the election manifestos revealed varying degrees of ecocentrism and anthropocentrism among the parties. The combination of anthropocentrism and ecocentrism was the most prevalent in eight of the fourteen parties (50,77%-64,71% of the coded text per manifesto). Of these eight parties, four are considered large (occupying more than 10% of the seats in their respective lower houses), and three out of these four large parties are in government. As an example of a combination text was found in The Austrian Die Grünen-Die Grüne Alternative manifesto. The party mentions the necessity of water for both natures’ and human interest in: “The protection of our soil, water and air as the basis of life must be prioritized in all forms of agricultural activity.”<sup>29</sup>

The second most prevalent kind of excerpt was ecocentrism, predominantly found in five parties (49,65%-72,13% idem.), all of which are considered small (occupying less than 10% of the seats in their respective lower houses). The Dutch Partij voor de Dieren for example states in their manifesto: “The convictions of this program stem from our ecocentric thought: animals, climate, nature and environment form the guiding principles for the Party for the Animals.”<sup>30</sup> These text excerpts emphasize the value of the well-being of nature and animals, independent of profitability and human utility. Least common were anthropocentric texts (0,0%-22,57%).

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<sup>29</sup> Die Grünen-Die Grüne Alternative, “Unsere Zukunft Wählen?” 22, author’s translation.

<sup>30</sup> Partij voor de Dieren, “Een Wereld te Herwinnen,” 5, author’s translation.

Text excerpts included those expressed in the Irish Green Party election manifesto: “Water is one of our most precious resources and every human has a basic right to sufficient, safe and affordable water.”<sup>31</sup> Excerpts such as this, which denote the utility of resources for humans, were labeled anthropocentric. In short: the analysis of these manifestos demonstrated that larger and governmental parties seem to combine the two ideologies, while smaller, opposition and extra-parliamentary parties seem more predominantly ecocentric.

Many green parties criticize the current economic system, specifically, for being excessively growth- and profit-driven at the expense of human health and planetary boundaries. Out of the fourteen parties, eleven are more critical than supportive of the current economic system in their states, with between 73,91% and 100% of the excerpts being regarded as critical as opposed to endorsing. Party size does not influence this outcome. Regarding the capitalist economic system’s wastefulness, for example, Austria’s Die Grünen-Die Grüne Alternative states: “Our current economy is based on extracting resources from nature, producing excessive new products, using them for a short time and then throwing them away.”<sup>32</sup> Criticisms are not only raised regarding the capitalist economic system’s wastefulness, but also regarding the powerful role of transnational corporations in politics. Power with which they gain political influence thereby shaping the political agenda and evade taxes with that they defy social responsibility. Both the Australian Greens and the Green Party in the United Kingdom criticize donations from the wealthy to politicians, including donations from the fossil fuel industry. The UK Greens state: “Money buys power in our current system, with donations from wealthy individuals and groups shaping the priorities of establishment politicians.”<sup>33</sup>

However, green parties are not solely critical of the capitalist economic system. Many explicitly highlight the value of medium and small enterprises, stating that these are the backbone of society. The Canadian Green Party mentions: “Small businesses are the backbone of the Canadian economy, creating more employment in

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<sup>31</sup> Irish Green Party, “2030,” 44.

<sup>32</sup> Die Grünen-Die Grüne Alternative, “Unsere Zukunft Wählen?” 14, author’s translation.

<sup>33</sup> The Green Party of England and Wales, “Our Political Programme,” 11.

the private sector than the big corporations.”<sup>34</sup> This view is shared by the Dutch GroenLinks-PvdA party about Dutch small and medium companies as well.<sup>35</sup> The German party Bündnis 90/die Grünen endorses global capitalistic trade, stating: “Trade is an important foundation of our prosperity: Fair trade contributes to deepening of international partnerships and thus to a safer world.”<sup>36</sup> Despite statements of support like these, only three out of fourteen parties endorse the current capitalist economic system more than they criticize it (53,33%-63,34%). The size of the party and its ideological background does not play a role here.

A thorough examination of the analyzed party manifestos reveals that no party explicitly expresses a plan for an alternative economy. Although parties often criticize the workings of capitalism, no substantive alternative economic system is proposed. Instead, parties of all sizes have proposed modifications and limitations to the current economic system while keeping the premises of the capitalistic economic system intact. For instance, the proposal of the Ökologisch Demokratische Partei: “Using instead of owning: Promoting shared use, rental and exchange,”<sup>37</sup> does provide an alternative to private ownership, yet does not signify a complete overhaul of the capitalist economic system.

Instead, all parties pursue alternatives within the capitalist economic system, albeit not in the same manner. Notably, micro policy proposals outweigh the macro policy proposals in thirteen out of fourteen election manifestos (46,27%-89,47%). This disparity may be influenced by the inclusion of two regional election manifestos, such as those of MUT and Klimaliste, that serve as proxy manifestos (see Discussion). The subsequent sections will provide a detailed analysis of these micro- and macro policy proposals.

In their manifesto, the Dutch party De Groenen sum up a tendency of green parties to propose governmental investment policies that stimulate sustainable innovations in the economy (e.g. an investment fund for small businesses and startups, or innovation

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<sup>34</sup> Green Party of Canada, “Platform 2021,” 18.

<sup>35</sup> GroenLinks-PvdA, “Hoopvolle Toekomst,” 27.

<sup>36</sup> Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, “Alles Ist Drin,” 79.

<sup>37</sup> Ökologisch-Demokratische Partei, “Wahlprogramm zur Bundestagswahl,” 7.

in sustainable education) with the following excerpt: “[We] support stimulating the economy through low interest rates and investment as an appropriate Keynesian counter-cyclical measure.”<sup>38</sup> Investment policy is found in all election manifestos. Not only do green parties advocate for investing in society and economy, but they also often call for ending subsidies and tax breaks to polluting organizations. Regarding such tax breaks, the Green Party of Ireland mentions in this regard: “[We propose] reintroducing the flight tax and [are] working towards a global aviation and shipping tax.”<sup>39</sup> Additionally, all green parties propose various changes in income and wealth taxes, as well as reforms to value-added tax (VAT) and excise duties. The Green Party of New Zealand lists such a measure: “Progressively increase[ing] the landfill levy and continue to use the revenue for waste minimisation, including funding for community waste reduction initiatives.”<sup>40</sup> By reforming the VAT and excise system, all green parties propose ways to stimulate the economy in a manner that encourages individuals and businesses to make more sustainable choices regarding their consumption and use of resources.

On a systemic level, most parties (nine out of fourteen) propose alternative measures of growth rather than measuring GDP. Terms as “Gemeinwohl-Bilanz”<sup>41</sup> (common good balance) and “ecological growth”<sup>42</sup> are used to install a measure of growth that considers human, animal and environmental well-being. Other parties either do not mention an alternative measure of growth (four), or endorse GDP as is (one, Canada). Apart from proposing alternative measures of growth, the concept of circular economy (or “Kreislaufwirtschaft”<sup>43</sup>/“circulaire economie”<sup>44</sup>) is promoted by most of the analyzed parties (ten out of fourteen) regardless of their size and role. With this, they aim to close the loop of resource usage, i.e. repurposing the resources that would otherwise be thrown away into

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<sup>38</sup> De Groenen, “Draagkracht van de Aarde,” 26, author’s translation.

<sup>39</sup> Green party-Comhaontas Glas, “Manifesto. Towards 2030,” 25.

<sup>40</sup> Green Party of Aotearoa New Zealand, “Green Party Manifesto 2023,” 40.

<sup>41</sup> Ökologisch-Demokratische Partei, “Wahlprogramm zur Bundestagswahl 2021,” 36.

<sup>42</sup> Partij voor de Dieren, “Een Wereld te Herwinnen,” 11.

<sup>43</sup> E.g. Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, “Alles Ist Drin,” 8.

<sup>44</sup> E.g. GroenLinks-PvdA, “Hoopvolle Toekomst,” 84.

new products. Not only do parties mention closing the loop, they also frequently mention minimizing the number of resources consumed. Klimaliste mentions both: “To achieve global justice, industrial countries must drastically reduce their resource consumption. We will therefore realize a comprehensive circular economy that rethinks the principle of waste and pollution.”<sup>45</sup>

Where ten parties speak explicitly of circular economies, the Green Party of England and Wales talks briefly about a “zero-waste system.”<sup>46</sup> The Green Party of Canada aims for a “net-zero emissions” economy.<sup>47</sup> The remaining parties, De Groenen and MUT, mention to aim for sustainable and efficient use of resources, but not specific policy proposals of how to achieve this on a systemic scale.

A combination of micro- and macroeconomic policy proposals was the least frequent type of text excerpt found (1,96%-21,23%). Most of the green parties that are in the European Union (nine out of ten) advocate for working together with other states in EU partnerships. By advocating for change regarding EU subsidies and international taxes, these parties can be identified as proponents of international cooperation to alter the economy. The Irish Green Party proposes: “. . . the EU [should] increase its support and funding for research and technology innovation, with a focus on environmental innovation.”<sup>48</sup> The other parties located outside of the EU mention state the wish to invest more in international aid and green initiatives overseas.

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

Certain choices that were made for this research project might have influenced the outcome in several ways. To acknowledge some of the pitfalls of this method of analysis, this section will start by outlining some limitations of the study. The first limitation to applies to case selection: some parties were considered for analysis but later excluded. To make a comparison between the parties that can be considered equal, only manifestos for national elections and only manifestos of parties that potentially could form a government have

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<sup>45</sup> Klimaliste Rheinland-Pfalz, “Klimaplan Rheinland-Pfalz,” 80, author’s translation.

<sup>46</sup> Green Party of England and Wales, “Our Political Programme,” 7.

<sup>47</sup> Green Party of Canada, “Platform 2021,” 8.

<sup>48</sup> Green Party-Comhaontas Glas, “Manifesto. Towards 2030,” 65.

been considered. The GRÜNE Schweiz/Les VERT-E-S Suisse of Switzerland was therefore excluded, since this party theoretically could not form a part of a coalition government. The Green Party of the US was removed from the analysis, as election manifestos are only published on national-level, and on nation-wide level only party principles exist. Likewise, the Green Party of Northern Ireland and the Green Party of Scotland were left out, as they only participate in regional elections, not on national-level elections. An exemption to this rule are MUT and Klimaliste, for which regional election manifestos were analyzed as proxy data, as both parties support individual candidates that compete on the national level.

Another limitation of this study is that, as a qualitative study, its results do not bear statistical significance. This brings the generalizability of the findings into question. Further research could adopt a more quantitative method, to verify the observations made in this study. Secondly, qualitative research is sensitive to the subjectivity of the researcher, potentially introducing bias into the outcomes. Repeating this study could help mitigate such bias. Thirdly, this study focuses on parties in the Global North, overlooking a multitude of green parties in other regions. This exclusion potentially introduces bias as well. Further research could investigate green party positions in countries with different industrialization levels, particularly those with histories of socialist or communist regimes or colonial pasts, as these historical contexts might influence their policy development and political strategies and alter the outcome. Lastly, as it is unclear what parts of the election manifestos are ideologically driven, what parts are written as achievable policy and what parts are designed to attract voters, true policy stances of parties remain investigable. Further research could be conducted via interviews with voters or party officials to extract the true vision of the parties in this study.

After these limitations, I come to an analysis of the data. Although the different party manifesto show a slight difference in the depth of ecocentrism, which correlate somewhat to the party's sizes, this difference of depth does not affect the economic policies they propose. No alternative economy is proposed by either large or small parties. Instead, all parties propose alternatives within the capitalistic economic rather than advocating for the economic



system's abolition or minimization, or making plans for a new socio-political movement to facilitate a just ecological society. The parties endorse a form of green capitalism by merely suggesting different taxation rules that promote sustainable behavior and investing in innovation and green entrepreneurship. This approach allows businesses and individuals to continue resource extraction with minimal consequences to their profit-making possibilities, but at great expense of human and planetary health.

These findings have several explanations. First, green parties seem to have been affected by a process called *transformismo*. Transformismo, a concept attributed to Gramsci, describes the process whereby radical parties are absorbed into the ruling class, leading to the deradicalization of radical leaders and the moderation of their criticism of the status quo.<sup>49</sup> Green party leaders seem to break with deep green ecological values of the social movements from which they emerged, and allow free markets to exist despite the negative environmental impacts. By becoming part of the government processes, green party leaders have potentially drastically altered their views in support of the ruling elites, which is indicated by the moderation of their economic policy. By looking at their focus on investing in green technological innovation while maintaining capitalistic principles of private property of natural resources, and not holding businesses and individuals accountable for environmental damage that causes, it becomes evident that green parties endorse capitalist market functioning.

Secondly, while green parties emphasize taxing the wealthy and criticize their tax evasion, they do not question how these individuals and organizations have accumulated their wealth. This lack of critique means that green parties endorse the current system by setting no boundaries for the relationship between nature and economic activity. Thereby they pose no limit to how much wealth an individual or business can accumulate at the cost of nature and human health. This approach arguably leads to the unchecked growth of businesses that profit from environmental destruction. These points considered: green parties cannot be considered part of the counter-hegemonic movement. In their role as organic

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<sup>49</sup> Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, 58-9.

intellectuals, instead, they can be considered part of the hegemon, preserving capitalism, albeit in a greener facade.

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