A Green Transition with a Side of Displacement: An Evaluation of Critiques of Europe's Green Policies.

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Abstract

Through the lense of environmental justice, this thesis will explore the validity of critiques on Europe's green transition. Europe is at the forefront of global efforts to combat climate change, most notably with the EU Green Deal, and often proclaims its ambition to be the world's green leader. However, scholars have raised concerns with regards to the dark side of Europe's green policies, as they may actually perpetuate colonial relations and harm marginalized communities. This thesis, therefore, will look at three types of critiques, each being strands of the environmental justice theory, namely i. green colonialism, ii. green hypocrisy and iii. carbon colonialism. Each strand will be analyzed through a case study, using both evidence from authorities as well as academic literature. Through the examination of these case studies, this thesis will argue that the concerns regarding Europe's green transition are valid, particularity showing an absence of responsibly taken by Europe in addressing these critiques. As Europe's core values are founded upon justice and equality, it becomes crucial to address these concerns adequately, in order to make its green transition truly 'just'.

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CHAPTER I: SETTING THE SCENE

1 Introduction

According to the United Nations, the world is facing her biggest crisis yet, as rising temperatures threaten the sustainability of ecosystems, agricultures, and the entire human race (UN Press 2021). In fact, the World Health Organization considers it to be the ‘’single biggest health threat facing humanity’’ (WHO 2021). In the midst of this catastrophe, Europe is pushing itself forward as a green leader and the first in line to tackle climate change. European countries have vowed to transition from being a fossil-fuel based economy, to one fueled by renewable energy sources. Measures to achieve such a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions include, for instance, investing in wind and solar energy, promoting sustainable transportation, and maximizing energy efficiency (EC 2019). Europe’s green transition is driven most noticeably by the EU Green Deal: a policy package aimed at achieving carbon neutrality by 2050. This deal was launched in 2019, with an objective to make the EU more sustainable (EC, n.d.). Its policies extend across different sectors, including transport, biodiversity and energy. Many politicians and scholars have expressed their support about the European green transition, applauding its commitment, ambitious targets and exemplary leadership qualities. The EU Green Deal in particular, places Europe at the forefront of the fight against climate change.

Despite Europe’s commendable aspirations however, different schools of scholars and activists has also expressed concerns about the transition. From a realist perspective, scholars question the effectiveness of European and global cooperation, as states will ultimately prioritize their own interests (Heffron 2015). Others have argued, from an economic standpoint, that a green transition will be too costly, especially given the disparity in financial strength between European nations (De Sousa 2022). From a critical, constructivist point of view arose the so-called Environmental Justice Movement (EJM): a movement which recognizes that the costs of Europe’s praised green transition are being unequally distributed across different continents, countries, and even local communities. EJM theorists argue that the EU Green Deal - whilst promoting justice and equality - perpetuates forms of colonialism as it imposes a Western model of development onto other

cultures, often without taking their knowledge or needs into account. Primarily, they underscore three strands of the environmental justice theory: i. Green colonialism, ii. Carbon colonialism and iii. Green hypocrisy. The first, green colonialism, refers to the exploitation and displacement of marginalized communities in the name of sustainability. Carbon colonialism in particular, refers to the imposition of carbon offset projects in developing countries, leading to local displacements whilst exacerbating existing inequalities. Lastly, the concept of green hypocrisy emphasizes the discrepancy between Europe's environmental targets and values, and its actions in practice.

The aim of this thesis is to examine the following research question: to what extend are these three green critiques of the European green transition and the EU Green Deal valid? In order to answer this question, three case studies will be conducted, each addressing one of the three strands of environmental justice theory. Firstly, this thesis will explore existing literature on both Europe' green transition and the environmental justice theory, as well as provide a methodology. Then, the notion of green colonialism will be explored through a case study of Norway and the Sami people's experience with onshore wind farms. Thirdly, the notion green hypocrisy will be analyzed through a case study of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, shedding light on the human rights violations that occur during cobalt mining. Lastly, the concept of carbon colonialism will be examined through a case study of Uganda and carbon offset projects resulting in forceful evictions. Through these case studies, the thesis will investigate how the implementation of green policies is affecting different communities and countries, and whether it is actually perpetuating forms of colonialism and injustice. The thesis will end with a discussion, connecting the findings to broader context, and finally, draw a conclusion. The findings of this thesis will contribute to a better understanding of the challenges facing Europe's green transition and provide insights into how to address these issues in an equitable manner.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Europe's Green Transition

Europe, particularity the European Union (EU), has been at the forefront of global efforts to address climate change and the promotion of sustainable development for many years. Ever since the early 2000s, it has called for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, the promotion of

renewable energy sources, and increased energy efficiency (Siddi 2023, 83-4). During this period, scholars pointed to the so-called 'credibility-gap' that formed. This gap refers to the difference between the EU's green intentions and promises with actual implementation of said policies (Oberthür and Kelly 2008, 39). In other words, is Europe all talk? Interestingly, it was not until 2007 that the EU began to address this critique by making an 'independent commitment' to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 20% and increase the share of renewable energy sources to 20% - thus lessening the credibility gap (Oberthür and Kelly 2008, 41). Additionally, Europe utilized these policies to portray itself as a green leader and entrepreneur: a role it has continuously reinforced over the years, via a "soft leadership strategy" (Oberthür and Kelly 2008, 36). Moreover, any contemporary criticisms about the EU's credibility gap were disempowered with the EU Green Deal.

2.1.1 EU's Green Deal

In 2019, Europe's green transition became anchored in the Green Deal: the EU's roadmap for achieving climate neutrality by 2050. It contains ambitious targets, policies and initiatives to achieve them. According to European Commission, the Green Deal aims to

> ''transform the EU into a fair and prosperous society, with a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy where there are no net emissions of greenhouse gasses in 2050 and where economic growth is decoupled from resource use'' (EC 2019, 2).

Many argue that the Green Deal is not just another green initiative, but rather that it is a building block for a revamped European economic model. The deal served as a link between, on one hand, a long-term policy for a green transition and on the other, a short-term policy as an exit strategy for the crisis at hand (Bongardt and Torres 2022, 176). Further, part of the Green Deal's staying power came from the fact that it didn't argue for new EU competences - in contrast to the single market. Instead, it drew upon the existing economic governance of the EU with an aim to think long-term about how to mainstream climate and environmental issues (Bongardt and Torres 2022, 171).

Some feared the Green Deal's effectiveness would be stymied with the emergence of the Covid-pandemic, perhaps illustrate realist understanding of the world: namely that security and sovereignty of states was of primary concern, over issues such as climate change (Siddi 2023, 84; Dupont, Oberthür and von Homeyer 2020, 1101). Yet on the contrary, the pandemic arguably managed to re-enforce the Green Deal (Dupont, Oberthür and von Homeyer 2020, 1103; Bongardt and Torres 2022, 181). The European Commission, rather than pushing the Green Deal to the side, made the deal the "core of the EU's crisis response" through the usage of crisis-recovery instruments, including sustainability as an organizing principle in its governance, and made great efforts to continue publishing its strategies (Dupont, Oberthür, and von Homeyer 2020, 1102). By using its agenda-setting power and politicization strategies, the Commission not only raised the share within the recovery fund and the MFF that goes to climate to 30%, but also used the pandemic as a way to reinforce the importance of science and health, giving a knowledge-based justification for centering sustainability at the heart of the pandemic response (Dupont, Oberthür and von Homeyer 2020, 1102-1104; Siddi 2023, 84). The latter refers to the growing salience of climate change, reinforced due to social movements, scientific findings and importantly, the aspiration of the EU to become a green leader (Dupont, Oberthür and von Homeyer 2020, 1105). Today, the Green Deal is applauded by scholars for its strong political commitment and its responsiveness to the EU's citizens (Hafner and Raimondi 2020, 378).

2.2 Environmental Justice Theory

The European green transition, most notably the EU Green Deal, has thus widely been hailed as an important and central step towards combating climate change. However, there are serious normative implications to such broad ranging climate policies. Thus, it is important to understand what such universalizing messaging about Europe's climate ambitions and strategies obscures. Theories centering on environmental justice bring attention to these issues, asking for whom these policies are for, who is left out, and what power relations structure such relations.

2.2.1 Environmental Justice Theory

In the first half of the 20th century, environmental activists and scholars largely focused on wildlife preservation - emphasizing the role of rewilding spaces and preserving 'the wilderness' (Taylor 2000, 556; Bullard 1990, 9). However, in the wake of broad industrialization, they began to raise

concerns about the disproportionate burden of environmental hazards on marginalized communities. Scholars identify the dumping of PCB-contaminated soil on the lands of African Americans in North Carolina, 1982 - which sparked protests and discourse about environmental racism - as the catalyst that ignited the Environmental Justice Movement (EJM) (Kurtz 2005, 80; Perez et al 2015, 2; Farrel 2012, 46; Schlosberg 2007, 48). The bottom-up development of EJM as a grassroots movement rapidly grew in popularity, which some attribute to the ‘’adoption of formal legal status, emergence of partnerships and networks, and broadening of missions and reach’’ (Perez et al 2015, 2-9).

Robert Bullard is widely recognized as one of the forefathers of environmental justice theory in the United States. His book, *Dumping in Dixie: Race, Class and Environmental Quality,* points out how marginalized (often black) communities are disproportionately affected by, and exposed to, environmental hazards. Bullard argues that this is the result of intentional decisions made by elites that locate polluting facilities such as wastewater treatment plants, near to marginalized communities. His proposed Environmental Justice Framework aims to

> ‘’uncover the underlying assumption that contribute to and produce unequal protection, [and] brings to the surface the ethical and political questions of ‘who gets what, why and how much’’’ (Bullard 1990, 121).

Additionally, the environmental justice theory is both broad and intersectional because it

> “addresses issues concerning both humans and other species, such as human health outcomes and biodiversity loss; it also addresses multiple interconnected dimensions of inequality, such as race, class, gender, and structural position in the global hierarchy’’ (Givens et al 2019, 7).

Some scholars focus specifically on the discrepancy between how the Global North and South experience environmental degradation, naming such differences as the “environmentalism of the poor” (Guha and Martinez-Alier 1998, 12). Similarly, the Ecological Unequal Exchange theory - a subarea of EJM - emphasizes the unequal relationship between core and periphery countries,

suggesting that the periphery becomes a carbon sink where not only are its natural resources exploited, but they are forced to bear the costs of the exploitation and consumption of those resources taking place in the Global North (Givens et al 2019, 3-4; Ajl 2023, 26-7).

Questions of environmental justice thus fall on two spectrums. First, the question of environmental harm and the way in which it impacts different groups of people in disproportionate ways. Second, it raises important questions about justice. Whose justice? David Schlosberg, an influential theorist in the field of environmental justice, suggests that considerations of justice have now gone beyond that of individual justice, but rather by its very nature, must also incorporate that of community justice (Schlosberg 2013, 43; Schlosberg 2007, 97). A post-materialist perspective similarly engages with the question of non-human justice and the relationship between humans-nature. Thus, when speaking about environmental justice, the concept is both complex as well as multi-faceted, encompassing a variety of different frameworks. At its core, however, are key ideas around exploitation, power imbalances, and the institutions that both reinforce such inequity but also possess the potential for solving it. Thus, although theories surrounding environmental justice are not easily divided into separate strands, this thesis will focus on the three broadly agreed-upon themes that are often used to criticize Western environmentalism: i. Green colonialism, ii. Carbon colonialism and iii. Green hypocrisy.

2.2.2 Green colonialism

Integral to the environmental justice theory is the role of colonialism. According to the critical school of thought, while formal colonialism is no longer the norm, neocolonialism still continues on. Today, it often refers to the unequal relationship between the Global North and Global South - emphasizing the way in which trade patterns such as dependency continue to exploit the Global South and enrich the Global North - similar to the era of formal colonialism (Dorn 2022, 141). One of today's leading indigenous scholars on environmental justice, Kyle Whyte, explores the concept of 'settler colonialism', which he describes as

> ''a form of oppression in which settlers permanently and ecologically inscribe homelands of their own onto Indigenous homelands'' (Whyte, Caldwell and Schaefer 2018, 158).

In order to do so, settlers – often Europeans or North Americans - create ‘’moralizing narratives’’ to justify the displacement of the indigenous communities (Whyte 2018, 135). More often, however, this is referred to as ‘green colonialism’. Ghada Sasa defines this as

> ‘’the weaponization of ecological discourses and practices for the achievement of White supremacist, patriarchal and capitalist aims’’ (Sasa 2023, 222).

Sasa hereby suggests that Western green policies label indigenous people as ‘’intrinsically environmentally irresponsible’’ in order to take their land (Sasa 2023, 222). In doing so, the West not only further disenfranchises indigenous communities, dismissing their local knowledge and culture, but they do so under the justification that they are protecting the planet. That green policies are harming indigenous people and perpetuating colonial relations is a shared view of other scholars. Dorn (2022, 143) argues that ‘green’ policies i. illustrate the bias that exists in how the poor and rich experience climate policies, ii. reinforce existing power relations that disenfranchised marginalized communities, and iii. do so under the justification of making just green policies. In short, both the discourse as well as the policy around climate change often justifies “socio-ecologically destructive structures of exploitation” (Dorn 2022, 143).

2.2.3 Carbon colonialism

Tracking close to green colonialism, is the notion of carbon colonialism. This phenomenon refers to the exploitation of natural resources in the Global South to offset carbon emissions in the Global North (Lyons and Westoby 2014, 14). Carbon colonialism relates to the ecologically unequal exchange theory, as a new form of colonialism that is driven by the demand for carbon credits as well as the norm that we can buy our way out of the climate crisis. The most popular form of this carbon colonialism is often referred to as carbon offset projects. A market-based solution to address climate change, such projects aim to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in one place to compensate for emissions produced elsewhere. Some suggest that rather than incentivizing companies and countries to be sustainable, carbon offset projects create a strategy where it “pays to pollute” (Bachran 2004, 7). This is because it is hard to regulate such projects, leading to private companies generating huge profits while not truly ‘solving’ the climate crisis, as they continue to

pollute. Moreover, such mechanisms reinforce the idea that green growth is possible through market-based solutions that reinforce the division between the rich and the poor (Dehm 2016, 136).

2.2.4 Green hypocrisy

One of the least discussed strands is referred to as 'green hypocrisy'. As previously mentioned, one of the main critiques of Western green policies is the underlying assumption that technical solutions or market-based incentives can solve climate change from within the capitalist system. In doing so, the responsibility to 'be green' is pushed onto the shoulders of the individual, who needs to make environmentally conscious choices (Magdoff and Foster 2011, 102-7). In addition to questioning the effectiveness of technical solutions, scholars suggest that the hypocrisy discourse accompanying such justifications shames individuals for making the wrong decision. The term 'green hypocrisy' therefore, refers to occasions where individuals or institutions claim to prioritize environmental responsibility, whilst their actions fail to align with these alleged values. Often the theoretical framework of green hypocrisy is used on an individual level: criticizing celebrities, scientists and the normal consumer (Mknono 2020, 2). However, green hypocrisy can be applied to a broader level. Gunster et al find that

> ''Institutions and politicians [...] profess a desire to address climate change while cleaving to "business-as-usual" decisions and policies'' (Gunster et al 2018, 8).

Additionally, this lens can be applied to a country. For example, the Scottish government has set ambitious goals to reduce greenhouse gasses but simultaneously has approved new coal mines (Gunster et al 2018, 8). Scholars highlight that green hypocrisy is rooted in self-interest. This does not mean that all states or people are 'bad actors', but rather that actors who may want to 'do good' are constrained by their self-interest (Yang, Manika and Athanasopoulou 2020, 337). In this regard, green hypocrisy theory has a realist dimension.

3 Methodology

This thesis aims to examine whether the green critiques of the European green transition are justified. 'Green' critiques in this case, are presented from within the framework of environmental

justice. In order to answer the research question, three case studies will be conducted. Each case study will focus on a major European green initiative, being i. Wind energy, ii. Carbon trading, and iii. Electric vehicles. These three initiatives are also found in the first three pillars of the EU Green Deal, namely i. ''Supplying clean, affordable and secure energy'', ii. ''Mobilizing industry for a clean and circular economy'' and iii. ''Increasing the EU's climate ambition for 2030 and 2050'' (see *figure a*). The three cases of initiatives are representative of European priorities not only because they are in the Green Deal, but also because they are emblematic of how the EU frames itself of the world stage as a green entrepreneur. The three objectives were selected based on their significance in driving Europe's green transition, whilst also being subject to most green critiques.

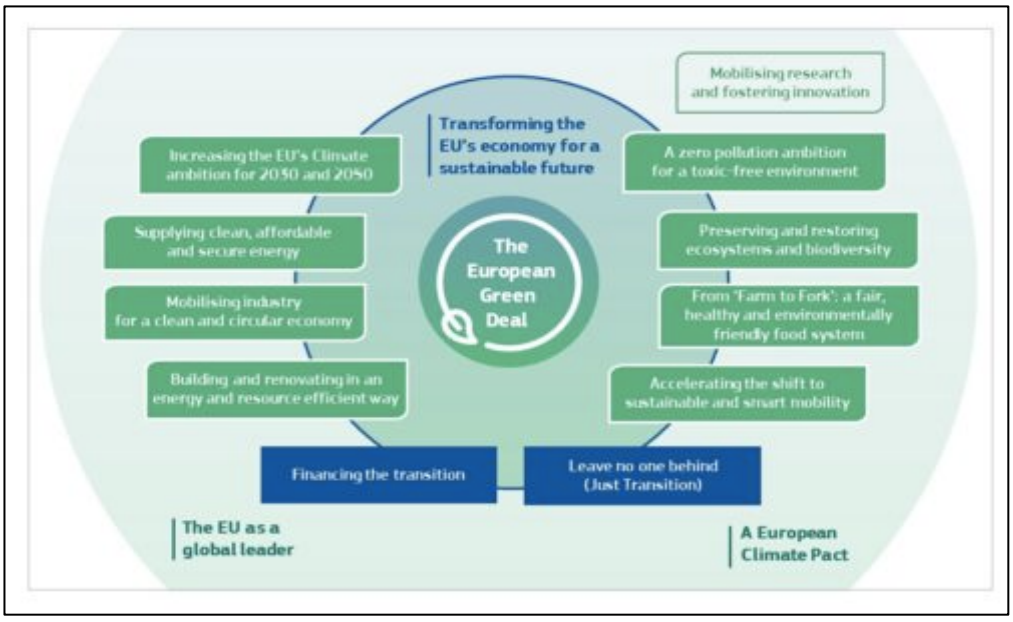

Figure a: The European Green Deal (EC 2019, 3)

3.1 Research design

This thesis is using a within-case study approach, because this allows for an in-depth, context specific analysis of each case. This thesis will therefore provide a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the validity of the green critiques leveled against Europe's green transition. The findings in the case studies will be backed by relevant academic literature, of the most prominent scholars in the field. It will address three strands of the environmental justice theory: i. Green colonialism, ii. Green hypocrisy and iii. Carbon colonialism. While each of these strands has its distinct focus, they are interrelated and share assumptions about the world.

3.2 Case studies

The first case study will address the strand of green colonialism, by examining the impact of onshore wind farms in Norway on its indigenous community of the Sami. Norway, even though not part of the EU, shares the European aspiration to be a 'green leader' and to achieve climate neutrality by 2050. The country, as many other European countries, relies therefore heavily on renewable energy sources, in particular wind energy. However, the construction of wind farms is causing Sami people to lose their traditional lands, and thus their way of living.

The second case study will focus on the strand of green hypocrisy, by examining the consequences of cobalt mining for electric car batteries in the Congo on its local communities. The increasing demand for cobalt in Europe is driven by the growing push to transition to electric vehicles, as reflected in its policies. However, this demand has led to a surge in mining activities in the Congo: resulting in the exploitation and abuse of the local communities involved. Many – even children - are exposed to hazardous working conditions, leading to health issues and environmental degradation.

The last case study will examine the strand of carbon colonialism, by analyzing the impacts of Norwegian carbon offset projects in Uganda on its local communities. Carbon trading has been a widely adopted market-based system for years, as exemplified by the EU Emissions Trading System (ETS). Additionally, voluntary carbon markets play a significant role in Europe, allowing individuals and companies to trade carbon emissions too. Notably, Green Resources - a Norwegian private company, indirectly funded by the Norwegian state - is involved in reforestation projects in Uganda for carbon credits. However, these projects are causing the forceful displacement of local communities who rely on these lands for their livelihoods.

Chapter II: Green Colonialism

The first case examined will focus on the validity of the critique that Europe continues to rely upon colonial logics by centering the theory of green colonialism to understand the unexpected manner that windmills - a key part of Norway's green transition - impacts the Sami people. This chapter will begin by discussing Norway's green transition, showcasing how Norway's approach is

emblematic of broader European green policy. As the analysis will illustrate, Norway's green policy has led to negative consequences for the Sami. This closely tracks with assumptions of green colonialism not only reiterating the usefulness of the theory itself but also providing one example of how there is a dark underbelly to the European green transition.

4.1 Norway's green transition

Despite not being a member of the EU - and thus not part of the EU Green Deal - Norway is a significant player in Europe's green transition. Not only is Norway's energy exports a key portion of the EU's green transition, it also has a close relationship to the EU. Geographically, Norway produces more than 94% of its electricity through hydropower and exports renewable energy to Europe (Dustad et al 2020, 1; Damman et al 2021, 1). This renewable energy is then central for the broader energy mix of Europe and particularly prescient given the Russian energy crisis (DNV 2022, 6). In other words, the EU relies on Norway as a supplier of renewable energy which is especially important for its green transition. The Norwegian government itself has, similarly to the EU, also proclaimed its desire to ''lead the way in climate policy'' (Norwegian Ministry of Climate and Environment 2021, 14). Moreover, the EU and Norway do not only have a trade relationship when it comes to energy, but also formal agreements that cement their green priorities. One example of this is the 2023 Green Alliance between the EU and Norway, a bilateral agreement in which both parties agreed to ''strengthen their joint climate action, environmental protection efforts, and cooperation on the clean energy and industrial transition'' (EC 2023). In this alliance, both parties have emphasized their dual goals of reaching zero emissions by 2050.

One central aspect of Norway's green transition is the development of wind energy. Scholars point to the influence of industrial developers, climate change lobbyists, and energy authorities as the driving force behind the promotion of wind energy, by framing it as a ''urgent global responsibility'' (Vasstrøm and Lysgård 2021, 8). Another part of the rationale behind this push for wind energy development is increasing Norwegian commitments to European energy markets as well as domestic consumption (Normann 2020, 79; Abnett and Buli 2022).

The Fosen wind farms, located in the Fosen peninsula, Hiltra and Snillford (see *figure b*) are a good example of this increase in wind energy development. They are part of Europe's largest onshore wind farms, with 278 turbines and a total capacity of 1,057 MW (Statkraft, n.d.). While the construction of this project began in 2016, it continues on today. Statkraft, a company owned by the Norwegian state, is not only responsible for the construction of the Fosen wind farm but is also Europe's largest generator of renewable energy (Statkraft, n.d.). Thus, the development of these farms is not only critical for Europe's green transition, but also for the financial health of Norway.

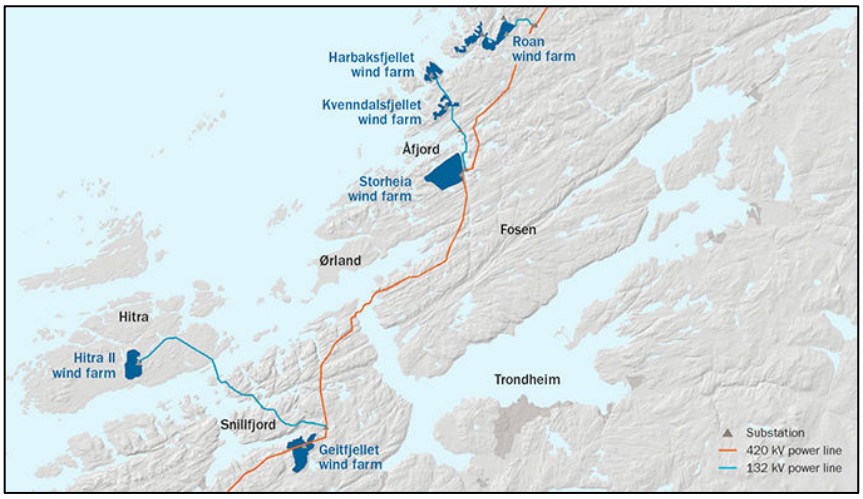

Figure b: Fosen vind (Statkraft, n.d.)

However, wind turbines in general are often critiqued for their negative impacts on the surrounding environment - including both the ground it is built on and the nature around it. For example, birds that fly in the vicinity of wind turbines may collide into the turbines, causing a decrease in local bird populations (Schippers et al 2020, 6275). Further, there is evidence to suggest that large turbines damage the surrounding nature (Kårtveit 2021, 160). Most importantly, it impacts people that may live in the vicinity, particularly indigenous people. Last February, many protestors, including Greta Thunberg, went to Norway to protest against the Fosen wind farms - arguing that it is not climate justice to build these farms at the expense of indigenous rights (Nugent 2023).

4.2 Sami

The indigenous community that the protestors referred to are the Sami: with a population of about 70.000 to 80.000 individuals, they live across the sovereign territories of Norway, Sweden, Finland

and Russia (Nikel 2018). They have a rich culture built on reindeer herding and a nomadic lifestyle. In Norway, the Sami culture, language and livelihood are legally protected under laws such as article 108 of the Norwegian Constitutions, as well as the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Regjeringen 2018). The Sami are known for their reindeer husbandry, a practice that has been an essential part of their traditional livelihoods for centuries and involves the domestication and herding of reindeer (Mæhlum 2019, 21-3). Not only are reindeer a central part of the Sami's lifestyle, but they also play an important role in their identity and generational learning (Nilssen 2019, 171).

4.3 Analysis

Sami vs Norwegian state

The rights of the Sami come into conflict with the interests of the Norwegian state when it comes to the development of onshore wind farms. Broadly, the construction of wind farms disturbs the ecosystem, but specifically destroys reindeer grazing areas. The large wind turbines scare off the reindeer with their loudness and force the animals to find new areas to graze, a difficult task given their minimum amount of land (Normann 2020, 80-81). Moreover, the cacophony from the turbines - both their vibration and noise - can affect the reindeer's stress levels and behaviors. Given that the Sami rely on the health of the reindeer, this inevitably disrupts the Sami's seasonal movements which in effect limits their ability to maintain their traditional way of living (Peroni 2021; Kårtveit 2021, 168).

In particular, the construction of two of the Fosen windfarm parks, both which received bad press for the location chosen and the construction process, exemplifies these dynamics. In 2010, the Norwegian government approved the building of several windfarms in the Fosen area. Immediately, the Sami community pushed back against this (Lovells, Faber and Laewen 2022). Initially, the Ministry of Petroleum and Energy dismissed these concerns, which led the Sami's to bring their issue to court. The case they brought suggested that the wind farms violated their rights to their culture, under article 27 of the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which states:

> ‘’In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exists, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their groups, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion, or to use their own language’’ (Fjellheim 2022).

In 2021, the court sided with the Sami, agreeing that the construction of the wind farm would hurt the Sami. Therefore, the court stipulated a compensation for the winter feeding of reindeer (Norwegian Supreme Court 2021). Yet in the meantime, the construction of the wind farms continued and even after the verdict, the wind turbines were neither removed nor stopped operating (Nugent 2023). This is not the only case in which the Norwegian government has acted in environmentally unjust ways to promote their renewable energy policy. Even after another one of the wind-plant companies got sued by the reindeer herders, and had to pay millions as compensation money, the government ''decided to support the wind power company, legally and financially, in their efforts to appeal the compensation claim’’ (Kårtveit 2021, 161). This pattern of behavior appears to be similar to past efforts, such as the Norwegian government’s decision to build the Alta Dam in 1982, knowing it would require the flooding of a Sami natural reserve (Kårtveit 2021, 164). Some scholars refer to this pattern of behavior by the Norwegian government as “cultural genocide” (Normann 2020, 89). Interestingly, the Norwegian government appears to be aware of this.

In their Energy Transition Norway 2022 Report - which forecasts Norway’s energy demand and supply - on and off-shore wind power is mentioned several times.[1] Yet the report acknowledges that there may be serious delays or even setbacks due to the Sami pushback (DNV 2022). While the language they use in the report shows an understanding that their projects face significant pushback, it is not at all clear that the Norwegian government understands why as they claim:

> ‘’Wind power onshore is more cost efficient than offshore, but it is hampered by local resistance’’ (DNV 2022, 2).

[1] The word ‘wind’ is mentioned 66 times, ‘onshore wind’ is mentioned 10 times.

> ‘’Future onshore installations are likely to be delayed and/or scaled down by public concerns like noise, impact on birds, recreation and a desire to preserve untouched landscape and wilderness’’ (DNV 2022, 36).

While it appears that the language used in the policies shows some degree of awareness of the issue, it falls short in addressing the underlying problems of injustice and inequity. Instead, it illustrates key tenets of green colonialism, particularly in the way in which ‘local resistance’ is used to dismiss the Sami’s right to cultural existence.

Green colonialism

Green colonialism is often attributed to a post-dialectical understanding of nature, namely as entirely separate from humanity and only understood as something to exploit. This way of seeing nature is not only perpetuated by the Global North but also relies upon technical solutions to climate issues rather than addressing underlying problems of justice and inequity (Paliewicz 2022, 235-43). One must only look at Norway’s approach to the climate issue as building and constructing more technical solutions such as wind farms and simultaneously disenfranchising the Sami to see how this theory can clearly explain the situation. Solutions that are offered operate under the illusion that all communities experience environmental problems in the same way, ignoring the disproportionate experience that indigenous and other marginalized communities have as well as the fact that they contribute the least to global climate change (Dorn 2022, 139; Young 2020, 233).

Additionally, green colonialism scholars refer to the windfarms on Sami lands as an example of ‘green grabbing’. This concept is understood as the “appropriation of land and resources for environmental ends” - often resulting in the displacement of indigenous or marginalized communities, who rarely have a say in this process (Fairhead, Leach and Scoones 2012, 238). Frankly, the struggle between the Sami and Norway goes beyond a mere conflict over land rights: it highlights a much larger issue of supposedly green policies that may have huge ramifications for vulnerable communities, begging the question whether these broad green policies are just. The case of the Sami and Norway is a good example of how green policies tend to reinforce the biases in how the rich and poor experience climate policies as the rich Norwegian government in the

South wants to build wind farms to better diversify their energy mix while not fully understanding how their policies are harmful to the 'poor' Sami northerners. This further reinforces existing power relations that disenfranchise marginalized communities. The Sami have been historically marginalized in the Norwegian state, and in some cases even forced to give up their language as part of an assimilation campaign[2] instigated by the Norwegian government (Minde 2005, 20). The construction of these wind farms further disenfranchised them, reinforcing this historic pattern of 'Othering' and trying to take away the Sami's right to cultural security. In short, both the Norwegian discourse around the wind farms and the perception of 'local resistance' as well as the policy itself justifies "socio-ecologically destructive structures of exploitation" (Dorn 2022, 143).

A key aspect of the critique from a green colonialist perspective on the European green transition is the loss of indigenous knowledge about the environment. As the Sami people lose their land, their traditions, and ways of life, their traditional knowledge may also be lost. Whyte (2017, 158) emphasizes how indigenous communities have essential knowledge about the environment that cannot be overlooked and can even be used as an addition to scientific climate research. Scholars point to Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK): which refers to the knowledge and beliefs that indigenous people have in relation to the land, often built up over generations (Riseth et al 2011, 2). For instance, the in-depth understanding of the Sami about weather conditions can play a crucial role in informing climate strategies or promoting environmental conservation (Risheth et al 2011, 2).

4.4 Conclusion

Returning to the research question, is the critique valid that Europe's green transition is yet another form of green colonialism?

The Sami debate suggests that there are certainly grounds for this critique. Firstly, the onshore windmill farms are driving the Sami off their lands, resulting in loss of their culture and livelihood. As the Sami are already a historically marginalized community in Norway, such behavior from

[2] This process is referred to as 'Norwegianization', aimed to assimilate the Sami into the 'official' Norwegian culture (Weinstock 2013, 414).

the Norwegian state continues to reinforce colonial relations through the façade of environmentalism. As Rebecca Lawrence denotes,

> ‘’The Nordic states may be regarded (and regard themselves) as leaders in international human rights, yet the issue of the Sami rights remains fundamentally unresolved in Scandinavia’’ (Lawrence 2014, 1039).

On a national level, Norway can be seen to reproduce previously observed colonial dynamics between the Norwegian state vis-à-vis the Sami population. The next case study will show that such dynamics also occur on European level.

Chapter II: Green Hypocrisy

The second case examined will focus on the validity of the critique that Europe as an actor exhibits green hypocrisy, by focusing on how its transition to electric cars leads to negative consequences for people in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). This chapter will begin by discussing the Fit for 55 policy, bringing attention to the centrality of electric cars as leading to an increased demand for cobalt, mostly drawn from the DRC. In the DRC, inhumane working conditions and practices are exacerbated by this increasing demand. Further, this example illustrates Europe’s hypocritical behavior.

5.1 Electric vehicles

The Green Deal often discusses the role of a climate neutral and circular economy as ‘’requir[ing] the full mobilization of industry’’ (EC 2019, 9). This implies that industry must play a key role in developing and implementing new technologies to reduce emissions, as well as minimize waste. As part of this approach, the EC announced the ‘Fit for 55’ package: a set of legislative proposals also aimed to reduce emissions. One of its key elements is ensuring all new vehicles in Europe will be zero-emission by 2035, as well as the average emissions of new vehicles to be halved by 2030 (EC 2022). For car manufacturers, this means that they must produce more energy-efficient electric cars, as these vehicles are seen as one of the most important and promising ways to reach climate neutrality (Henderson 2022, 1994). This emphasis on electric cars is in line with past

carbon emissions from the EU, particularly the massive increase from 1990 to 2019, powered by cars (Partsch 2022).

However, some scholars have already pointed out flaws in the concept that electric cars are the solution to climate change. For instance, they predict that their popularization could result in even more cars and driving writ large. Henderson (2022, 1995) suggests that ‘’future growth in cars and car usage is baked into electric vehicle projections’’, as rich, European households are likely to own both electric and non-electric cars (Berkeleya et al 2017, 326). In other words, electric cars will likely only be used by the rich who will own both electric and non-electric cars - increasing the number of emissions in unexpected ways. Similarly, the concept of electric cars reinforces a neoliberal idea that we can invent our way out of climate change rather than deciding to use fewer or no cars at all. It assumes that consumers are rational actors and will act in ways that benefit both themselves and the planet (Henderson 2022, 2005). Furthermore, only a small percentage of the world will have the ability and money to quickly switch to electric vehicles, namely the so-called Kinetic Elite. This refers to wealthy individuals who are highly mobile, such as politicians or celebrities (Henderson 2022, 1998).

However, another issue plagues the concept of electric cars: the fact that the materials necessary to produce these electric cars do not come from Europe. First, many materials - often even the same materials used in normal cars - come with high emissions bills when they are extracted. (Henderson 2022, 2000). Second, the extraction of these materials often falls outside of the EU’s regulatory jurisdiction, meaning they have no oversight or control over what happens at these sites, whether that means inhumane practices for workers or other concerns (EEA 2018, 15). Most of the required minerals only come from a few locations, resulting in a scramble to contend with rising demand (Henderson 2022, 2000). One such country where mining of necessary minerals is rampant is the Democratic Republic of the Congo which produces over 70% of the world’s cobalt - an essential mineral for lithium-ion batteries (Cobalt Institute 2022; Campbell 2020).

5.2 Mining in the DRC

The DRC has been the primary mining ground for cobalt for centuries. Extraction can be traced back to its colonial days, when the DRC was still under Belgium rule. Even at that early stage,

cobalt was a highly valuable resource as it was used for the production of weaponry, gas turbines, and jet engines (Gulley 2022, 2). After the DRC gained independence in 1960, it faced a tumultuous period of violence, political unrest, and rebellions that destabilized the country. To this day, the country is characterized by poverty, corruption, high mortality rates and poor state control (Sovacool 2019, 916; Sovacool 2021, 273). Today, mining activities continue to be important for the DRC, further exacerbating the unrest and causing environmental degradation as there are few if any regulations that are consistently followed (Sovacool 2019, 920). Moreover, locals are consistently excluded from the economic benefits of the extraction. Although cobalt has been historically valuable, its value has drastically increased in recent years due to the critical nature of cobalt for batteries. That has meant that many people in the DRC have moved closer to mining areas such as Kolwezi (see *figure c*). As a matter of fact, the DRC's economy depends so heavily on mining that it is referred to as the country's 'engine' (Sovacool 2021, 272). The increase of mining has led to serious downstream consequences for not only the environment of the DRC, but also the people living there.

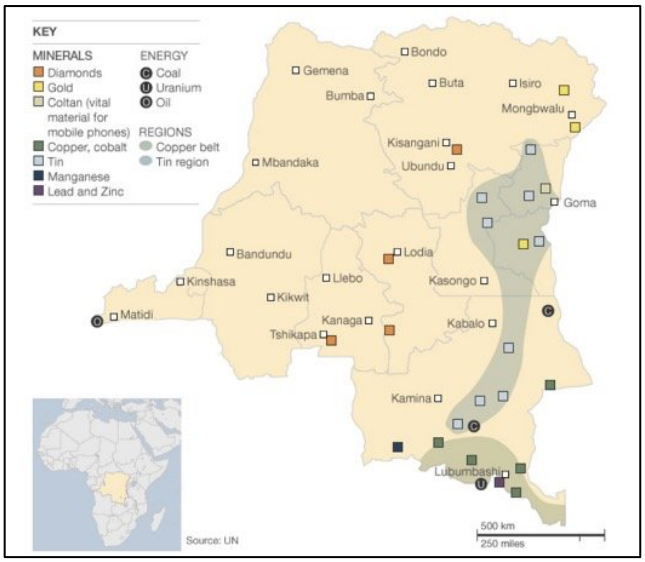

Figure c: Cobalt mines in the DRC (Henson 2022)

5.3 Analysis

Human rights violations

The current boom in demand for cobalt in tandem with the EU's increasing targets for electric cars, has led to a devastating impact on the people of the region. First, while there are 'regulated

mines', around 40% of the DRC's cobalt is extracted from so-called 'artisanal mines' (Sovacool 2021, 271). Artisanal mines are unregulated and informal, with poorly managed or absent safety measures. The men who work in these mines, known as *creuseurs*, dig the tunnels themselves without a map or proper tools, exposing themselves to significant risks of accidents and death (Frankel 2016). Moreover, these mines are often not unionized, leaving miners without a platform to advocate for their rights (Sovacool 2019, 927). Furthermore, it is estimated that around 40,000 children also work in these mines due to vast poverty across the DRC (Frankel 2016). Not only are working conditions for the individuals bad, but the surrounding communities are exposed to high levels of cobalt and other toxic materials. As the communities surround the mines themselves, these toxic chemicals infiltrate their bodies through the air, food, water and even dust - leading to poor health outcomes (Banza et al 2009, 751; Sovacool 2021, 285; Elbel, O'Reilly and Hrzic 2023, 2). Global health specialists have conducted studies that have linked the increased exposure to these chemicals to lung problems and birth deficits (Frankel 2016). However, for many of these individuals, they have no other choice. Because of the country-wide poverty and lack of social support system, they must choose between working or starving. Some even refer to it as modern-day slavery (Gross 2023; Sovacool 2021, 286). The EU is not immune from caring about modern-day slavery, and as recently as September 2021, President von der Leyen announced that ending forced labor was one of her priorities (EC 2022). However, given that obtaining cobalt from countries like the DRC is central for the EU's Fit for 55 plans, it begs important questions that theories on green hypocrisy can answer.

Green hypocrisy

European countries, as well as the EU, have been accused of green hypocrisy on a few occasions. The re-opening of coal mines in attempts to meet gas demands during the Russian-Ukrainian crisis served for many as an example of prioritizing geopolitical needs over climate policy, especially considering the EU's efforts to promote renewable energy worldwide (Kant 2022). Outside of this one instance, the EU has also been accused of acting hypocritically broadly in how it promotes electric cars without any acknowledgement of the knock-on consequences in the DRC. Interestingly, Europe seems to be aware of the dire situation in the DRC. For instance, only a year ago, representatives of several European countries and of the EU participated in a Human Rights Council roundtable to discuss the matter of violence and human rights in the DRC. Although they

agreed the problem needs to be solved, there is little understanding that the production of electric cars is linked to the worsening situation in the Congo (OHCHR 2022). Similarity, the Green Deal itself states that:

> ''The EU will work [...] to prevent these challenges[3] from becoming sources of conflict, food insecurity, population displacement and forced migration, and support a just transition globally'' (EC 2019, 21).

The disconnect between the EU's attempts to address instability in the DRC and its green policies that directly lead to these problems is at the core of what makes Europe European. The establishment of the European Community - today the European Union - was the prioritization of democracy, human rights, and people above all else. However, in the DRC, that emphasis seems to be lost - leading to the sidelining of issues such as the loss of indigenous land, forced migration, and loss of identity (Sovacool 2019, 932). Mining grounds are also sites for violence, which the EU also wants to avoid, due to conflicts between the policy of military and the workers, or amongst workers themselves (Sovacool 2019, 932-3). In short, the EU does have policies and approaches to address problems in the DRC - but they all miss the driver, the EU's own actions. By introducing the Strategic Action Plan on Batteries, in addition to the 2017 European Battery Alliance, they claim to develop an ''innovative, competitive and sustainable battery value chain in Europe (EC 2019, 9). This means that companies ought to ensure their batteries are manufactured socially and environmentally responsible (EC 2022). However, this evidently not the reality in the DCR. Bearing in mind the theory of self-interest – in which green hypocrisy is rooted, according to Yang, Manika and Athanasopoulou (2020, 337) – it becomes clear that Europe seems to care about the DRC's human rights only when it does not intersect with their own interests. Ultimately, it appears as if they prioritize their own green transition at the expense of workers in the DRC.

Responsibility

Some might argue that the responsibility to fix these issues in the DRC does not fall on the shoulders of the European Union. According to Amnesty's analysis of the cobalt supply chain,

[3] 'These challenges' refers to the fact that environmental issues can be a ''threat multiplier and a source of instability'' (EC 2019, 21).

DRC's mined cobalt is exported to China: in particular to trading company Huayou Cobalt, China's largest cobalt manufacturer (Amnesty International 2016, 52). From here, the batteries made from the cobalt are sent to the first world, including Europe (Amnesty International 2016, 46, 56). Whereas Amnesty's report heavily criticizes China's trading companies for being liable for human rights violations in the DRC and reinforcing child labor, it does not recognize that countries further on the value chain - such as in Europe - also share the burden. Rather than focusing on addressing the link between green policies and cobalt mining, the EU seems to instead pay attention to the growing influence of China and its attempts to gain a monopoly on critical minerals as suggested in the 2022 Critical Raw Materials Act. This act seeks ''secure and sustainable access to the necessary raw materials'', as without this, the EU's ''ambition to become the first climate neutral continent is at risk'', according to EC president von der Leyen (EC, n.d.). While emphasizing Europe's need to stand up against China, the role of the US, and the race for critical minerals, she does not mention the corresponding negative impacts or how to address intrinsic problems in the global value chains. It might seem like a solution to remove China from the supply chain, and in doing so, making it more transparent and sustainable, yet with most of the world's cobalt in the DRC's grounds, von der Leyen does not address opportunities for change.

On the other hand, one could propose that the real blame for the situation in the DRC falls on their own government. In fact, mining contracts have been instrumentalized to benefit a small percentage of rich politicians and the president. It is, therefore, inherently corrupt (Sovacool 2019, 931). However, mining is the engine that drives DRC's economy. According to Sovacool, mining translates to

> ''poverty reduction, community development, regional stability, ancillary markets, state revenue and a strong social and cultural identity'' (Sovacool 2019, 916).

Mining, then, is central to the DRC in many different ways yet also perpetuates the very same corruption that plagues the DRC. However, one could argue that this corruption is not inherently linked to mining but rather is the result of centuries of colonialism, exploitation and dependency. Several scholars argue that the DRC has consistently had its comparative advantage unfairly appropriated by colonial interests which are still present through neocolonial motives (Henson

2022; Malik 2022). As Siddharth Kara argues, the ‘’neocolonial machinery of the West’’ has and will always seek to exploit the region, with cobalt simply being one of their latest areas of interest (Kara 2023, 115).

5.4 Conclusion

Returning to the research question, is the critique that Europe’s green transition is hypocritical valid?

This case proves trickier, as on the one side, the EU has many laws in place and a plethora of official statements claim that human rights is a priority. Yet on the other hand, even though they are not directly involved in certain actions taken by the other actors, they are still indirectly marginalizing those who are already on the periphery. Frankly, this precisely exemplifies the hypocritical nature of the European green transition. As Frankel (2016) states,

> ‘’[The issue of cobalt mining in the DRC] comes to the fore every now and again, […] and it is met much muttering and shaking of the head and tuttering – and goes away again’’ (Frankel 2016).

Chapter III: Carbon Colonialism

The last case examined will focus on the validity of the critique that European behavior exhibits all the characteristics of carbon colonialism, by discussing the European attitude towards carbon trading and its promotion of carbon offset projects. These projects, as the case study will illustrate, have harmful effects on local communities in Uganda who are being forcefully displaced to make room for reforestation projects.

6.1 Carbon trading

Carbon markets have emerged as an important tool in achieving the goals of climate neutrality by 2050. Especially in Europe, carbon trading has been a prevalent strategy. There are two types of carbon markets, namely voluntary and compliant. The EU Emissions Trading System (ETS) is perhaps the best example of the latter. This cap-and-trade system, introduced back in 2005, aims

to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in particular places to compensate for emissions produced elsewhere. These projects generate emission alliances (or: carbon credits), which can be traded on the market. This system serves as a financial incentive to reduce their emissions. When an operator emits more than they are allowed, they can buy other's allowances from those that have additional credits (EC, n.d.). The EU started its plans for the ETS already in 1998, after the Kyoto Protocol, fully committed to not only prove their willingness to find solutions to climate change, but also to establish themselves as a green leader (Convey 2009, 394-400). As of now, the ETS is the world's first and biggest trading system: responsible for a reduction of emissions of 35% between 2005 and 2021 (EC, n.d.).

Whilst compliance carbon markets are required for some EU sectors, the voluntary carbon market is also highly important as it relates to governments, companies, and individuals. These markets are not binding, in other words, Europeans choose to participate in them (UNDP 2022; Wessel and de Boer 2023). European companies purchase carbon offsets to compensate for their emissions, mostly by investing or promoting 'green' projects, such as reforestation or renewable energy projects (Bachram 2004, 8). These voluntary carbon markets have grown rapidly and are together with the ETS key portions of European climate discourse.

However, critiques of carbon markets are on the rise. Market incentives as a strategy to solve climate change have serious drawbacks including the inability to regulate such projects and its reliance on the assumption that we can buy our way out of climate change (Dehm 2016; Bachran 2004). From this perspective, these incentives allow both member states and Europe to avoid any type of serious green transition and instead reinforce markets that are the cornerstone of capitalism (Lysons and Westoby 2014, 78). Many polluters see reforestation as a real and relatively cheap solution: plant one tree in for example the Amazon, get one credit. This has led to developing countries sprinting to plant more trees, eager to gain access to this financial benefit. One of the most problematic examples of this is Uganda.

6.2 Uganda

Uganda is one of the countries in the Global South that has seen the opportunities of participating in the carbon markets. Not only do these markets draw in companies from Europe, but additional investors. One of the largest of these is Green Resources, a Norwegian company engaged in sustainable forestry in Africa. Back in 1996 this company got a series of 50-year licenses to create such projects in both the north and the south of Uganda (see *figure d*). Green Resources aimed to get and sell carbon credits to governmental agencies such as the Swedish Energy Agency (The Oakland Institute 2019, 3). It is also one of Africa's largest forest companies (Milne 2016). Although a private company, Green Resources receives funding from several public institutions such as Norfund and Finnfund.[4] Local people have begun to raise concerns over the years that they were being evicted off their land: land that they have inhabited for centuries, which often has a cultural and religious value. In 2019, the Oakland Institute – a independent policy think tank - came out with a report documenting how local Ugandan people are being evicted off their lands.

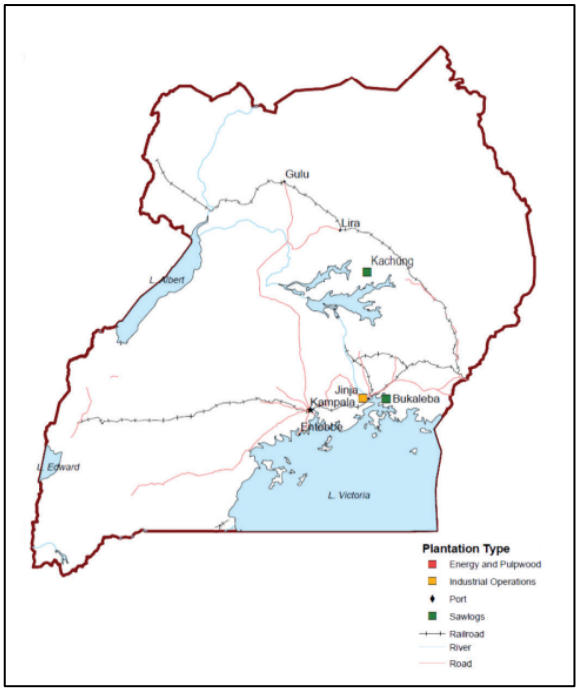

Figure d: Uganda, showing the areas licensed to Green Resources (The Oakland Institute 2014, 5)

[4] Norfund and Finnfund are investment funds for developing countries, both owned by their respective national governments of Norway and Finland (Norfund, n.d.; Finnfund, n.d.).

6.3 Analysis

Population displacement

Whilst it seems like for investors, Uganda is a land that is only important for its value of commodification, it has much historical and cultural value for the local communities. The majority of Ugandans rely on the land as their source of income: they grow crops, raise farm animals and build their homes on their land (Lysons and Westoby 2014, 87). With the arrival of foreign companies such as Green Resources therefore, Ugandans are being robbed not only of their lands but of their livelihoods. In order to make room for Green Resources' reforestation projects, locals are chased off the lands through violent tactics including the use of guns or the burning of their houses; leaving all their crops and animals behind, often without even advance notice (Lysons and Westoby 2014, 86; Milne 2016). Moreover, the Ugandan soil is deeply ingrained in how locals understand their culture and their belief system. It contains sacred burial grounds, cultural sites, and holy trees that have been worshiped by generations. Losing such important places has a negative effect on the health, happiness and overall existence of the communities (Lysons and Westoby 2014, 85-9). Unfortunately, as Green Resources has a legal right over the lands, they use this as an excuse to easily evict the locals from their leased land - referring to them as 'illegal trespassers' (Lysons and Westoby 2014, 86; The Oakland Institute 2019, 5). Additionally, companies like Green Resources do not have the same knowledge of ecosystems as locals and inevitably end up destroying much of the environment. While they do plant monoculture trees as part of an effort to follow green policies, even this attempt ends up harming the natural environment as according to studies, they cause loss of biodiversity and are net emitters of carbon (Hance 2008).

Carbon colonialism

Lysons and Westoby (2014, 81) refer to the case of Uganda as 'carbon violence', which alludes to the ''structural violence systemic to the carbon economy" - but a broader term used by scholars is carbon colonialism. This theory highlights how patterns from the colonial era are being repeated today through new tactics such as carbon offset projects (Carmody and Taylor 2016, 103). Historically, the entire continent of Africa has much experience of both colonial land grabbing and territorial restructuring as well as green grabbing and climate restructuring (Carmody and Taylor 2016, 103). Several scholars suggest the reason for this pattern of behavior is because the elite

profits from it. With the rising popularity of carbon markets, many western countries and institutions invest in reforestation and other 'green' projects. However, in tandem with this investment comes negative consequences such as population displacement. Because of a severe lack of organization and bad governance, the financial support meant to benefit a broader swath of people instead almost always goes directly into the pockets of the few and further disenfranchises the many (Carmody and Taylor 2016, 105). In fact, this is how colonialism continues to persist, according to Carmody and Taylor (2016, 118). Therefore, the case of Uganda illustrates how long-standing colonial relationships are reinforced, again under the justification of 'being green' (Bachram 2004, 12-9).

One of the other issues associated with carbon colonialism and land grabbing is the question of land tenure rights. Land rights are essential for carbon trading to work, as buyers need to be assured that they have property rights in order to justify their actions (Greenleaf 2020, 291). Some scholars believe that achieving land tenure is simple, yet in reality, it is not so easy. Uganda for instance, has and had historical and cultural laws that provide locals rights to their land, encompassing religious and cultural boundaries (Greenleaf 2020, 292). However, over time, these laws became diluted due to instability and corruption. Many Ugandans do not even know about the cultural or heritage laws that are supposed to protect them (Milne 2016).

Responsibility

In the case of Uganda, Green Resources sells their carbon credits to the Swedish Energy Agency (SEA), a ''government agency responsible for matters of the supply and use of energy in Sweden'' (SEA, n.d.). According to the Oakland Institute Report, the SEA willingly ignored negative claims of forced evictions from land and claims of land grabbing up until they *allegedly* suspended their payments to Green Resources in 2015 due to increased media scrutiny. Rather than actually suspending their payments, the SEA later claimed to never have suspended anything (The Oakland Institute 2019, 7). The SEA aside, Green Resources receives support from Norway, Sweden and Finland through state-owned development funds. Norfund for instance, is currently Green Resources' biggest supporter (The Oakland Institute 2019, 7-8). It would not be surprising then, if national European governments are aware of the many problems associated with Green Resources but choose to ignore them.

Uganda is a tricky case as Green Resources itself claims to never use violence to evict people, blaming the Ugandan state instead. Green Resources only has a loan on the land that the Ugandan governments gives out (Carmody and Taylor 2016, 118). Although Green Resources then may not be directly at fault, it is certainly part of the problem alongside the European carbon markets broadly. While the ETS does not carry direct responsibility for this carbon colonialism, the EU voluntary market for carbon – which is equally relevant - does. Additionally, the EC only a few months ago proposed a new voluntary market offset certifier, or ‘’the first EU-wide voluntary framework to reliably certify high-quality carbon removals’’ (EC 2022). While this new framework focuses heavily on transparency and credibility, at its core, this policy relies on the inherently problematic concept of carbon markets. In short, it serves as a reminder that for Europe, one cannot separate its green transition from the carbon market - meaning that much of these progressive policies rely on exclusionary practices built into carbon colonialism. In response to the EU’s proposed voluntary market offset certifier, 80 European environmental organizations signed an open letter to protest, calling the voluntary carbon market a ‘scam’. In their words, ‘’no offset certifiers should be endorsed by EU climate policy’’ (IATP 2023).

6.4 Conclusion

Returning to the research question, is the critique that Europe’s green transition is a form of carbon colonialism valid?

In the case of Uganda, it appears that Europe’s policies of carbon trading and offset projects continue to reinforce colonial relations. One example of this is that through the actions of a foreign actors and under the guise of ‘greater good’, local populations were evicted from their land – a similar pattern to that of colonialism. Similar to the DRC’s case, it cannot be said that Europe had direct responsibility for these displacements. However, the guise of ‘greater good’ expressed in the justification of a loss of human welfare at the benefit of a green transition indicates a certain pattern of priorities: one that will be unpacked in the final chapter.

Chapter V: Discussion

7.1 Validity of the green critiques

Each case has demonstrated that academics, coming from an environmental justice perspective, have reason to criticize the European green transition. The point on which they agree in particular, is the reinforcement of colonial relations through the displacement of local and indigenous communities. Carmody and Taylor, two of the experts who did fieldwork in Uganda, effectively summarize this by saying

> ''The denial, or selective undermining of property and citizenship rights, could be seen as a form of internal colonialism, resulting from the operation of land-grab assemblage composed of national and transnational actors'' (Carmody and Taylor 2016, 108).

Although the two scholars referred to Uganda specifically, their argument can be applied to the other two case studies as well. Both the Sami and the DRC cases demonstrate the link between European green policies and the denial or grabbing of land that historically belonged to the local communities. Whether this is referred to as 'green grabbing', 'green colonialism' or 'carbon violence', it all points towards the same exploitative and neo-colonial nature of Europe's green transition. Felix Dorn, whose work focused on green colonialism in Latin America, argues that

> ''The current energy transition is rather (neo-)colonial, in the sense that it perpetuates a hegemonic epistemology'' (Dorn 2022, 143).

Hereby he suggests that Europe's green transition perpetuates a 'dominant', western ideology, one that relies upon power asymmetry between the core and the periphery. The DRC serves as the most prominent example of this, as it has been exploited for its cobalt during and especially after being under Belgian occupation. Benjamin Sovacool, who has done extensive research on mining in the DRC, remarks that Europe is the root of many environmental and social issues in the DRC (Sovacool 2019, 918). The Sami case, however, shows that issues of environmental injustice are

not exclusive to the Global North and South divide: but manifest also within European countries as an already marginalized group fell victim to land grabbing in Norway.

Many scholars point towards Europe's – especially the Green Deal's - market-based approach to climate change, as the culprit in perpetuating injustices. Heidi Bachram, who specialized in carbon colonialism, assumes that the EU's 'green' market – including carbon trading – inherently has the same ''built-in inequities that other commodity markets thrive upon'' (Bachram 2004, 20). According to Christof Zografos, policies within this market are supposed to be perceived as apolitical, yet in reality rely on ''contemporary colonial relations of injustice'' (Zografos 2022, 38). One aspect that comes to mind, that aligns with the findings of the case studies, is the idea of 'taming the wilderness'. In fact, the ''framing [of] the wilderness as a place for extractive and economics opportunity evokes ideas of ecological imperialism'' (Gricius 2022, 12). Europe's desire to reach their green targets involves taking control of the 'wilderness' in Norway and Uganda. As a result, and as clear from all three case studies, indigenous or local communities who inhabit those regions are being overlooked and willfully ignored or pushed away. Additionally, this comes at the loss of local knowledge and traditions, possible for good. Kyle White, a prominent indigenous scholar, notes how climate change is a form of

> ''colonially imposed environmental change, and another intensified episode of colonialism that opens up Indigenous territories for capitalism and industrialization'' (Whyte 2017, 156).

This suggests that the exploitation of the wilderness, under the guise of sustainability, is inherently colonial and incredibly harmful to indigenous communities. Moreover, it is often highlighted that those groups who suffer the most, are ironically the ones who contributed the least to climate change in the first place (Dorn 2022, 139; Young 2020, 233).

To sum this up, both findings from the case studies as well as prominent academics clearly connect (neo-)colonialism to the European green transition. One of the scholars however, Dorn, stands out as he acknowledges that one should not oversimply the issue by calling Europe's green transition 'colonial' and leaving it at that. According to him, this idea ''lacks an important analytical foundation'' (Dorn 2022, 143). Dorn refers hereby to the role of actors other than Europe: in

particular the ever-growing influence of China. This is consistent with results from the case study on green hypocrisy, as Amnesty's report of the cobalt supply chain heavily emphasizes China's responsibility for both demanding cobalt and violating human rights in the DRC (Amnesty International 2016). Interestingly however, there appears to be a pattern of assigning blame and deflecting responsibility, as the EU chastises China for not upholding human rights, despite being (partly) accountable for this issue themselves - although less directly. Whilst scholars – most notably those mentioned prior – continue to address issues of environmental justice, Europe and the EU have remained relatively silent. It begs to question who exactly should be held accountable in this complex web of countries, actors and policies.

7.2 The underlying issue

In the case of Norway, it is evident who is responsible for the harm caused to the Sami: both windmills companies and the Norwegian state being the perpetrators. Yet in the cases of Uganda and the DRC, the main perpetrator is less easy to identify. European countries and the EU are only indirectly responsible for the evictions of locals and violations of human rights, since they are not the ones with local jurisprudence and direct agency. Indeed, taking into account the responsibility of the local governments of Uganda and the DRC, as well as other actors such as China, is important. However, as Europe is openly claiming green leadership status, it is also crucial to understand and confront its tendency to deflect responsibility. Many scholars from the critical school of thought, tend to refer to the fact that European countries are responsible for half of the world's total emission, even though they account for only about 12 percent of the world's population (Popovich and Plumer 2021).

Yet in order to provide an honest, comprehensive critique, one must understand the full picture. First of all, it is important to be aware of the highly fragmented nature of today's global supply chains – such as that of cobalt (Thun 2014). This makes it hard to trace the exact origins of resources or identify those responsible for any violations; let alone create effective regulations. Secondly, there is inherently nothing wrong with Europe's desire to be a green leader, as it often proclaims. Europe – especially the EU – has shown a longstanding commitment to find solutions for climate change, which cannot be said for all countries. Although Europe, as previously mentioned, contributed (historically speaking) the most to greenhouse gas emissions, it is also

essential to shift our focus to the future and commend the efforts taken to stop climate change. Is it truly realistic to expect extensive change overnight? Realistically, such changes take time, effort and research. As of now, the most important and realistic thing Europe should do, is address the critiques on its green transition, rather than turning a blind eye to them.

Therefore, this thesis suggests that Europe must acknowledge these criticisms in a more systematic way. It is no longer sufficient to ignore indirect responsibility even if a direct link between Europe and colonial policies is not clear. If Europe wishes to claim the moniker of a green power on the world stage, it must recognize the many shortcomings of its approach to climate change. If Europe wishes to continue to claim that its core values are human rights, the right to sustainability for every person, and democracy – it must back up its rhetoric with action. Whether that means acknowledging wrongdoing or proactively trying to solve these indirect harms, the EU Green Deal cannot claim it promotes "sustainability for all" while simultaneously displacing non-Europeans for their own gain. Admittedly, issues of environmental justice are not always black or white – as shown in the case studies – yet concealing the issue entirely is the most ineffective course of action, if Europe truly wants to have a 'just' transition.

Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis was to examine the validity of the green critiques of Europe's green transition, coming from an environmental justice perspective. Each of the three case studies used to answer this question, zoomed in on a different strand of the environmental justice theory: namely i. green colonialism, ii. green hypocrisy and iii. carbon colonialism. Green colonialism was explored through the experiences of the Sami – an indigenous community in Norway – with onshore windfarm parks. The building of these parks forced the Sami to evacuate, consequently undermining their livelihood, traditions and culture. Green hypocrisy was examined through mining operations in the DRC, where *creuseurs* face dangerous and inhumane conditions whilst extracting cobalt. Although Europe might not directly buy this resource, its green policies and targets – such as Fitfor55 – are inherently dependent upon cobalt extraction. This case highlights how Europe's core values of equality and human rights are not reflected in its green policies. Lastly, carbon colonialism was analyzed using carbon offset projects in Uganda, which led to the

violent evictions of local people. Similar to the case of the DRC, Europe might not have directly enforced these evictions, yet as they support and promote carbon trading – and as European states often fund the carbon offset companies – they ought to be held accountable. In conclusion, these three case studies collectively showed that Europe's green policies, either directly or indirectly, contribute to the displacement, unjust treatment and marginalization of communities: effectively perpetuating a pattern reminiscent of colonialism.

It is important to note that, while the case studies provided relevant insights, they do not cover all aspects of Europe's green transition: aspects which may include commendable, inclusive and sustainable practices that are not discussed in this thesis. Furthermore, much of the evidence in the case studies was derived from prominent scholars in the field of environmental justice, rather than from fieldwork. It therefore is critical to take possible bias from the academics into account, who view these issues from a particular school of thought. Additionally, this thesis briefly touched upon the notion that Europe uses a market-based approach to its green policies, one that allegedly inherently perpetuates environmental injustices. Future research could delve into this particular aspect, by shifting focus to theories of green growth and degrowth: the latter could perhaps be the true solution to the shortcomings of Europe's green transition.

Climate change is undeniably, and unfortunately, the biggest challenge of our time. As temperatures are rising beyond expectations, the world cannot afford to sit still and wait for change to happen. The green initiative that Europe has shown, particularity with the Green Deal, is therefore highly commendable and inspirational. Aspiring to be a 'green leader' is nothing but admirable and moreover, crucial. However, in order to lead, and in order for Europe's green transition to be truly just and inclusive, Europe must acknowledge the flaws and harmful consequences of its green policies: both within the continent, as well as globally. Openly admitting any wrongdoings, such as the harm inflicted upon communities in Norway, Uganda and the DRC, is therefore a good place to start. Whether it is partly or fully Europe's fault, whether it is easily or not so easily solved, whether harm was intentional or unintentional, it is essential to create a discourse that addresses said issues of environmental injustice. Once these acknowledges are made, only then efforts can be made towards rectifying the wrongdoings and ensuring the green transition is not just green, but just and inclusive. By prioritizing justice, as it is and has been one

of Europe's core values, Europe can genuinely set an example for the rest of the world and truly lead the way towards a better, greener future.

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