

Envisioning a Green Just Future

The Potential of Political Utopias
in the Transformation Towards a
More Ecocentric Society

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The front page is designed in reference to the book cover of 'Half-Earth Socialism' by Chantal Jahchan.

Abstract

This thesis examines the potential for political utopias to transform and critique contemporary dominant environmental theories and to present alternative futures with a more ecocentric philosophy and political strategies. The thesis builds on the scientific consensus that we are experiencing multiple ecological crises that pose an existential threat to all living beings on the planet. More specifically, it focuses on the need to urgently combat human-made climate change, linked to the influence of industrialization and global capitalism by Jason W. Moore and others. As well as the Sixth Mass Extinction of species, caused by agricultural land-use change and other industrial environmental degradation, according to Ashley Dawson.

An expression of dominant environmental politics was found in “ecomodernism”, as defined by Asafu-Adjaye et al., which was examined for its reliance on future technological solutions to problems of ecology and its role in the proposed decoupling of economic growth and consumption from its environmental footprint, as well as other expressions of neoliberal environmentalism. Significant traits of ecomodernism were found through analysis of contemporary Danish climate politics, mainly the politics of Socialdemokratiet between 2019-2022, which was used to examine the context of the political strategies and expressions of such philosophy in practice. According to the theories of Timothy Morton, Aldo Leopold, Jason W. Moore, and others, the root of the ecological crises within capitalism is found in its anthropocentric, or capitalocentric, view of nature and the consequences of the ensuing “humanization” of ecosystems, which then needs to be changed to a more ecocentric ontology. According to theories on “utopianism” visions of political utopias have the potential to motivate and imagine radical changes to society, and to transform people’s values and philosophy. As such, two cases of contemporary political utopias: ‘Half-Earth Socialism’ (2022) by Troy Vettese and Drew Pendergrass and ‘En Grøn Retfærdig Fremtid’ (2022) by the Danish social movement Den Grønne Ungdomsbevægelse, was analyzed as alternatives to ecomodernism, to examine their potential and expressions of ecocentric philosophy and transformative politics. ‘Half-Earth Socialism’ was found to confront anthropocentrism through its vision of radical rewilding, as well as pose an alternative to the current political system through market-less central planning, energy-quotas and other proposals from the socialist ideology. Likewise, ‘En Grøn Retfærdig Fremtid’ was found to express similar visions and proposals, which in addition utilize the proposed benefits of connecting utopianism with activism by using the social movement’s vision in their political campaigns to change contemporary Danish climate politics. Ultimately, this thesis concludes that the two case-examples of political utopias, has the potential to contribute to philosophical and political change by envisioning a future with a significant departure from ecomodernist ideology and political strategy, and possibly instilling ecocentric ontology through its political vision.

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Introduction

The planet is currently experiencing multiple ecological crises that existentially threatens the life of all living beings through the Sixth Mass Extinction of species and the unprecedented consequences to civil societies and humankind through the climate crises. According to writer Margaret Robertson, we are: “(...) situated either at the threshold of a planetary disaster of unprecedented magnitude or at the beginning of a sustainable new era. Whatever the outcome, the new state of the world will not be like it is today” (Robertson 2014: 3). This new state needs to break with the fundamental structures of how we organize our economy and resources, an issue of transforming away from capitalism and changing dominant values, according to Jason W. Moore. As well as move towards a more ecocentric philosophy that regards the interests of other living beings, and entire ecosystems, in the organizing of human society, which is currently dominated by anthropocentric ontology. This thesis aims to examine whether, and how, these ecological problems are prevalent in the dominant modes of environmentalism, especially in terms of nature conservation, reliance on technological developments, and continuing current levels of consumption and distribution of resources. As such I will examine the school of “ecomodernism” defined by Asafu-Adjaye et al., and whether it is similar to the philosophical assumptions that can be extracted from contemporary climate politics like the Danish government of 2019-2022. In turn, I wish to examine alternatives to this dominant philosophy, to answer a similar question to that of Ashley Dawson: “If mainstream environmentalism has been co-opted by such neoliberal policies, what would a radical anti-capitalist conservation movement look like?” (Dawson, 2016: 85). Because of the scope of the argued transformation needed to combat the ecological crises, I wish to analyze cases of utopian visions that, according to Lyman Tower Sargent poses a great potential to overcome issues of such complexities by imagining a different future and changing the reader’s values and perceptions. To this end, I want to examine two contemporary examples of political utopian visions for the future; 'Half-Earth Socialism' by Troy Vettese and Drew Pendergrass and 'En Grøn Retfærdig Fremtid' by Den Grønne Ungdomsbevægelse. Both in regards to how they express ecological problems of nature conservation and rewilding, the “humanization” of nature under capitalism, and redistribution of resources. As well as how they relate to transferring ecocentrist philosophies into political and social change.

Research question

What is the potential for political utopias like 'Half-Earth Socialism' and 'En Grøn Retfærdig Fremtid' to transform the “humanization” of nature and other ecological controversies inherent in the ideology of “ecomodernism”, as seen in the current Danish climate politics?

I will work towards answering this question by examining the following sub-questions:

- Can Danish climate politics from 2019-2022 be seen as an expression of “ecomodernism” as proposed by Asufu-Adjaye et al. and neoliberal environmentalism?
- How does 'Half-Earth Socialism' and 'En Grøn Retfærdig Fremtid' relate to theories on ecocentrism by Timothy Morton and others, through their visions for nature conservation, rewilding, and other political proposals?
- In what ways do the two case-examples connect to, or differ from, theories on anti-capitalocentrism by Jason W. Moore and others, and the questions of socialist ideology, “humanization” of nature, and critiques of the strategy to decouple economic growth from its environmental footprint through future technologies?
- What is the potential for utopian visions like the case-examples to transform values and ontologies in society, according to “utopianism” by Lyman Tower Sargent, and how do they relate to the Martin Pötz’ argued benefits of utilizing such visions in political activism and social movements?

Background

Limits

Climate and ecological crises

When exploring the visions of future societies, many contemporary social, geopolitical, and economic controversies could be explored. But as this thesis is part of the MSc in Climate Change, I will focus on the efforts towards staying within the planetary boundaries; herein the climate crisis and biosphere integrity (Rockström et al., 2010).

The cases challenge contemporary modes of political thinking by dealing with issues of intersectional environmentalism that span class struggles and social equity, racism, feminism, and anti-capitalism. Therefore, this thesis might delve into these fields, though the issues of the ecological crisis will be the main focus.

Temporal perspectives

The thesis will work with various temporal perspectives: The current Danish climate politics and cultural landscape will be compared to predictions and visions of the future as they unfold regarding the ecological crises. This will be done either with the speculative accounts of future conditions (i.e. the certain chapters of 'Half-Earth Socialism' that reflect on and leading up to the year 2047), with political goals for reductions or implementations by primarily the years 2025, 2030, 2040 and 2050, or with predictions and pathways that goes beyond the current century.

Case materials

For the thesis, I have chosen the main cases 'Half-Earth Socialism' (2022) by Troy Vettese and Drew Pendergrass and 'En Grøn Retfærdig Fremtid' (2022) by Den Grønne Ungdomsbevægelse. The first a case of an extensive utopian political vision that covers many areas of ideological, scientific and philosophical topics and theories, and the latter as a case that

touches on similar topics, however less comprehensively, but directly refers to the context of Danish climate politics through its proposals and use in the strategic activism of Den Grønne Ungdomsbevægelse.

Context

This thesis deals with large-scale philosophical and political theories, oftentimes specifically with a planetary scope, and as such much of the analysis will be universal and speculative. However, I have somewhat limited the scope of the ultimate case analysis to a Danish context. Herein Danish climate politics and in turn the visions of Danish climate activists. I've done this to examine the potential and the stakes of political utopias at a scale that allows for a more thorough discussion. Hopefully, this will bridge the gaps between the somewhat intangible magnitude of speculative utopianism and the concurring contemporary political struggles, as well as grounding the abstract concepts and discussions of philosophy and view of nature in smaller scale cases with political initiatives.

The context of these limitations will now be presented through the context of Danish climate politics and ecomodernism, as well as the two chosen cases of 'Half-Earth Socialism' (2022) and 'En Grøn Retfærdig Fremtid' (2022).

Danish Climate Politics

Following what came to be dubbed as the “climate election of 2019”, Socialdemokratiet and the parties that made up their confidence-and-supply agreement, negotiated the terms for the new Frederiksen Cabinet. Among which was the goal of reaching a national CO₂-reduction of 70% by 2030 compared to 1990-levels, by agreeing on a binding Climate Law (Kallestrup & Eller, 2019). The agreement was signed on December 6th, 2019 by Socialdemokratiet, Venstre, Dansk Folkeparti, Radikale Venstre, Socialistisk Folkeparti, Enhedslisten, Det Konservative Folkeparti and Alternativet in a nine-page written agreement containing guiding principles, sub-goals and action-plan, yearly climate program and duty to act, establishment of Klimarådet [the Climate Council], global reporting and strategy, and methods of measurements (Regeringen et al, 2019: 2). Since its inception, the Climate Law, and especially the 70% by 2030 goal, is seen to have become the frame within which much of the political debate on climate has been held. Since a majority of the parties in parliament have agreed upon the goals, the need for reaching the target is largely not debated, but rather the approaches, strategies and tools.

The guiding principles of the Climate Law is to consider Denmark as a leading nation in the global green transition, and to inspire other countries to follow in its footsteps (Regeringen et al, 2019: 2). To achieve this, the transition may not come at the cost of the power of the Danish financial sector or welfare, or that local GHG-reductions do not lead to increased emissions in other countries through migrating industries (Ibid.). These principles are visible in the government’s climate strategy, mostly exemplified in this thesis through the 2019 climate political vision from Socialdemokratiet: “Danmark skal igen være en grøn stormagt” [Denmark shall once again be a green superpower] (Socialdemokratiet, 2019) as well as the negotiations and agreements of the Frederiksen cabinet from 2019-2022. As well as the framing and tasks put on various expert-groups and commissions, like the expert group for examining a Danish carbon tax who were asked to consider Danish financial power and economic growth in their recommendations (Ekspertgruppen for en Grøn skattereform, 2022).

In addition to the goal of 70% by 2030, the agreement requires the parties to negotiate new sub-goals every five years (Ibid.: 3). This has especially been a point of debate when it comes to the so-called “hockey-stick strategy” and the discussion of immediate emission reductions in known polluting sectors, versus reliance on future technological solutions.

The hockey-stick strategy, carbon tax, and Danish agriculture

When presenting the government's climate strategy related to a financial proposal in October 2020, the Minister for Climate, Energy and Utilities Dan Jørgensen referred to the overall guiding principle as a 'hockey-stick' (Haaland & Hagel, 2020). The implication is the scenario in which GHG-reductions are mostly stagnant until just before 2030 where sudden significant reductions are achieved due to technological developments in various carbon sequestration technologies such as carbon capture- and storage [CCS] (Ibid.). The method was widely criticized among organizations, activists, and experts. The critique was further qualified by the release of a report by Klimarådet, in which they strongly advised against postponing reductions and concluded that the government did not convincingly clarify the path to reach the climate goals (Klimarådet, 2021). In addition to the critique of the uncertainty of technology delivering reduction that amount to the needed levels of negative carbon emissions, Klimarådet points to the necessity of immediate reductions to adhere to the CO₂-budgets appointed to individual countries by the IPCC, to stay within the 1.5 to 2 degree range in global average temperature increase. It will be necessary to stay within this range, to avoid the worst of the predicted tipping points for critical ecosystems and non-reversible climatic changes (Ibid.).

An example of the hockey-stick strategy is the discussion and agreement on a Danish carbon tax. In 2020, Klimarådet recommended the implementation of a uniform carbon tax of 1.500 DKK per ton CO₂e as one of the most efficient ways of quickly lowering GHG-emissions and staying within the goals of the Climate Law (Klimarådet, 2020). Additionally, Det Økonomiske Råd [The Economic Council] agreed on this recommendation and added that it was likewise a cost-efficient way of financing the green transition without financially burdening Danish citizens but instead the most polluting companies (Det Økonomiske Råd, 2020). Following negotiations of a carbon tax in 2020, in which a majority of parties agreed on its need and potential, but not on a price per ton CO₂e and on which premises it would apply, Ekspertgruppen for en Grøn skattereform [The Expert-group for a Green Tax Reform] was tasked by the government to develop models and proposals for the tax (Hannestad & Bredsdorff, 2020). The group was asked to work on the guiding principles of the Climate Law, and to find the most GHG-reductions while at the same time protecting job-stability and financial growth. (Ekspertgruppen for en Grøn skattereform, 2022: 11-13). As such, the models

exempt specific industries like cement, by investing in carbon capture technologies like Bioenergy with carbon capture and storage (BECCS) and CCS as compensation for the missing GHG-emissions due to a low tax (Ibid.: 15-20). Some models reach the missing reductions by taxing industries uniformly and sufficiently to predict systematic changes in production or by changing markets. In the end, the model with 750 DKK per ton CO₂e was chosen by the government, and mineral processing from companies such as Aalborg Portland were exempted from these taxations. Instead, the agreement funnels the proceeds from taxing other companies and citizens into technologies that compensate for these emissions (Finansministeriet, 2022).

The aforementioned report by Ekspertgruppen for en Grøn skattereform was scheduled to be the first of two reports. The other report will propose models for a carbon tax on the Danish agricultural sector (Ekspertgruppen for en Grøn skattereform, 2022: 4). As part of their election campaign, Socialdemokratiet announced that they would support a carbon tax on agriculture, as was uncertain until then, which could possibly be the missing reductions needed to reach the 2025 goal of 50-54% national CO₂e reductions (Socialdemokratiet, 2022A). This ties into a similar debate as with the exemption of mineral processing in the first carbon tax, in that the proposed agriculture strategy of the government in the past, has been to exempt the agricultural sector from reducing their emissions by investing in carbon capture technologies as pyrolysis technologies that could potentially reduce emissions in the future (Ministeriet for Fødevarer, Landbrug og Fiskeri, 2021). This literal and proverbial investment in technological offsets of GHG-emissions in the agriculture sector, has implications on whether the sector should reduce their animal production, possibly at the cost of jobs, migrating emissions, or international financial positioning, but which currently makes up 90% of the sector's CO₂e emissions (Klimarådet, 2016). By predictions on the emissions-pathways according to current policies, Danish agriculture could amount to 50% of national CO₂e emissions and the 2025 target, and thereby the Danish CO₂ budget, would be exceeded (Klimakoalitionen, 2022). Additionally, “wild nature” only makes up 0,5% of the Danish land-area, whereas the agricultural sector, and thereby cultivated monoculture known to be destructive of local and global ecosystems, makes up 60% (Danmarks Naturfredningsforening, 2022). This makes Denmark the most cultivated country in Europe and in the midst of a biodiversity crisis worse than many other nations (Arp, 2022).

‘An Ecomodernist Manifesto’

I will here present the term “ecomodernism” as it relates to the observed political philosophy inherent in the strategies and statements of the Frederiksen cabinet, which could expand the examination of Danish climate politics to a broader movement of environmental politics and visions for the future.

The term ecomodernism is described and expanded in ‘An Ecomodernist Manifesto’ (2015) written by 18 authors (Asafu-Adjaye et al, 2015). According to the manifesto, the ecomodernistic school of thought subscribe to: “(...) the conviction that knowledge and technology, applied with wisdom, might allow for a good, or even great, Anthropocene” (Asafu-Adjaye et al, 2015). They argue that this future can be reached by technological progress that would enable the decoupling of economic growth from rising CO₂e emissions (Ibid.: 11-12). This in spite of the fact that global rise in GDP and global CO₂e emissions have followed the same upward trajectory since the industrial revolution. Notably, the global financial crisis in 2008 led to global CO₂ reduction following lowered production, consumption, and activity (Holland et al, 2019). Decoupling then, refers to the notion that carbon negative technologies and developments in technological efficiency and renewable energies will eventually enable eternal global economic growth without the rise of global GHG emissions (Hickel & Kallis, 2019: 469). This would enable technological and economic development, accompanied by rising levels of consumption and resource- and energy-use, to continue into the coming decades without structural changes to economic systems, resource-use, or the general trends of human activity (Ibid.). In ‘An Ecomodernist Manifesto’, they argue for the positive effects of economic growth and industrial development on the general human welfare, and how trends of urbanization, innovation, low carbon energy systems, and mechanization of heavy industries like agriculture and mineral processing are signs of a future that will correct itself towards “sustainable” systems and prosperous human lives (Asafu-Adjaye et al, 2015: 12-19). They do this by presenting their arguments in 7 chapters, which will be used to structure the analysis on possible similarities to Danish climate politics (Ibid.). These arguments will be further expanded upon in the analysis, through their relation to relevant parallels in Danish climate politics, discussions of views of nature, and the case-examples of other utopian visions in 'Half-Earth Socialism' (2022) and 'En Grøn Retfærdig Fremtid' (2022).

‘Half-Earth Socialism’

'Half-Earth Socialism' (2022) by Troy Vettese and Drew Pendergrass is, in their own words, a work in the utopian tradition, a critique of the dominant neoliberal political philosophy in contemporary environmental strategies, and finally a: “(...) plan to save the future from extinction, climate change, and pandemics” (Vettese & Pendergrass, 2022). The text is bookended by two short works of fiction; opening with a dystopian rundown of global catastrophic developments until the year 2047, centered around the hypothetical consequences of a neoliberal and market-based response involving geoengineering to combat the climate crisis. Ending with a fictional day-in-the-life prose of a person waking in a utopian society reminiscent of the one proposed in 'Half-Earth Socialism' (Ibid.).

'Half-Earth Socialism' emphasize that as a work of utopianism: “The purpose of this book is to outline the material conditions of the current ecological predicament and show how it can be transcended by providing new ways of conceiving the relationship between the economy and the environment” (Vettese & Pendergrass, 2022: 9). Likewise, they assert that they do not claim to have all the answers and that: “(...) while at times our proposals may seem outlandish - our book, after all, belongs to the utopian tradition – they are meant to encourage those on the Left and the environmental movement to take seriously the challenge of not merely surviving the next century but creating a better society within a wilder and stabilized society” (Ibid.).

I will present 'Half-Earth Socialism' by dividing it into themes that relate to the research of this thesis. First by exploring its criticism of geoengineering, anthropocentric philosophy in the humanization of nature, and technological solutions to climate change. Secondly, on their theory of radical rewilding of half of Earth's water and land areas to combat the Sixth Mass Extinction and climate crisis. Lastly, I will present the political standpoints and planning of 'Half-Earth Socialism' that propel a restructuring of humankind's organization and resource-use.

Binding Prometheus

Although 'Half-Earth Socialism' broadly is a utopian vision, it elaborates on what the authors believe to be the main drivers of the dystopian alternative to their vision and the main opponents to their ideology and scientific convictions. The opening piece of fiction titled "Looking Backward: 2047" describes the trajectory global society takes to reach a dystopian state in the year 2047 (Vettese & Pendergrass, 2022: 1-8). A society that continues its reliance and belief in a predominantly neoliberal approach to environmentalism, and where after years of continuing in the same vein as contemporary global climate politics, an unprecedented hurricane hits the United States which responds with a string of dramatic geoengineering efforts, mainly a large-scale solar radiation management (SRM) an operation that spreads Sulphur into the atmosphere and blocking the sun with reflective aerosols (Ibid.: 1). Following the immediate cooling-effect and a couple of years of relief, global capitalism continues on its course undisturbed. By 2040 the IPCC uncovers the unaltered climatic changes, and the market is unable to stop emissions from the burning of fossil fuels before it is too late. This leads to a spiral of tipping points, irreversible biodiversity loss, zoonotic diseases, and civil collapse due to unlivable land, wars, economic crashes, and extreme weather events (Ibid.: 7). "Although much of the natural world had been transformed into a factory farm, a suburb, or a garbage dump, the market's control over the biosphere remained far from complete. SRM best revealed the gulf that lay between mastery and unintended chaos" (Ibid.: 7).

The dystopian fiction is followed by a critique of the anthropocentrism of neoliberalism, the market, and in turn, humankind to assume understanding and control of ecosystems (Ibid.: 32). 'Half-Earth Socialism' reviews the uncertainty of geoengineering, disputable renewable energy systems, and carbon capture technologies like SRM, nuclear power, carbon capture and sequestration (CCS), respectively (Ibid.: 61-72). This critique relates to the previously mentioned controversies of the hockey-stick strategy that ignore carbon budgets and immediate GHG-reductions in society and production itself and wager the fulfillment of national and global climate goals on negative carbon techniques to be implemented the year(s) immediately leading up to said deadline (Ibid.). In addition, they note the inefficiency of these technologies to deliver reductions that amount to what is required to stay beneath 2°C (Ibid.).

Throughout, Vettese & Pendergrass use the term “Prometheanism” as a framework to examine philosophical controversies related to the dangerous chauvinism of humankind to assume control of the biosphere through geoengineering technologies or the insistence of understanding geophysical processes well enough to compensate for industrial CO₂e emissions. The term refers to Prometheus, a titan in Greek mythology who disobeyed the gods by stealing fire and giving it to humanity who in turn developed technology and society (Ibid.: 27-31). The philosophy of ecocentrism, capitalocentrism and flat ontology will be further discussed in the presentation of theoretical frameworks. But Vettese & Pendergrass exemplifies Prometheanism in cases like the aforementioned geoengineering and in the lessons from the project Biosphere 2, which will be presented for further reference.

Biosphere 2 was an American experiment in the late 1980's to early 1990's wherein a collective of scientists and artists, funded by the oil-billionaire Ed Bass, built the world's largest dome and enclosed ecosystem in the desert outside Tucson (Ibid.: 22). Biosphere 2 refers to being a sequel to Earth, the proverbial Biosphere 1, and the goal of the project was to create a self-sustaining ecosystem that could support life and be studied with regards to future space exploration and colonization of other planets (Ibid.: 23). Within the dome, five ecosystems were created to copy the global systems of Earth's biosphere: “(...) tropical rainforest, coastal fog desert, mangrove wetland, savannah and ocean with a coral reef” (Ibid.). Herein the group underwent an experiment in which eight people lived in the dome for two years, only supported by the closed system of the dome's own oxygen, agriculture, and recycled water (Ibid.: 24). The experiment became a publicity phenomenon in American and international media but failed disastrously as it experienced, what Vettese & Pendergrass defines as, a microcosm of the ecological crises of Biosphere 1 (Ibid.: 24-25). In the anthropocentric attempt to recreate complex natural ecosystems, interdependent microbial and fungal processes, and interplay between species and biological processes, the ‘biospherians’ experienced a dangerous rise in greenhouse gasses emitted from unforeseen biological processes in the interplay between the installed ecosystems and the concrete of the facility. These GHG-emissions tipped the photosynthesis of the closed system to see a mass extinction of plant and animal species, an invasion of stowaway insects, and a fall in oxygen levels that affected the participants greatly. Crops failed and the biospherians nearly died from starvation and lack of oxygen before the control-center inserted liquid oxygen into the biosphere (Ibid.).

Vettese & Pendergrass refers to the lessons of Biosphere 2 throughout the text, mainly as a philosophical argument for the reoccurring attempts of humankind to culturally, industrially, and biologically humanize and control natural processes, and to see this as a continuation of anthropocentric ontology tracing back to the origins of Christian theology (Ibid.: 28). They define the humanization of nature as: “(...) the process by which humanity overcomes its alienation from nature by instilling the latter with human consciousness through the process of labor – transforming wilderness into a garden” (Ibid.). This contrasts Half-Earth Socialism’s utopian opposition to Prometheism by firstly asserting that: “(...) the key philosophical principle of eco-socialism is not the unknowability of nature but something else, say, the hybridity of nature and culture” (Vettese & Pendergrass, 2022: 20-21). As such, arguing for an end to the ontological divide between nature and humanity/culture, and possibly a shift towards a flat or ecocentric ontology as will be examined further in this thesis. Their opposing political vision then leads to the conclusion that rewilding half of the planet’s surface is needed to break from Promethean initiatives that seize perceived and industrial control of nature.

Radical Rewilding

The theory of Half-Earth was defined by E. O. Wilson in ‘Half-Earth: Our Planet’s Fight for Life’ (2016). The theory highlights land-use change’s effects on the Sixth Mass Extinction of species, destruction of vital ecosystems, and contributions to rising GHG-emissions, and argues for the need to conserve large, connected wildlife reserves and rewilding (Wilson, 2016: 131-147). According to Wilson, conserving areas amounting to around 50% of Earth’s land and water areas is needed to effectively combat the worst consequences of the ecological crises. (Ibid. 6-8) This was calculated by Wilson and others, based on the examination of island ecosystems as microcosms of nature preservation and concluded that more space is needed for a thriving existence of habitats: “(...) the number of species was roughly proportional to the fourth root of the area” (Vettese & Pendergrass, 2022: 11). When applying this spatial need to the area of the globe and calculating it with the projected 84% of species not expected to survive the Sixth Mass Extinction according to the Planetary Boundaries by Rockström et al, then 50% would need to be preserved: $0.5^{0.25} = 0.84$ (Ibid.). According to Wilson, this would sequester

enormous amounts of GHG due to the increased biomass both on land and at sea as photosynthesis increases, soil-structures improve to retain more carbon, and fossil infrastructure is displaced (Ibid.). Although Vettese & Pendergrass challenge and criticize Wilson's theory, mainly through their assertion of the need for a political link to socialism, the original text of Wilson's 'Half-Earth: Our Planet's Fight for Life' (2010) will be used in this thesis as an appendix to 'Half-Earth Socialism' and examined for further details on their utopia throughout the analysis and discussion.

In addition, 'Half-Earth Socialism' elaborates on the philosophical implications of such conservation efforts and argue for the need for protecting existing nature reserves and carefully restoring nature to its ecological state before human intervention and then leaving them alone (Vettese & Pendergrass, 2022: 49-54). Vettese & Pendergrass argues that: "Instead of the humanization of nature, much work in the future will be rewilding, which can be theorized as a kind of unbuilding of the world" (Vettese & Pendergrass, 2022: 54). The theoretical reflections and nature philosophy of 'Half-Earth Socialism' will be further explored and presented throughout the analysis.

The relation between the disturbance and unbalancing of ecosystems, and the spreading of zoonotic diseases is also used as an argument for radical rewilding (Vettese & Pendergrass, 2022: 37). They refer to the historical documentation of scientist Edward Jenner, who argued that before the development of animal husbandry, humanity only suffered from minor parasites or infections. (Ibid.: 36) According to them, most major outbreaks through history, like measles, influenza, leprosy, smallpox, and plagues, can be traced to animal domestication within the last 10.000 years – most contemporarily the outburst of the zoonosis COVID-19 (Ibid.: 37). They use this as an argument for both reducing avoidable human suffering from deadly pandemics and defending the lives and well-being of non-human species in captivity, by radically reducing animal husbandry via widespread veganism, and rewilding and protecting bio-dense ecosystems to avoid contamination and unearthing of new zoonoses (Ibid. 39).

An important caveat to the tradition of conservationism, according to Vettese & Pendergrass, is the dangers of the theory of the role of overpopulation in ecological problems, which they define as Malthusianism (Ibid.: 29). The term refers to the British economist Thomas Malthus

who in the late 17th to early 18th centuries popularized the idea of the population growing at faster rates than the food supply can deliver, and the accompanying controversies of who suffers from a shortage in supply; the rich or the poor (Ibid.: 35). In 'Half-Earth Socialism', they refer to this thinking as seeing how: “(...) each rich nation amounts to a lifeboat full of comparatively rich people (...) while the poor nations are lifeboats so crowded that the ‘poor fall out’ and hope to benefit from the ‘goodies’ in the rich lifeboats. The Malthusian imperative was simple: let them drown” (Ibid.: 36). They fear that the false premise saying that humankind will grow in a way that cannot be sustained, will lead to racist rhetoric and actions like the eco-fascist mass shooting seen in the last couple of years and the rise of eco-fascist states in the face of climate collapse (Ibid.). An ideology that cannot be united with Half-Earth initiatives, and one that Vettese & Pendergrass sees among prominent environmentalists: “(...) such as David Attenborough and Jane Goodall” (Ibid.). Malthusianism, or neo-Malthusianism as will be presented by Jason W. Moore, will be used throughout the thesis when similar expressions are explored in ecomodernism.

In 'Half-Earth Socialism', they argue that: “(...) Wilson fails to see that Half-Earth must be socialist if it is ever to exist” (Vettese & Pendergrass, 2022: 11-12). They then address the challenges of a planetary effort of such magnitude, by arguing for the need for combining nature reserves with a: “(...) planetary in natura economy (...)”, a redistribution of power, widespread veganism, and energy-quotas. (Vettese & Pendergrass, 2022: 73-75). The effort to rewild areas at the scale presented within Half-Earth, would require an unprecedented intervention on all sectors of society, an enormous, coordinated workforce, and limits and planning of the land-, resource-, and energy-use of human existence and its industries.

In their vision, they build on the assumption that population growth stagnates at a level around 10 billion people, and that even by rewilding half of earth's area, such a future society could sufficiently be supported by a radical redistribution of resources based on lessons from the socialist tradition and ideology.

Vegan Communism

Vettese & Pendergrass presents various other aspects to their political vision and reflect on the potential of the utopian tradition within previous socialist movements. Among these other aspects are cybernetic planning, energy-quotas, and widespread veganism. In terms of planning, socialist models, and cybernetic planning, the chapter “Planning Half-Earth” predominantly refers to the works of the Austrian philosopher and political economist Otto Neurath, soviet mathematician Leonid Vitaljevitj Kantorovitj, and the methods of the soviet State Planning Committee known as Gosplan [and renamed Gosplant in 'Half-Earth Socialism'] (Vettese & Pendergrass, 2022: 88-107). They argue that that planning a market-less economy that redistributes workforce, resources, and energy-use to be in line with the Planetary Boundaries and a rewilding of half the globe, would require learning from the large-scale economic modelers and mathematicians of historical societies like the Soviet Union and other communist nations (Ibid.: 89). They introduce planning methods that could incorporate the cybernetic mathematical algorithms of projects like the Cybersyn computer-system (Ibid.: 119-124). Cybersyn was discovered in Chile after the coup of Salvador Allende’s socialist state in 1973, where a room of intricate computer-systems had been developed to replace the regulatory processes of the market with numerical equations built on equity among people and resources (Ibid.). Vettese & Pendergrass argues for a centralized planning algorithm that combines models like these with the general circulation models (GCM) and other models used by the IPCC and climate scientists, to calculate the functions of geophysical systems and their limits and needs for staying within the Planetary Boundaries (Ibid.: 130). Additionally, they argue that a central planning system, contrary to the soviet planning bodies of the past, should be based on “in natura democracy” as explained by Neurath, to fight technocratic and totalitarian regimes (Ibid.: 111-112).

As such, they present the mission of such a central planning system to: “(...) provide a 2,000-watt quota for all, limit global warming to 2°C, and rewild half the planet” (Vettese & Pendergrass, 2022: 108). Based on this overall mission, 'Half-Earth Socialism' deals with dilemmas of such planning like; how can you minimize land and still produce enough food, while needing the space for biofuels and other relatively renewable energy sources? Herein they speculate on several solutions like widespread veganism and planning of land-use change and

production to reduce GHG-emissions (Ibid.). Managing a global distribution of 2.000-watts per person [that means 2.000 joules per second] to meet the recommendations of the IPCC, would require new infrastructure and consumption-change to ensure support to the nations with the lowest amounts like the Gaza Strip in the Palestinian state, at around 0.01-watts while also limiting the highest consumers like America at 12,000-watts (British Business Energy, 2022). Aside from this quota, they also argue for completely replacing fossil fuels with cleaner sources like wind turbines and mills, solar panels, and transitional biofuels in a global immediate effort based on algorithms that equally distribute energy-levels based on land use, economy and historic consumption-related responsibility of the different nations (Vettese & Pendergrass, 2022: 109).

‘En Grøn Retfærdig Fremtid’

Den Grønne Ungdomsbevægelse [DGUB] is a Danish grassroots movement established in May 2018. Their stated goal is to ‘(...) fight for a green just future through structural changes in society’ (DGUB, 2022A). The movement has since 2018 been part of organizing different kinds of civil protests like climate strikes, demonstrations, a hunger strike, civil disobedient blockades, and banner drops throughout cities in Denmark (DGUB, 2022B). These physical manifestations are often accompanied by campaigns that include meetings with politicians, appearances in Danish media, and communication on their social media platforms. (Ibid.) Some of the political topics and agendas DGUB have addressed are: the Danish Climate Law, oil extraction in the North Sea, agriculture, climate aid, parliamentary and municipality elections, citizens assemblies on climate, banning of fossil fuel ads, reliance on technological solutions, carbon tax, the construction of Lynetteholm in Copenhagen and the expansion of Aarhus harbor (Ibid.).

Currently DGUB consists of 10 local groups in Copenhagen, Aarhus, Odense, Aalborg, Silkeborg, Haderslev, Sydbyn, Hillerød, Vejle, and Kolding (DGUB, 2022C). According to their ‘Formålsprogram’ [Declaration of Purpose], the movement is volunteer-based with no paid employees, no board or organized hierarchy, independent of political parties, and have no membership-status or preexisting requirements for people to join or start their own campaigns and work groups (DGUB, 2022D).

When deciding or agreeing on larger cooperative narratives or political campaigns, like the one related to their utopian manifest ‘En Grøn Retfærdig Fremtid’, it is defined by way of initiative from the movement’s activists and is supported by the open work group ‘Politik & Presse’ [Politics and Press] as a text that speaks on behalf of the movement at large (DGUB, 2022D).

A Green Just Future

The text 'En Grøn Retfærdig Fremtid' [EGRF] is a publication by DGUB that was released by the movement on September 6th, 2022, on their website (DGUB, 2022A) and later as a self-published booklet (DGUB, 2022H). The text was presented as being somewhere between a real-political proposal and a utopian vision. As well as intended as a response driven by hope, to accommodate the criticism that climate activists focus too much on the politics and structures they oppose, rather than what they want the future to look like (DGUB, 2022E).

The title translates to 'A Green Just Future' and, according to one of the authors Caroline Bessermann, refers to a recurring chant at DGUB's demonstrations: "Vi vil ha' en grøn, retfærdig fremtid" [We want a green just future] (DGUB, 2022E). According to her, the title was meant as a reference to the fact that the movement now explains what they mean by the 'green just future' they want, and: "(...) the visions for such a future, that we find worth fighting for. It is a testament to the indisputable obligations we have to the future, and it strengthens our hope of reaching 70% reductions by 2030" (Ibid.).

EGRF is structured around 14 chapters that refer to different sectors, principles, and challenges that need to be addressed to succeed with the green transition, which they argue need to be perceived as interconnected: "In a world filled with isolated political topics, we choose the whole" (EGRF, 2022: 1). These topics are: bearing principles, education, construction and housing, transportation, agriculture, biodiversity and nature, energy, technology, global climate justice, finance and economy, work life, welfare, media and culture, and consumption and recycling (Ibid.). The chapters range from proposals to political changes in the various sectors via specific economic or reduction initiatives, to principles or approaches to government planning and individual consumption. To examine the research questions of this thesis and discuss the potential and implications of the text on its view on nature and political ecocentrism, I will mainly focus on the proposals and visions of the text on nature conservation and regulations, general principles, and consumption.

DGUB's view of nature is most directly addressed in the opening passage to the chapter 'Biodiversity and Nature', in which they state that: "(...) we need to overturn the development to create a just world where humankind isn't raised above all other living organisms" (EGRF, 2022: 17). Like 'Half-Earth Socialism', EGRF presents the main solutions to this challenge as changes in land-use and nature conservation. According to DGUB: "Both agriculture and infrastructure take up a disproportionate amount of space in Denmark.", and they propose a transformation of 1/3 of the country's area to protected nature, as opposed to the present 0,5% (Ibid.). They envision this as a: "(...) new, living, and connected nature [that] spreads across the whole country and is incorporated in all sectors of society" (Ibid.). To which they add the need for reforestation as a bearing form of carbon sequestration as well as: "(...) supporting biodiversity, cleaning the air, securing our groundwater, preventing floods, and cooling our cities" (Ibid.: 18). In terms of regulatory planning, they assert the need for a Danish "Biodiversity Law" akin to the Climate Law with annual evaluations and deadlines, financing, and long-term action plans (Ibid.). As well as leading by example in the UN and EU and pushing for large-scale international agreements on climate and biodiversity financing, banning of fossil fuels and making ecocide, in which human activity leads to mass-destruction of nature, into an international felony (Ibid.: 19).

In addition, DGUB argue for the need for combining rewilding with a large-scale reduction in the land-use of Danish agriculture, specifically with the areas used for livestock and their feed: "Within the next few years we need to halve our animal production. Which would free enormous amounts of space to nature and biodiversity and it would enable us to produce food directly to humans and grow crops where both the soil, climate, biodiversity, rural-life, and food security is better off" (Ibid.: 14). Additionally, they address the need for different political indicators instead of measuring society solely based on economic growth, reductions in energy-use, and regulations of fossil industries, which will be elaborated as they relate to Danish climate politics and the theories of this thesis. Likewise, the surrounding campaign material, herein demonstrations, communication-output and public meetings with politicians, from September to November of 2022, will be used in the analysis of the potential of political utopias. This will be done through inclusion of DGUB's social media accounts and coverage in the Danish press.

Ecocentrism, the Capitalocene, & Political Utopianism

Apart from radical rewilding's benefits to biodiversity and climate, contemporary philosophers speak of the need for transforming the dominant Western ontology and view of nature. According to the British philosopher Timothy Morton, anthropocentric philosophy is seen throughout most industrial societies and is a driving force behind the humanization of nature and its role in causing extinction of species and climate change (Morton, 2010: 1-20). When examining environmental political utopias, I want to focus on their inherent views of nature, with regard to their potential in transforming current cultural philosophies. As such, I will present the theory of ecocentrism as an alternative to anthropocentrism through Morton and Aldo Leopold, as well as expanding these theories in their relation to capitalism through Mikkel Krause Frantzen and Jason W. Moore. The latter two will also qualify the analysis of political philosophy as it relates to critiques of capitalism and its handling of the ecological crises. Additionally, I will present the methodology and theory of ecocriticism through Greg Garrard, which enables examination of these philosophies and ecological problems in literature and art with regard to discussing the potential of such to change cultural views of nature. This leads to the discussion of the potential of political utopias to change societal and cultural values, as argued in the theory of utopianism by Lyman Tower Sargent with additions of the terms and philosophy of radical hope by Jonathan Lear and Theodor W. Adorno.

Ecocentrism: Dark Ecology & Land Ethics

Within environmental ethics, anthropocentrism refers to a philosophy in which humans are the only species to bear intrinsic value, and where all other beings only have instrumental value through their relation to human beings (Hordequin, 2015). Additionally, human beings are the only species to have moral standing when it comes to dealing with ethical controversies and granting rights to different stakeholders (Ibid.). According to Timothy Morton, this

philosophy, which dates back to Christian theology, creates a false separation between culture/humanity and Nature, which they insist on spelling with sentence case to underline the construct of such a term (Morton, 2010). In their theory, they challenge this dualism with the term: “the mesh”, referring to the metaphysical theory that everything is connected in one ecosystem (Ibid. 47). The mesh is inherently without hierarchy between its parts: “(...) it is a vast, sprawling mesh of interconnection without a definite center or edge”, denying the notion of humankind at the center or otherwise prioritized metaphysically (Ibid.: 8). A dualism and false hierarchy, that in turn enables an understanding of species and non-human entities as being exploitable resources to support human society and need to be changed (Ibid.). This is part of the philosophical school which Morton defines as ecocentrism or co-existentialism (Ibid.). In this view, all living and non-living objects influence each other and should equally be given consideration of interest.

As such, Morton argues that the subject’s adoption of the view of nature inherent in the theory of the mesh, will lead to an eventual dissolvment of anthropocentrism. Hereby, humankind will weigh the interests and needs of Nature or other non-human entities as high or central as their own and in turn be more susceptible to support and execute the necessary societal changes to combat the ecological crises (Morton, 2010).

Morton argues that their theory differs from other ecocentric and environmental philosophies, as it entails realizations that in their existential and sacrificial scope can be difficult and depressive to human recipients – leading Morton to denote their theory “dark ecology” (Ibid.: 97). In dark ecology, the metaphysical exercise of seeing all objects as being equally important and connected in the mesh, what is also referred to as flat ontology, speculative realism, or object-oriented ontology [OOO] within different schools of philosophy, the subject may experience disorientation and depression in the realization of its worth and place (Lysgaard et al, 2017). As well as bringing the ethical controversies of past and present exploitation of non-human species and ecosystems into the subject’s consciousness, with the following notions of responsibility, guilt, and maleficence. (Morton, 2010: 97). In this view: “(...) tree hugging begins to sound sinister, not innocent. We have to go through this darkness. It’s the only way to grow up. If we don’t take responsibility this way, we’re stuck in an attitude we can never shake off” (Ibid.). The process of adapting this philosophy is challenged by a reluctance to ‘go through the darkness’, as it were.

In relation, Danish writer Mikkel Krause Frantzen argues that Timothy Morton and comparable contemporary philosophers should be challenged on the unapproachable nature of dark ecology, as well as oftentimes over-academized and convoluted metaphysical approaches to these questions. (Frantzen, 2020: 19) To this, he refers to “Latour Litany” as a commonality between OOO-thinkers like Morton, Graham Harman, Jane Bennett, and Bruno Latour to list objects like plants, people, consumer-goods, and to then sideline them in importance and metaphysical location (Ibid.: 9). A tendency that might lead to spiraling into obscurity which is somewhat unproductive from a change-making point of view. These critiques will be discussed in light of the goals of the political utopias to challenge contemporary anthropocentrism in various forms through political visions and incentives, and the methods and platforms for which this transformation has the greatest potential.

Another ecocentric philosophy that will be used in relation to the cases of political utopias, specifically in regard to radical rewilding and conservation, is the theory of “Land Ethics” coined by Aldo Leopold (Leopold, 1949) and “the anthropocentric fallacy” by Warwick Fox (Fox, 1995). Leopold’s theory, that emerged in mid-century America, is built on the need to understand the intrinsic value of ecosystems as whole entities and grant moral standing and rights to entire geographical areas, to avoid the human underestimation of the biological interconnectedness when manipulating nature towards human ends. This includes expanding the ecocentric ethical rights to not only non-human species such as animals, plants, and fungi, but to the soils, waters, and everything else that makes up the ecosystems of a given land or marine areas as well. The theory builds on the notion that: “(...) a thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise” (Leopold, 1949: 263). As such, seeing nature as an interconnected community, as well as planning and thinking at different temporal levels towards the long-term interests of ecosystems, is needed to: “(...) think like a mountain” and break from past and present humanization of nature (Ibid.: 137-141). Specifically, Leopold criticizes the capitalization of natural resources and non-human species and the trend of separating the natural entities from their whole: “(...) you cannot love game and hate predators; you cannot conserve the waters and waste the ranges; you cannot build the forest and mine the farm. The land is one organism” (Leopold, 1938: 145-146).

Fox' theory on the anthropocentric fallacy is used to address the unavoidable epistemological challenge of perceiving the world from a human perspective, and how it relates to the delegitimization of rewilding and nature conservation in assuming human understanding of other species' interests. As well as the critique of the alleged anthropocentric monopoly on granting intrinsic value to others, from the exceptional ability of humans to perceive, and thereby create value (Fox, 1995: 19-20). According to Fox, the fallacy refers to the notion that the ability to perceive ethical values is often confused with having ethical values. One cannot equate having a specific perspective on the world with what can be perceived from such a perspective (Ibid.: 20). In other words, claiming that the actions or statements of an environmentalist is inherently anthropocentric because they are human, does not mean that the content has no non-anthropocentric value or that the blamed person is anthropocentrist. At least only by the parameters of what Fox defines as a: "(...) weak, trivial, tautological sense of anthropocentrism", which unfairly enables a labeling of actions or perceptions that strive to be more ecocentric as inherently anthropocentric, and thereby illegitimate (Ibid.). Instead, he argues that ecocentric actions can in fact avoid: "unwarranted differential treatment" of other beings in a meaningful way and avoid a strong sense of anthropocentrism (Ibid.: 21). This will become relevant when examining the nature-philosophy of ecomodernism, as well as when discussing the implications and ethical controversies of rewilding or other perceived ecocentric actions.

As Frantzen have noted, Morton and other ecocentric theorists can be seen to have an aversion or otherwise overlook political philosophical controversies of inequality and explicit theorization of the role of capitalism in flat ontology, within their environmental theories. (Frantzen, 2020: 19) As such, his and Jason W. Moore's theories on the capitalocene will be presented.

Capitalism in the mesh

The terminology of how we address the contemporary geological epoch in light of the ecological crises, has been debated since the 1970's since the term "Anthropocene" was introduced to express the significance of human activity having measurable geophysical impacts on all natural ecosystems (Wilson, 2016: 7). However, the term that will be used in this thesis to relate to the interplay between the dominant view of nature and natural ecosystems, and the political systems and their impacts on these ontologies and ecological disturbances, is the Capitalocene – seen as something separate from the Anthropocene. According to Mikkel Krause Frantzen, the term Anthropocene bears the implication that it is all of humankind as a species [the Anthro in Anthropocene] that collectively creates the changes in biodiversity and climate (Frantzen, 2020: 28-30). Rather he asserts that it is not all of humanity that is equally responsible, and quotes Jason W. Moore: "Blaming all of humanity for climate change lets capitalism off the hook" (Ibid.: 30). As indigenous or other societies with low environmental and carbon footprints do not add to the global trends at the same levels as the richest Global North countries or people directly linked to enterprises that are dependent on and responsible for the burning or extraction of fossil fuels or destruction of natural ecosystems (Ibid.). In this view, capitalism and the humanization of nature for economic profit is to blame for the ecological crises and the current geological epoch, rather than humankind as a biological species. Hereby refusing the inherent notion that it is within human nature to organize societies and their relation to ecosystems the way that they do now (Ibid.). Herein lies a shift towards seeing capitalism as an unsustainable political philosophy that can be challenged, altered, and dispersed to create a future in which human societies organize in ways that lower our impact on natural ecosystems, reflecting a more ecocentric way of relating to non-human species. As such, the Capitalocene will be used to contextualize such discussion as they relate to the cases in the analysis and discussion and replace the term Anthropocene where it might otherwise have occurred.

Furthermore, the theories in 'Capitalism in the Web of Life' by environmental historian Jason W. Moore will be used to qualify the connections made in the analysis between the dominant anthropocentric view of nature, global capitalism, and neoliberalism, historically and in terms of political philosophy (Moore, 2015: 3-21). Moore argues that capitalism is defined by the

process of making nature into labor and resources towards economic growth ad infinitum, and that the capacities of such labor and resources are limited within the planetary boundaries: “The point can scarcely be overemphasized if we are to take seriously the idea that all limits to capital emerge historically, out of the relations of humans with the rest of nature” (Ibid. 21). He in turn argues that: “(...) in equal measure, so do all projects for the liberation of humanity and our neighbors on planet earth”, as all fundamental transformation towards a future society that protects and stabilizes ecosystems towards livable conditions for all life on Earth, most break from the control of capitalism (Ibid.). In addition, he uses the term “Cheap nature” to describe the historical phenomenon of market-based regulations and evolution to develop solutions and products that may be more efficient in terms of energy and cost, but that predominantly ignore the needs of ecosystems, rights of marginalized groups, and overall fail in addressing problems of ecology (Ibid.: 116-227). He connects the failure of capitalism to the building of civilization on its perceived separation from nature, similar to Morton’s false duality of Nature and culture, and how it: “(...) proved extraordinarily functional. Natures were appropriated. Capital was accumulated. Wastes were dumped overboard. That logic — and the strategies premised on it — has now reached the end of its particular road. Another course will have to be charted” (Ibid. 217). This other course lies in the realization of the ontological relations of all things within the Web of Life, similar again to Morton’s the mesh. Not only as a flat ontology, but as a map of the destructive power-relations that make up fossil capitalism and its threat to other beings: “Shut down a coal plant, and you can slow global warming for a day; shut down the relations that made the coal plant, and you can stop it for good” (Ibid.: 125). This theory will be applied when analysing 'Half-Earth Socialism' and 'En Grøn Retfærdig Fremtid' in their relation to capitalism, consumption-levels, and market-based environmental solutions.

Methodology: Ecocritical reading of political visions

This thesis interprets political visions and philosophies in the case-examples with the ecocritical approach as defined by Canadian professor Greg Garrard, to examine the ecological problems they express (Garrard, 2004). Within the theory of ecocriticism, Garrard makes a distinction between ‘problems in ecology’ and ‘ecological problems’. (Ibid.: 5) Problems in ecology refers to the natural sciences and their description of our surroundings and how human actions influence their environment and with which consequences. Ecological problems on the other hand, is the cultural and sociological approach to examining how humankind understands their surroundings and what we define as problems within ecology. Generally, this thesis will focus on ecological problems, and mostly refrain from discussing problems in ecology, although I assume the scientific consensus of the IPCC with regard to the pathways, stakes, and critiques of technological solutions to the ecological crises. As well as the adage of E. O. Wilson’s works on biodiversity (Wilson, 2016) and the Planetary Boundaries by Rockström et al. (Rockström et al, 2009).

According to Garrard, what is perceived as an ecological problem is not universally true but varies through the scope of cultural and temporal contexts – i.e., a thistle is not only a definable species of plant within botany, but also a question of categorization within normative views of the plant’s aesthetical value and its impact on other more anthropocentrically desirable plants as a weed (Garrard, 2004). As such, ecological problems deal with normative constructs and how you define the perimeters of this understanding. Ecological problems are defined by how we create the context in which we humanize and exploit natural ecosystems beyond sustainable capacity and what alternatives to normative views of nature within political structures look like and how they deal with ecological problems and ethical rights within these societal systems. Ecocriticism deals with how ecological problems are expressed in cultural mediums, and herein how these expressions interact with discursive struggles of how to address ecological problems: “Thus ecocriticism cannot contribute much to debates about problems in ecology, but it can help to define, explore and even resolve ecological problems in this wider sense” (Ibid.: 6).

Ecocriticism is predominantly used to interpret tropes and icons of fiction and culturally defining texts related to apocalypse, wilderness, pollution, and scientific speculation, using terms and ideas from ecocriticism and other environmental philosophy (Garrard, 2004). In this thesis, I will expand the scope of ecocriticism from literature and art to political utopias which, in their speculative fictional characteristics and temporal perspectives, bear similarities to the works analyzed by Garrard and others. Garrard builds his theory on an understanding of the world to be in a dialectic relationship with our discursive practices, and as such, we affect the way we produce, reproduce, and transform this understanding simultaneously.

This leads into addressing the political utopias as relevant expressions of this interplay and potential agents of cultural changes in ontology through discursive practices. As well as in terms of the potential of the political visions, seen as variations on the tradition of utopian fiction and speculation, this thesis builds on the conclusions of both Garrard's theory and method of ecocriticism and on French philosopher Paul Ricœur's interpretational theory. According to Ricœur, fiction plays a key role in humankind's ability to understand and imagine alternate worlds and through interpretation and imagination, to likewise increase judgement and willingness to act (Andersen, 2016: 35). Herein, Ricœur argues that the first way in which people try to understand and master the complexity of the "practical field", is by constructing a fictional representation of it (Ibid.). Ricœur's extensive examination of the long history of literature and art's impact on our culture has led to his interpretational theory, which asserts the potential and power of fiction as a great force of impacting and transforming our understanding of reality (Ibid.).

Utopianism, radical hope, and social movements

Both 'Half-Earth Socialism' and 'En Grøn Retfærdig Fremtid' refer to their works as being part of the "utopian tradition" (Vettese & Pendergrass, 2022: 3) (DGUB, 2022E). According to the American professor Lyman Tower Sargent in the work 'Utopianism', the term utopia was coined in the 15th century by Thomas Moore as the name for his fictional futuristic city, and stems from a combination of Greek and Latin words into "Eutopia", meaning "happy land, or good place" (Sargent, 2010: 27). Sargent refers to a long line of utopian fiction, dating back to

before Thomas Moore, and has noticed the defining trend that: “(...) all utopias ask questions. They ask whether or not the way we live could be improved and answer that it could. Most utopias compare life in the present and life in utopia and point out what is wrong with the way we now live, thus suggesting what needs to be done to improve things” (Ibid.: 30). The tendency to point fingers at the wrongs of the present, could also lead to the opposite but similar tradition of dystopian visions that builds on contemporary concerns and the notion that: “(...) however bad this life was, it could be worse” (Ibid.). Sargent also concludes that many of the earliest examples of utopianism, all the way back to 2000 BCE: “(...) were very like dreams, completely out of human control, something that could come about naturally or because some good god willed it” (Ibid.). Whereas utopian examples from the last decades, is more often an appeal to readers and society to believe and act in a way that would bring about change towards the alternative visions (Ibid.). Such utopianism is built on the idea that a better future is possible and within the structural restraints of a society or culture to manipulate and demand; Or in other words: “hope” (Ibid.). These characteristics tie into Sargent’s theory on the fundamental necessity and need for utopias in changing society: “(...) civilization can be saved only if we are willing to change our ways of life. We have to invent utopias, necessarily to make them reality and to help us formulate worthwhile human goals” (Sargent, 2021: 463-464). In this way he negates notions of naivety and privilege of such visions utopias but assert that: “(...) utopia in the most profound sense is not the dream of a paradise but the defense of the necessary against the realistic” (Ibid.: 464). He then links this insistence to a political and ecological context in that: “(...) it’s the refusal to accept the triage of humanity implied by the vicious circle of inequality and environmental degradation”, a notion that perhaps makes the utopian tradition especially relevant for the fight against the ecological crises and towards climate justice (Ibid.).

Nonetheless, utopias also foster detractors, who argue for the potential dangers of utopias by the perceived self-delusion, as Sargent explains: “(...) on the part of the cosseted utopians about the actuality of utopias remains the most incomprehensible element of the story of the twentieth century, and its least welcome gift to the twenty-first” (Ibid.). However, Sargent also opposes this sentiment, by pointing to contemporary thinkers and writers like John Rawls who “envision real utopias” and use utopian thinking as a political tool in contemporary struggles: “(...) by showing how the social world may realize the features of a realistic utopia, political philosophy provides a long-term goal of political endeavor, and in working toward it gives

meaning to what we can do today" (Ibid.: 465). He hereby asserts that utopias can motivate the population to confront the status quo, which is a vital function in creating social change. To this end he underlines the potential of political utopias as: "(...) a toolbox from which communities can forge solutions on a participatory scale" (Ibid.: 466). Utopias as a tool have historical precedent and theoretical background to support its impact on change-making when it succeeds in resonating with its supporters, proposing necessary ideologies, and inspiring hope (Ibid.).

In relation to notions and philosophical theories on hope, American professor Jonathan Lear argues that utopianism requires what he calls 'radical hope' – the radical being defined by how: "(...) it is directed toward a future goodness that transcends the current ability to understand what it is. Radical hope anticipates a good for which those who have the hope as yet lack the appropriate concepts with which to understand it" (Lear, 2006: 103). Ordinary hope is the wish for a positive future that is plausible, yet uncertain, but generally known and imaginable by the subject envisioning it. Radical hope on the other hand, is a hope in which the desire for a different future, and the goodness it entails, is far greater than what the subject can understand and articulate wholly (Ibid.: 115). The need for radical hope, rather than ordinary hope, comes at the behest of what Lear, through German philosopher Theodor W. Adorno, calls 'radical evil'. This radical evil refers to the notion of substantive negativism in which modern society is inherently bad, and where all good developments or experiences are exceptions or false (Jütten, 2019: 4). In Adorno's view this leads to struggles in imagination as: "(...) whoever presents an image of the right conditions, in order to answer the objection that they do not know what they want, cannot disregard that supremacy [which extends] also over them. Even if their imagination was capable of imagining everything as radically different, it would still remain chained to them and their present time as static points of reference, and everything would be askew" (Ibid.: 5). As such, utopian visions need to bear the marks of radical hope and transcend the limits to the imagination of the present by creating a: "future in which the forces of domination that characterize our radically evil world no longer blight human practices from cognition to social relations" (Ibid.: 8). The radically hopeful utopias need to see and address radical evil and understand that its current state lacks morality. Because it is in this act that meaningful defiance and courage is created – the overall absence of good in the present, leaves

the future open for true goodness beyond our present ability to understand, according to Lear (Ibid.: 30).

A relevant cultural and political sphere for examining the spreading of such utopias in this thesis, is the activism and ideology of social movements. In a peer-reviewed article by Martin Pötz, they argue for the importance of utopian imagination to motivate the continued pressure from activist groups, the fundamental theory of change for most social movements, and as a political tool for these groups within political debate and strategy. According to Pötz, the premise of activism is: “(...) motivated by the rejection of how a certain aspect of life is at the moment, or by protecting a current state from a change that might lead to an even worse situation, inspired by the idea that a better world is possible” (Pötz, 2021: 124). From the offset of believing in the possibility and nature of a more desirable future, they: “(...) try to exert influence on policy, institutional and organizational systems, or cultural norms (...) especially for those who believe that the problems are rooted in the foundation of the system” (Ibid.). They then present observed benefits from activist groups directly or indirectly dealing with utopian visions and narratives. Benefits include noted mobilization-potential in getting more people engaged, perhaps because of a clearer goal and positive narrative, internal benefits like psychological and regenerative sustainability and skill sharing of political and structural analyzes and added direction to political campaigns and strategies (Ibid.: 131-132). Overall, it can further: “(...) impact the construction of the material world, point activists towards prefigurative politics and give direction through focusing on what one wants” (Ibid.: 135). Pötz’ research conclude that where utopian imagination in social movements predominantly stay at implied or indirect levels, such as internal motivation and generalized campaign narratives, taking the time to spell out specific political goals and concrete formulations of the visions: “(...) is an important step in translating the idea of utopia from literature and other art-forms into a strategy of achieving fundamental change that can be applied by activists on the ground” (Ibid.: 142). Likewise, these formulations of political demands and goals can be an effective tool in engaging with hesitant or opposing figures and people, as an optimistic and positivistic list of suggestions and visions, rather than critiques, attacks, or dystopian rhetoric which can be perceived as unconstructive or dogmatically contrarian, according to the experiences documented by Pötz (Ibid.: 135).

The question of how transformative utopianism works in the interplay between politicians or unpersuaded agents and social movements and activist groups, seems difficult to answer quantitatively and qualitatively. But it seems to bear certain historical and theoretical potentials politically, and more certainly beneficial within the fabric of social movements themselves.

As such, the campaign and activism surrounding the release of the case-example 'En Grøn Retfærdig Fremtid', will be examined in light of activist strategies and perceived political merit, as they relate to Pötz' research. In addition to the ecocritical analysis of the content of the utopian vision itself.

Ecomodernism and Danish climate politics

In this chapter, I wish to examine and answer the question of whether contemporary Danish climate politics, exemplified through the agreements and statements of Socialdemokratiet and the Frederiksen cabinet of 2019-2022, can be seen as an expression of the ecomodernist ideology and philosophy. I do this, to examine what political arena the Danish activist group Den Grønne Ungdomsbevægelse operates within in their advocating for their political utopia EGRF. As well as examine a possible case of anthropocentrism, technological Prometheanism, and neoliberal environmentalism in a contemporary political sphere, which the utopias of this thesis challenge. This analysis will be structured around the seven chapters of 'An Ecomodernist Manifesto' and related to the presented examples of politics and philosophy from Danish climate politics. The analysis will mainly revolve around the strategy of Denmark as a green leading nation, the hockey-stick strategy; herein, the role of technology and prioritization of the market and GDP, the national carbon tax, and debate and politics of Danish agriculture, as previously presented. To further the examination of ecomodernist notions of proposed decoupling of economic growth and rising GHG-emissions as a strategy and ideology both in a broader sense and in the case of Danish climate politics, I will challenge these ideas with references to the theories on ecocentrism and capitalism's role in the ecological crises.

Chapter I: On the historical flourishing of human well-being and its links to technological developments (Asafu-Adjaye et al., 2015).

In Socialdemokratiet's published climate political vision: "Danmark skal igen være en grøn stormagt" (Socialdemokratiet, 2019), Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen defines the overall visions for the party's climate politics. The citations from which I will translate from Danish in the following chapters. In it she writes that Denmark is a leading nation in having created a thriving welfare-state that ranks among the happiest and economically stable countries in the world (Socialdemokratiet, 2019: 4-7). She argues that this position was achieved through a

visionary and skilled private sector and industrialization as well as brave and strong political leadership throughout the 19th and 20th centuries (Ibid.). She highlights the central role of technological progress and innovation in this humanitarian development, as well as for the environmental accomplishments and opportunities of the last centuries, enabled by “green technologies”, and refers to Danish writer H.C. Andersen and how he would, if still alive, have: “(...) written a fairytale about it. For what Denmark has accomplished is nothing short of a fairytale” (Ibid.: 6). This is then brought into the rhetoric and responsibility of Denmark as a green leading nation to show the international climate political community that it is possible to deliver on the green transition without sacrificing economic growth and competitive power.

This ideology, and the interpretation of industrial and social history, seemingly align with the formulations of ‘An Ecomodernist Manifesto’ by Asafu-Adjaye et al. who more explicitly propose that: “Human technologies, from those that first enabled agriculture to replace hunting and gathering, to those that drive today’s globalized economy, have made humans less reliant upon the many ecosystems that once provided their only sustenance” (Asafu-Adjaye et al., 2015: 8). The conclusion of an overall increase in human life expectancy and rise of economic and democratic equality in many countries over the last decades seem to be supported by intergovernmental bodies like the UN (UN Nations, 2022) as well as influential thinkers like French economist Thomas Piketty (Piketty, 2022: 25-40). These same drivers of progress, however, are argued to be the main drivers of the ecological crises and their existential threats to human civilization and life on the planet, likewise concluded by the UN and Piketty (Ibid.). Technological and industrial reliance and development akin to those of the past and present, are deemed fundamentally incompatible with the goals of the IPCC and the planetary boundaries according to Jason Hickel & Giorgos Kallis (Hickel & Kallis, 2020: 483). Likewise, the underlying ecological problems in, what ‘Half-Earth Socialism’ might call, Prometheanism or Anthropocentrism will be addressed in following chapters. But I would conclude that the parallels between the visions of Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen and ‘An Ecomodernist Manifesto’ on the nature of development bear significant similarities.

Chapter II. On the possibility of decoupling economic growth from rising CO₂e emissions (Asafu-Adjaye et al., 2015).

In the same political visions of Mette Frederiksen and Socialdemokratiet as examined above, a somewhat explicit subscription to the theory of decoupling can be found: “We often see proposed opposition between climate and growth (...) They seem to forget that in Denmark we have not only succeeded in combining the two regards, but we have also succeeded in making them each other’s prerequisites. Today, there is a connection between on the one hand bigger growth and more jobs, and on the other a better climate and environment” (Socialdemokratiet, 2019: 6). Hereby, Mette Frederiksen expresses that economic growth can continue whilst adequately reducing GHG-emissions and combating environmental degradation and goes on to argue that tens of thousands of Danish citizens combat the climate crisis by going to work and supporting the innovation of the market and energy sector (Ibid.). This is similar to the formulation of ‘An Ecomodernist Manifesto’, that state that: “Even as human environmental impacts continue to grow in the aggregate, a range of long-term trends are today driving significant decoupling of human well-being [previously concluded to be enabled by economic growth] from environmental impacts” (Asafu-Adjaye et al., 2015: 8). Likewise, it has been the expressed premises for negotiating political agreements like the carbon tax, to not wager with economic growth or to create political structures that would shut down companies and industries, like the mineral production of Aalborg Portland, that cannot continue their enterprises without emitting CO₂e (Ekspertgruppen for en Grøn skattereform, 2022).

Chapter III. On the theory that the less resource-heavy natural footprints of societies of the past were due to lower populations and living standards (Asafu-Adjaye et al., 2015).

‘An Ecomodernist Manifesto’ concerns itself with whether societies of the pre-industrial past truly had lower environmental footprints and argues that: “(...) the processes of decoupling challenge the idea that early human societies lived more lightly on the land than do modern societies. Insofar as past societies had less impact upon the environment, it was because those societies supported vastly smaller populations” (Asafu-Adjaye et al., 2015: 16). They argue that the agricultural practices of the past had a more intense impact on the land, and that the precision and innovation of current agricultural and industrial technologies are less harmful, that modern housing and transportation has made the same development, and that the radical

spike in emissions and environmental degradation is due to the rise in human population numbers (Ibid.: 16-19). This could be seen as a clear example of the Malthusianism of contemporary schools of environmentalism as argued by Jason W. Moore. Moore underlines the dangers of what he defines as: “neo-Malthusianism” that: “(...) reproduce Malthus’s original error, which was less about population than it was about taking the dynamics of nature out of history” (Moore, 2015: 31). In terms of the dynamics of nature, this refers to: “(...) the view that resources are things unto themselves—and that the limits of capitalism are external constraints rather than internal contradictions” (Ibid.). This view of the limits of resources fails to understand humanity’s place within the Web of Life, and that the only true limit is the biosphere, which could never reach ultimate limitation in resources, as all biological matter, the humans that make up capitalism included, stems from the same quantity of matter (Ibid.: 30-34). In other words, the fallacy of neo-Malthusianism is that it ignores distributional inequities, as Earth could support all life forms if they were distributed on other parameters than those of capitalism. A philosophy that, according to Moore, has led to several atrocities in colonial history through population-control of marginalized peoples (Ibid.: 57-64).

Even though current Danish climate politics share their views on decoupling in the vital role of technological development in human well-being, it is more complicated to track statements or expressions of an analysis that mirror ‘An Ecomodernist Manifesto’ on the environmental footprints of historical human societies. However, the Malthusianism of the ecomodernist philosophy on overpopulation, has been part of Denmark’s recent history as it relates to biopolitics, a theory connected to Malthusianism by Moore through the works of Michel Foucault (Moore, 2015: 130-135). This theory traces historic instances of colonial powers in some way perceiving limited economic or environmental resources as being a question of population, leading to biopolitical efforts to lower the population size of the marginalized indigenous peoples, in favor of the consumption or economy of the oppressors (Ibid.). Admittedly, this could be seen as a digression from the main focus of this thesis, but as argued by Moore, a new ontology of “World-ecology” requires “(...) relational thinking about capitalism, nature, power, and history” (Moore, 2016: 4) As such, I will briefly go beyond the direct scope of ecological problems and the prior focus on Danish climate politics of the last 3 years. A Danish example of biopolitical Malthusianism is the “coil-campaign” of the Danish government on the peoples of Greenland from 1966-1970 (Nielsen, 2022). Herein, the rising

birth rates of the Greenlandic population, due to advancements in living-standards and medicine, was becoming: "(...) expensive for Denmark, because they needed to spend more on child-care, education and health-facilities". To which the Danish authorities responded by initiating an extensive campaign to insert copper-coils in the young Greenlandic women through the authority of the Danish-led Ministry of Health (Ibid.). The campaign led to an unknown number, but above 35% according to the Ministry, of women down to the age of 13 to have a coil inserted, which more than halved the number of newborns which is still decreasing to this day (Ibid.). This to say, that the colonial and biopolitical history that, according to Moore, has led to neo-Malthusian trends in contemporary environmentalism, is present in recent Danish history, and could perhaps be telling of what political philosophies should be monitored and deconstructed in contemporary politics of consumption, land-use, and climate justice. In addition, Moore argues that the neo- Malthusianism in environmentalism ties in with ideologies of technological and industrial developments to further and protect the consumption-levels and culture of Global North countries, at the behest of the peoples that are the least to blame for the ecological crises (Ibid.), and that perhaps would suffer the most under ecomodernist ideology.

As with 'An Ecomodernist Manifesto', the importance of furthering, focusing, and implementing cleaner technological solutions to mainly energy, industry, and heating, as opposed to working or addressing a need for reducing consumption, can be seen in the Danish climate politics. An example is the presented debate on Danish agriculture, where the main solutions to reducing emissions in the sector have been based on technological solutions that would increase productivity in the yields or sequester carbon through various processes (Ministeriet for Fødevarer, Landbrug og Fiskeri, 2021). This has been proposed as an alternative to reducing the Danish livestock production, currently responsible for 90% of the sector's emission, and to free up space for biodiversity without claiming the 60% of Danish land currently used for livestock or feed (Klimarådet, 2016). This is comparable to the manifesto in which they argue that: "(...) humanity's goal should be to use resources more productively. For example, increasing agricultural yields can reduce the conversion of forests and grasslands to farms" (Asafu-Adjaye et al., 2015: 18).

Chapter IV. On the necessary scale of cleaner renewable energy-sources and its central role for climate mitigation (Asafu-Adjaye et al., 2015).

This chapter expands and underlines many of the argumentations of the previous segment, mainly on the need for access to cheap and clean energy sources to transition away from primitive energy and allow: “(...) poor people around the world to stop using forests for fuel” (Asafu-Adjaye et al., 2015: 20). Again, tying in with Moore’s theory on neo-Malthusianism in neoliberal environmentalism (Moore, 2015: 30-34). Whereas the prior argument mainly revolved around the need for technological solutions to a growing population and its consumption, and how decoupling means seeing pre-industrial human societies as only less harmful through their lower numbers, this chapter focuses on the paramount need for clean energy. According to the manifesto: “(...) meaningful climate mitigation is fundamentally a technological challenge”, and the spreading of necessary cleaner energy-sources through outmatching the prices of fossil fuels through the market, overshadows the need for energy-reductions or structural out-phasing of fossil fuels (Ibid.: 21-22). This priority can likewise be seen in Danish climate politics, with the significant investment in rolling out renewable energy like the 210 billion DKK towards constructing “energy-islands” (Klima-, Energi og Forsyningsministeriet, 2021), as well as the aforementioned vision of Mette Frederiksen that focuses of the achievements and visions of Danish renewable energies (Socialdemokratiet, 2019: 4-7) without mentioning the other sectors like international shipping, agriculture and industry that make up the other 90% of total Danish GHG-emissions (Danmarks Statistik, 2021). This is to say that Danish climate politics highly revolves around energy politics, and less on phasing out polluting industries and rethinking consumption-levels. Nowhere in "An Ecomodernist Manifesto" does it argue for reductions in consumption-levels of energy, emission-heavy foods, or other resources, outside of tautologically stating that: “(...) consumption will continue to rise through much if not all of the 21st century” (Asafu-Adjaye et al., 2015: 21), something both 'Half-Earth Socialism' and EGRF would adamantly challenge. The reluctance to address or strategize significant limits to energy and production seems to be one of the main critiques of the ecomodernist opposition, among other by Giorgos Kallis: “My problem with ecomodernism is not its insistence on certain technologies (debatable as they may be), but its emphatic rejection of the need for limits” (Kallis, 2021).

In Danish climate politics, reduction in animal production and consumption is yet to be implemented in large-scale policy, and though statements by Minister for Climate, Energy, and Utility, Dan Jørgensen related to the energy-crisis of 2022, refer to strategies of reducing energy-use in municipalities, (Jørgensen, 2022A) the overall energy policies work towards accommodating the same number of yearly gigawatts towards at least 2050 and increasing international energy export (Regeringen, 2022).

Chapter V. On the idea that it will take a deeper connection to nature for societies to preserve beautiful landscapes and how all nature conservation is inevitably anthropocentric (Asafu-Adjaye et al., 2015).

In light of their confident visions of the possibilities and features of future technologies, and therein a decoupling, 'An Ecomodernist Manifesto' argues that future generations could: "(...) prosper materially on a planet with much less biodiversity and wild nature" (Asafu-Adjaye et al., 2015: 25). As such, they bypass Rockström et al's conclusions on the biodiversity crisis' existential threat to human society (Rockström et al, 2009) as well as E.O. Wilson's study on the need for large-scale rewilding and biodiversity to combat these developments (Wilson, 2016). They instead focus on the aesthetic and intrinsic value of beautiful landscapes (Asafu-Adjaye et al., 2015: 25-27). Additionally, they challenge the notions of rewilding by stating that there are: "(...) no single baseline prior to human modification to which nature might be returned" and goes on to argue that all: "(...) efforts to preserve landscapes for their non-utilitarian value are inevitably anthropogenic choices. For this reason, all conservation efforts are fundamentally anthropogenic" (Ibid.: 26). This seems to be an example of what Warwick Fox defines as the anthropocentric fallacy: "To imply that the views of non-anthropocentrists are anthropocentric in some informative, significant sense thus represents a logical sleight of hand that can only be accomplished by conflating the trivial and significant senses of anthropocentrism. It confuses the inescapable fact of our human identity, the trivial sense of anthropocentrism, with the human chauvinism or human imperialism, the significant sense of anthropocentrism" (Fox, 1995: 21). According to Fox, this matters in the sense that the notion of an inevitable anthropocentrism in nature conservation could lead to negating the fact that more ecocentric actions or understandings are possible. By equating the trivial and significant senses of anthropocentrism, and thereby legitimizing all levels or approaches to conservation

as equally valuable per epistemological limitations, one could justify an approach or effort without benefits to biodiversity or non-human life. As Fox argues, it is possible to avoid: “(...) unwarranted differential treatment”, and as such with the case of nature conservation, rewilding, or other practices with a scientific consensus on its benefits to a more diverse range of living beings, are in fact less anthropocentric than conserving nature based on parameters of their aesthetic or instrumental value to humans (Ibid.: 21). Despite any perceived epistemological biases from the anthropocentric perspective. Although Asafu-Adjaye et al argue for the need for conservation politics and more wild nature to strengthen a: “(...) deeper emotional connection to them”, they again stress their belief in decoupling and how that would enable communities to: “(...) conserve wildlife within agricultural landscapes, for example, rather than allowing it to revert to wild nature” (Asafu-Adjaye et al., 2015: 27).

The environmental and biodiversity politics and examined visions of Socialdemokratiet and the Frederiksen cabinet doesn't overtly disregard the consequences of the biodiversity crisis or directly engage with the philosophical ecological problems of anthropocentrism in nature conservation or rewilding projects in the same way as the manifesto. Frederiksen asserts that: “A diverse nature. A rich wildlife. That has value in and of itself” (Socialdemokratiet, 2019: 26), somewhat related to the philosophy of ecocentrism like Leopold's Land Ethics (Leopold, 1949) in terms of the intrinsic ethical value of nature. Although the Frederiksen cabinet has implemented various agreements on national parks and limits to industrial pollution and interference with forests throughout the tenure of 2019-2022 (Socialdemokratiet, 2022B), ecological stocktaking still assert that wild nature only take up 0,5% of Danish land, and that Denmark still ranks as one of the most ecologically altered countries with some of the lowest percentages of national biodiversity (Arp, 2022).

The politics of Socialdemokratiet proposes an uncultivated conservation of 75.000 hectares of the Danish land area, which is 1,7% of Denmark (Socialdemokratiet, 2019), and although statements during the election point to a possible implementation of a carbon tax on agriculture (Bundgaard, 2022), very few policies allude to reducing the current cultivation of 60% of Danish land for agriculture, 90% of which is for livestock and their feed (Danmarks Naturfredningsforening, 2022). The connections between agriculture and animal husbandry, and the humanization of nature in capitalism, will be further examined in the analysis.

Chapter VI. On how it is the responsibility of people in power and innovators to further the technological progress and spread the notion of responsibility among the global financial and political communities (Asafu-Adjaye et al., 2015).

In ‘An Ecomodernist Manifesto’, they point to the vital role of countries leading by example and showing that transitioning to cleaner energy can be economically profitable and increase human welfare, as to be desirable for other countries or institutions to mimic (Asafu-Adjaye et al., 2015: 28-30). They in turn downplay the potential of international bodies, presumably initiatives like the UN’s COP-process, as: “(...) technological choices will not be determined by remote international bodies but rather by national and local institutions and cultures” (Ibid.: 28). This ties in with the reasserted strategy of Danish climate politics to be a green leading nation for other countries to follow. Frederiksen and her ministers refer to the notion that Denmark continuously ranks among the “greenest nations” on the basis of agreed policies and clean energy-systems, and how the eyes of the global community are upon the country’s climate policies, to see how the transition can be done whilst maintaining a functioning welfare-state and profiting on the technological solutions and green business (Jørgensen, 2022B). This strategy is also explicitly stated in the Danish Climate Law of 2019: “Climate change is a global problem. As such, Denmark needs to be a leading nation in the international climate effort so we can inspire and affect the rest of the world” (Regeringen et al, 2019: 2). But as argued throughout, there is reason to criticize the Danish climate strategy, and as asserted by Klimarådet, the 70% by 2030 goals of the Climate Law don’t live up to the Paris Accord (Klimarådet, 2022), Danish consumption levels would require four times the resources of planet Earth, and Denmark is not convincingly enroute to reach its goals (Klimarådet, 2021). As such, in line with the responsibility and influence of Denmark as a green leading nation, it is tantamount that the strategies which are proposed to be copied, actually lead to the necessary CO₂e reductions. Otherwise, it could be seen as a strategy that would do more harm than good as a false and overly simplified solution for other countries to mimic.

Chapter VII. On the need to propel a positive and hopeful view of the future and the need for democratic debate in a “great Anthropocene” (Asafu-Adjaye et al., 2015).

Lastly, the need to: “(...) embrace an optimistic view toward human capacities and the future”, and to do so by strengthening the liberal principles of democracy and an inviting public debate about the environmental crises, is the key to creating a great Anthropocene, according to ‘An Ecomodernist Manifesto’ (Asafu-Adjaye et al., 2015: 31). In regards to an optimistic view of human capacities and the future, Socialdemokratiet seems to share the same sentiment, stating that: “They often say that we are the first generation to feel the effects of climate change and the last generation who can do something about it. This requires that we take responsibility. Luckily, we don’t need to start from the bottom in Denmark. We are already doing it. We’ve made the world green with envy before, let’s do it again” (Socialdemokratiet, 2019: 7). This statement asserts that it is not only within the human capacity to responsively act on the ecological crises, but that Denmark has shown how a: “(...) ambitious green transition can go hand in hand with a strong welfare society where there’s growth and jobs” (Ibid.). The role of democracy is also cited as important to Socialdemokratiet’s climate policies, especially in relation to the implementation of a citizen’s assembly, which was written into the Climate Law (Regeringen et al., 2019: 3). But although such an assembly was established in 2020, it has been heavily criticized by Klima- og Omstillingsrådet [The Climate and Transition Council] as being underbudgeted, merely symbolic without any influence on climate policies, and largely ignored by politicians following reports of the assembly’s presentations only being visited by a few members of parliament (Bjørn et al., 2022). So, although the Frederiksen cabinet has shared the concern of democratic process in climate politics, through citizen assemblies, the initiatives to implement this ideology seems lacking.

Overall, the similarities between the seven chapters of ‘An Ecomodernist Manifesto’ and the statements and policies of the Frederiksen Cabinet of 2019-2022 in regard to national and international climate politics, are deemed significant and telling of the same ideology and philosophy. Especially regarding the belief in decoupling economic growth and environmental impact and GHG-emissions through technological solutions and prioritization, as well as certain points of ecological problems of anthropocentrism and handling of the biodiversity crisis and the land-use policies of agriculture. They differ however, in the explicit analysis of the role of population growth, as asserted by ‘An Ecomodernist Manifesto’ but only found in previous historical iterations of governments led by Socialdemokratiet, through colonial

history and biopolitics. As well as with the apparent lack of a stance on anthropocentrism in conservation, akin to the anthropocentric fallacy in 'An Ecomodernist Manifesto', in the examined sources of Socialdemokratiet's statements. Ultimately however, I would conclude on the first sub-question of this thesis that Danish climate politics from 2019-2022 can in fact be seen as an expression of ecomodernism.

This conclusion will be used to categorize Danish climate politics within a school of environmental philosophy and strategy that is linked to capitalism and neoliberalism, which the utopian visions of this thesis challenge. This connection was made around the time of the release of 'An Ecomodernist Manifesto', by British writers George Monbiot (Monbiot, 2015) and Chris Smaje respectively (Smaje, 2015A). Smaje defines ecomodernism as "(...) neoliberalism with a green veneer" (Smaje, 2015B). A critique that will be used to qualify the explicit connection made between ecomodernism and neoliberalism in this thesis. Monbiot echoes this and criticizes the shallow interpretation of history as it relates to modernization and industrialization of society and how their: "(...) generalisations, their ignorance of history, their own unexplored prejudices and an astonishing lack of depth all contribute to a worldview that is, paradoxically, nothing if not old-fashioned" (Monbiot, 2015).

Half-Earth and the politics of ecocentrism

In seeing the connections between neoliberal environmental ideologies like ecomodernism and its influence on Danish climate politics, the question becomes what the alternatives are politically, and if it is possible to imagine a future that structurally and philosophically would transform the contemporary and expected anthropocentric view of nature towards a large-scale ecocentric political system and culture. Or as writer Ashley Dawson puts it in his examination of radical conservation: “If mainstream environmentalism has been co-opted by such neoliberal policies, what would a radical anti-capitalist conservation movement look like? (Dawson, 2016: 85).

Connecting political ideologies and utopias with an examination of ecological problems and ecocentric philosophy, poses many questions and contradictions in overcoming the inherent anthropocentrism of planning and systemizing natural ecosystems within, or without, human society. The question of whether we can claim to conserve and rewild ecosystems without imposing our own limited and anthropocentric perception of these systems, as observed by both Warwick Fox (1995) and Vettese & Pendergrass (2022). Or what would a future that radically transforms the Capitalocene and the global agricultural systems and general exploitation and degradation of ecosystems look like? What would it actually take to halt the Sixth Mass Extinction and combat the climate crisis to the best of our abilities? How does it approach the ontological dualism, and physical separation, of nature and culture? Some of these questions will be raised in the discussion as enquires in meta-reflection on academic philosophical controversies versus compromises towards an urgent physical transformation of our society in light of the time sensitive tipping points of the ecological crises. But the case of Half-Earth, and 'Half-Earth Socialism' utopia, will be ecocritically examined in regards to its strategies towards combating the current problems of ecology, as well as the ecological problems of a more ecocentric human society.

As previously mentioned in the presentation of 'Half-Earth Socialism', the theory, practicalities, and implications of the Half-Earth theory is only briefly presented by Vettese & Pendergrass in 'Half-Earth Socialism', but largely refers to the original text of E. O. Wilson which will be used as an appendix to examine their utopia and its ecological problems more thoroughly (Vettese

& Pendergrass, 2022: 11-13). 'Half-Earth' seems to firstly relate to ecocentrism through its expressed goal of saving not only humans, but the ecosystems, animals, and plants that live on the planet (Wilson, 2016: 6-8). Although the text mainly builds on the scientific credibility of Wilson and his source's work within biogeography, and the calculations that support the scale and method needed to combat the ecological crises it addresses, he also comments on the moral and political questions related to the theory. On the environmental ethics of the theory, Wilson argues that: "Only a major shift in moral reasoning, with greater commitment given to the rest of life, can meet this greatest challenge of the century" (Wilson, 2016: 163). In this sense, the implementation of radical rewilding is not only a question of scientific realization, but of an ecological crisis in human morality and the evolution of ethics. Wilson also expresses a philosophical understanding of death and the interconnectedness of all parts of ecosystems across time and space: "(...) the millions of species we have allowed to survive there, but continue to threaten, are our phylogenetic kin. Their long-term history is our long-term history" (Ibid.: 163). This seems similar to what Leopold refers to as: "(...) thinking like a mountain" within Land Ethics (Leopold, 1949: 129-133). Herein lies a relationship with death as relative to the experiences of different species or natural objects. That a mountain would see millions of lives coming and going at a different rate because of its lifespan, and that the boundaries between life and death of individual beings are opaque in the sense that biological life is part of the same ongoing history over millions of years (Ibid.). This ties in with the dark ecology of Morton, who asserts that: "All life forms are the mesh, and so are all dead ones, as are their habitats, which are also made up of living and nonliving beings" (Morton, 2010: 29). They then, perhaps coincidentally, also refer to the life of a mountain in experiencing death and history: "Iron is mostly a by-product of bacterial metabolism. So is oxygen. Mountains can be made of shells and fossilized bacteria. Death and the mesh go together in another sense, too, because natural selection implies extinction" (Ibid.). Wilson brings this ecological history towards humanity's development in that: "(...) wildlands are our birthplace. Our civilizations were built from them. Our food and most of our dwellings and vehicles were derived from them. Our gods lived in their midst. Nature in the wildlands is the birthright of everyone on Earth" (Wilson, 2016: 163). Although Morton might challenge the implications of the sentiment as being impossible within the mesh; to make distinctions between "nature", "wildlands", and "everyone on Earth", would be redundant in a flat ontology where everything is connected and part of the same biological material (Morton, 2010: 13-52). In other words,

everyone on Earth is Nature and the wild in wildlands would be a human construction of an imagined opposition to the civilized. The rhetoric and formulations throughout both Wilson's Half-Earth and 'Half-Earth Socialism' might often reveal an underlying understanding of the nature/culture-dichotomy, be it conscious or unconsciously, and the very title and accompanying slogan of the original campaign: "nature needs half" would be guilty of this (Vettese & Pendergrass, 2022: 19). In fact, in their critique of ecomodernism, Smaje points to this dichotomy within conservation projects as being dangerous and ultimately inefficient: "(...) the ecomodernists seem to be saying, despite our human need for nature, we can't be trusted to get along with it. We need a divorce, a division of the spoils: to us the city, and the minimum amount of farmland necessary to support it, to the rest of creation the wilderness where humans can go to look but not to live" (Smaje, 2015A). This critique seems at first relatable to the conservation and rewilding strategy of Half-Earth and is perhaps more-so with Wilson's vision of that future, as will be examined in his statements on market-enabled efficiency and lack of regulation in consumption-levels. Smaje claims that: "(...) absent people from the production of their subsistence and install an economy of modernization which offers no philosophical challenge to the proliferation of material demands and you unleash the bedlam we see already" (Ibid.). In a future scenario where you even further separate the human experience from the interactions with other living beings, you'd even further halt the spreading of a more ecocentric ontology, and you'd be at a greater risk of repeating the same developments in humanization of nature, according to Smaje (Ibid.). Vettese & Pendergrass seems to have a similar caveat to their version of Half-Earth in the critique of Wilson's neoliberalist visions of the energy-use and political ideology of the human half of the globe, and their argument for the need for radical rewilding to be a collective action of unbuilding the dichotomy between human capital interests and other living entities to which they are connected (Vettese & Pendergrass, 2022: 11-12). This will be further examined in the chapter on Vettese & Pendergrass' argument that Half-Earth must be socialist. Nonetheless, Wilson's Half-Earth share the notion of kinship and interconnectedness with the rest of the biological world, stating that: "(...) despite all of our pretenses and fantasies, we always have been and will remain a biological species tied to this particular biological world", and oftentimes assert the intrinsic value of non-human entities as being close to those of human beings (Wilson, 2016: 163). In addition, the scale and finality of conserved areas within Half-Earth, seem to align with the philosophy of Land Ethics that argue for seeing ecosystems as whole entities, rather than

the sum of its parts, as well as the departure from capitalizing on living beings (Leopold, 1938: 145-146).

Another ecological problem that the radical rewilding of Half-Earth could entail, is the notion and debate on ecological stewardship over nature and the anthropocentric understanding of such dominion. Within the definition of the Anthropocene era, lies the understanding that human activities have an influence on all natural ecosystems, and is one of the main drivers of changes to life in the biosphere. This would imply responsibility and power bestowed upon the human species through its impacts, or in reference to the Book of Genesis and the story of creation with Christianity often used when exploring stewardship; through its divine superiority and because God willed that they: “(...) will live all over the earth and bring it under their control. I am putting you in charge of the fish, the birds, and all the wild animals” (Good News Translation, 1966: 1:27). Within ecomodernism and other schools of contemporary environmentalism, stewardship and the recognition of human responsibility is proposed as the strength of creating a “great Anthropocene”, or as the fundamental duty of the species. (Asafu-Adjaye et al., 2015: 6-7). Wilson in turn argues for the importance of such responsibility, regardless of the human capacity to understand such complexity: “Like it or not, and prepared or not, we are the mind and stewards of the living world. Our own ultimate future depends upon that understanding” (Wilson, 2016: 165). But according to the ecocentrism of Morton, the notion of human exceptionalism and the hierarchical power of humanity is delusional (Morton, 2010). Although they echo the position of domination in: “(...) that the survival of the planet we’re now dominating beyond all doubt” depends on our actions, the idea that humanity could replicate or seize control of biological and geological processes towards a “naturalness”, is inherently anthropocentric and dangerous (Ibid.: 4-7). This goes along with Vettese & Pendergrass’s definition of the Prometheanism they see as dominating neoliberal environmentalism. Especially in its belief that human society through implementation of geoengineering like CCS and solar radiation technologies like sun-mirrors and aerosols in the atmosphere could consider itself masters of the ecological crises and the biosphere: “(...) despite its manifest threat to the essential and extremely complex Earth system” (Vettese & Pendergrass, 2022: 54). This underestimation of Earth systems has previously been presented through their example of the Biosphere 2 project and they argue that: “(...) climate change, emerging zoonotic diseases, and other environmental crises make a mockery of our pretense

of control. To bring the humanization of nature to an end, the collective consciousness must become aware of its own limits” (Ibid.). They adamantly argue against this Prometheism as a dangerous promise, but argues that rewilding, though perhaps also a reflection of the same fundamental notion of human knowledge, is a struggle towards: “(...) disentangling human consciousness from self-willed nature” (Ibid.: 54). They present this in opposition to the humanization of nature as: “(...) the process by which humanity overcomes its alienation from nature by instilling the latter with human consciousness through the process of labor – transforming wilderness into a garden” (Ibid.: 28). This relates to the ecocentrism of Mikkel Krause Frantzen, who builds on the theories of Morton and other OOO thinkers and defines capitalism as: “(...) not just an economic system and not just a social system; capitalism is a way of organizing nature – a world-ecology” (Frantzen, 2020: 30). He then points to the double internality of the dialectic relationship between: “(...) internalization of planetary life and the planet’s, the biosphere’s, internalization of capitalism” (Ibid.). In addition, he refers to Moore’s Web of Life and Morton’s the mesh and assert that the ontological relations between objects are exploited by capitalism, and should be cut to protect the planet (Ibid.: 30-31). Again, what Vettese & Pendergrass calls the disentanglement of “human consciousness from self-willed nature” (Vettese & Pendergrass, 2022: 54).

In further argument for rewilding, and a move towards veganism as more ecocentric alternatives to the present, Vettese & Pendergrass argues that: “(...) capitalism emerged from animal husbandry as well as its relationship to the Industrial Revolution. Replacing peasants with flocks of sheep and a few shepherds was a sort of proto-mechanization that increased relative profit by increasing labor productivity” (Vettese & Pendergrass, 2022: 75). Alongside the zoonotic diseases caused by the livestock industry, they argue that the humanization of nature under capitalism is a moral wrong taken to extreme, and that although reverting nature towards a pre-industrial understanding of the ecosystems is theoretically impossible from an anthropocentric standpoint: “(...) the task of unbuilding makes clear that environmentalism isn’t so much the idealization of ‘pristine’ nature (...) but the recognition that it is still possible to repair our broken world” (Ibid.: 54). This reverts back to Wilson who on rewilding and ecosystems likewise assert that: “(...) the intricacy of its species we know only in part, and the way they work together to create a sustainable balance we have only recently begun to grasp” (Wilson, 2016: 165). He also points to the historical and contemporary indulgence and failure of the human society who: “(...) thrash about, appallingly led, with no particular goal in mind

other than economic growth, unfettered consumption, good health, and personal happiness” (Ibid.: 7-8), but ultimately concludes that: “(...) we have come a very long way through the barbaric period in which we still live, and now I believe we’ve learned enough to adopt a transcendent moral precept concerning the rest of life. It is simple and easy to say: Do not further harm to the biosphere” (Ibid.: 165). This seems to echo Warwick Fox’ theory on the anthropocentric fallacy, and generally answer the question of how we can claim to conserve and rewild ecosystems without imposing our own limited anthropocentric understanding. As Fox would argue, more ecocentric actions that break from a: “significant sense of anthropocentrism” and avoid: “unwarranted differential treatment of other living species” are possible (Fox, 1995: 21). Although, as underlined by Vettese & Pendergrass, the immense complexity of ecosystems should not be underestimated or claimed to be flawlessly controlled, a radical and scientifically based effort to rewild large areas of the planet and conserve endangered ecosystems, is ultimately less anthropocentric than the exploitative internalization and humanization of other living beings under capitalism.

I’d conclude that although the joint theory of Half-Earth does not present a complete ecocentric shift from anthropocentrism and Prometheanism in the ontological hierarchy of humanity and its epistemology, it does scientifically argue for the overall empirical benefits to the biosphere through rewilding and conserving half the planet. As well as explicitly challenge the humanization of nature under capitalism by moving towards unbuilding that exploitative relationship, in spite of known limitations to the human understanding of the complexity of natural ecosystems. As such, I’d argue that Half-Earth presents a vision in which many of the ecological problems of anthropocentrism in neoliberalism and ecomodernism are addressed, and thereby pose a potential case for a political utopia to help transform such ontologies through policy and ideology.

Must Half-Earth be socialist?

As previously examined, Vettese & Pendergrass argues that an implementation of Half-Earth: “must be socialist if it is ever to exist” (Vettese & Pendergrass, 2022: 11-12). According to them, contemporary neoliberal environmental policies, as well as specifically Wilson’s Half-Earth, does not suffice: “(...) to reverse the biosphere’s deterioration. This is because energy, biodiversity, and carbon sequestration are not the three separate spheres they appear to be in environmental discourse but rather a single problem mediated through the scarcity of land” (Ibid.: 19). In regard to the specific case of Half-Earth, Vettese & Pendergrass assert that even if successful in rewilding and conserving half of the globe’s ecosystems, human life and activity on the remaining half would still need to break with the neoliberal belief and focus on technological developments and the powers of the free market to adapt to living within planetary boundaries. Wilson specifically expresses this belief in Half-Earth when addressing consumption and the emissions of the global community: “The footprint will evolve, not to claim more and more space, as you might at first suppose, but less. The reason lies in the evolution of the free market system, and the way it is increasingly shaped by high technology” (Wilson, 2016: 151). Instead of the energy and resource quotas of the post-capitalist utopia proposed by Vettese & Pendergrass, Wilson believes in the market to reach the same effects: “The products that win competition today, and will continue to do so indefinitely, are those that cost less to manufacture and advertise, need less frequent repair and replacement, and give highest performance with a minimum amount of energy” (Ibid.). Vettese & Pendergrass altogether refute this notion and believe that a: “(...) surrender to the all-knowing, all-powerful free market” ignores the lessons of history in exploitation of marginalized countries and groups and the accumulation of wealth and power as a democratic catastrophe which is vulnerable to climate denialist individuals (Vettese & Pendergrass, 2022: 56-87). This claim relates to Moore, who through his historical analysis deem the belief in market-based solutions to problems of ecology as inept and dangerous, as “cheap nature” or the way of capitalism to organize nature, however efficiently, will never not be exploitative or at the cost of marginalized groups and beings. (Moore, 2015: 116-227). Furthermore, Vettese & Pendergrass claim that the dominant proposed kinds of energy-efficient and clean technological solutions to problems of ecology are either too inefficient or land-heavy to accommodate current or rising consumption-levels (Vettese & Pendergrass, 2022: 56-87). That carbon sequestration technologies are too untested,

or altogether hypothetical, to meaningfully compensate for current and future emissions, and that there is no alternative to merely using these solutions as supplement to radically lowering the average consumption (Ibid.). They support this by referring to the calculations of the “2.000-Watt Society” that through energy-quotas either uniform or relative to countries historical levels, would limit the energy-consumption to around 2.000-watts per person, which would be in line with the international CO₂-budgets of the Paris-agreement and well-above the UN’s definition on welfare as it relates to access to energy (Ibid.: 82-87). As an average American use 12.000-watts, and Europeans 6.000-watts, their political systems and consumption would structurally be required to reduce significantly, whereas an average Indian citizen at around 1.000-watts, would benefit from the prospects of higher levels (Ibid.: 82).

In relation to capitalism’s exploitation of marginalized groups and beings, Vettese & Pendergrass criticizes the Malthusianism of conservation efforts by colonial powers that historically has deported and affected the population groups least responsible for the ecological crises, a school of thought that they see Wilson’s Half-Earth as a part of (Vettese & Pendergrass, 2022: 70). Fundamentally they argue that the question of who needs to move to make room for Half-Earth needs to be answered on the basis of an understanding of Malthusian “foxholes” of past conservation campaigns and the historical reparations and principles of climate justice (Ibid.: 70-84). Vettese & Pendergrass explores this trend through examples of conservation efforts like The Wildlands Network that prior to Half-Earth campaigned for rewilding 50% of the American continent but was connected ideologically and organizationally to anti-immigration campaigns like “How Overpopulation is Killing the World”, in which they cite numbers from an alleged white-supremacist think-tank (Ibid.: 71-72). As well as the WILD Foundation that in their ongoing campaign to conserve areas in South Africa, has supported and worked with Robert Mugabe and other militarized regimes to gain funding and permissions for their projects, and to forcefully deport indigenous communities to make room for their conservation (Ibid.). As Ashley Dawson writes: “Even well-meaning efforts to address extinction such as rewilding need to be challenged if they are not founded on considerations of globally redistributive climate justice. All too often rewilding schemes focus exclusively on wealthy areas of the planet” (Dawson, 2016: 87). To this, Vettese & Pendergrass assert that: “(...) socialists are right when they criticize conservation for burdening poor and Indigenous people”, but maintain their belief in the biogeographical work by Wilson and others, and that

there is: “(...) no way to stop the Sixth Mass Extinction other than expanding nature preserves under Indigenous leadership wherever possible” (Vettese & Pendergrass, 2022: 74). They thereby assert that socialism needs Half-Earth and refer back to their statement that this is why “Half-Earth must be socialist” and become part of a “broad liberatory coalition” and break from the influence of capitalist status quo on conservationists: As well as the need for what they call: “planetary in natura economics” (Ibid.).

'Half-Earth Socialism' would propose an alternative to capitalism through centralized market-less planning and other political strategies of socialism and communism, as a global ideological shift following a necessary, and entirely hypothetical, revolution. It should be mentioned that Wilson's Half-Earth and ecomodernism was previously criticized for being blind to the dangers and history of relying on the market and capitalism to solve social and environmental issues. But that 'Half-Earth Socialism' in turn draws on strategies and theories from Marxism and communism both theoretically and from historical societies like The Soviet Union, Chile, and China and should equally be held up to scrutiny for relying on the historical crimes and menace of these examples. Although Vettese & Pendergrass only briefly addresses the dangers and horrendous lessons from past totalitarian communist societies, they insist on their position as utopian thinkers to dream of a future where these lessons were learned, both in terms of what went wrong and what they argue demand the courage to expand on promising strategies of planning in face of the existential threat of the ecological crises, currently being failed by capitalism. (Vettese & Pendergrass, 2022: 88-91) This is examined in the chapter “Planning Half-Earth” where they present various socialist mathematical, economic, and political planning strategies they deem promising to replace the free market in managing the social and ecological resources and interests with equity, and with the need and theory of In Natura Democracy by Neurath that should be one of many principles to preemptively avoid totalitarian states (Ibid.: 88-134). As examined throughout, they, and others, assert the need for imagining a different future than the one proposed by neoliberal environmentalism, and by extension as underlined by Chris Smaje (Smaje, 2015A) and George Monbiot (Monbiot, 2015): ecomodernism. Vettese & Pendergrass seem to address many of the large-scale ecological problems, as well as their relation to capitalism and political philosophy, but as self-disclaimed, they see the work as a utopian experiment focused on provoking the thoughts and debate of people on the: “Left and in the environmental movement”, rather than presenting an all-

encompassing vision of all parts of such future society (Vettese & Pendergrass, 2022: 9). As such, I will finally examine the case in light of the theory of utopianism by Sargent and radical hope by Lear and Adorno.

The fundamental characteristics of Sargent's definition of the utopian tradition, seems foremost present in the chapters of 'Half-Earth Socialism' that point to the wrongs of the present and dangers of their trajectories, (Sargent, 2010: 30) As exemplified with Vettese & Pendergrass' critique of the exploitative consequences of capitalism on people and other beings within the biosphere, and fictionally and methodically communicates the perceived dangers of geoengineering and other aspects of neoliberal environmentalism going towards 2050 and beyond. As such they present an existential premise wherein status quo is not an option, mirroring Sargent in that their utopia is: "(...) not the dream of a paradise but the defense of the necessary against the realistic" (Sargent, 2021: 464). In addition, they underline the plausibility of their political vision by continually referring to the positive lessons of history and adding specificity to the models, organization, and planning of the future scenario, even though they may seem "outlandish", as they disclaim (Vettese & Pendergrass, 2022: 50). They defend the medium by arguing that: "(...) whatever the shortcomings of the utopian tradition, its strengths lies in the capacity to link food, land, ecology, and politics within a single analytical framework – an approach sorely lacking now" (Ibid.: 60). They hereby imply, that the means with which we discuss the necessary actions for the future are limited by a lack of imagination to see proposed solutions and futures to the systems and philosophies they represent, that also needs changing. This is perhaps an expression of what Lear defines as radical hope, as it: "(...) anticipates a good for which those who have the hope as yet lack the appropriate concepts with which to understand it" (Lear, 2006: 103). The idea of radical hope also lies within Vettese & Pendergrass's assertion that utopia has the ability to deconstruct the expected trajectory of the world, and as such begets their: "(...) humble endeavor of unbuilding the world." (Vettese & Pendergrass, 2022: 174). They ultimately tie their stance on utopia to the notion that the foremost limitations put upon humanity's imagination and the main barrier for transformation, is the internalizing of capitalism and its premises: "Yet it is a task as beautiful as the world we live in and feasible once our resourceful species is liberated from capital" (Ibid.: 174). Although Sargent or Adorno doesn't make the same claim on the internalization and ontological control of capitalism, at least within the referenced texts, Sargent does refer to the

political tradition of utopianism in the fight against “inequality and environmental degradation” (Sargent, 2021: 464). The unfathomable end to capitalism could perhaps be tied to Adorno’s “radical evil” that defies logical imagination of being overcome or changing. As Frantzen claims: “They often say that it is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism” (Frantzen, 2020: 8). Throughout, Vettese & Pendergrass explicitly reflect on the meta-potential of utopias in political struggles, stating that: “(...) for us, agreeing on the details of what that utopia might look like matters less than agreeing that speculation is a vital political act” (Vettese & Pendergrass, 2022: 18). This invitation towards dialogue and speculation within the political spheres, can then be seen as: “(...) a toolbox from which communities can forge solutions on a participatory scale”, as proposed by Sargent (Sargent, 2021: 466). They support this within a socialist context, by claiming that the critiques of Karl Marx’s socialist utopias and other visions of the past that were deemed strategically inefficient and alienating, have been proved wrong by history, as the lack of transformative changes to society in light of the ecological crises warrant all methods and preemptive speculation, as it would otherwise: “(...) limit the Left’s ability to implement a socialist programme upon taking power” (Ibid.). Furthermore, they wish for a utopian vision like theirs to gather the different fractions of the, traditionally, Leftist movements by appealing to: “(...) environmentalists, feminists, animal liberationists, and socialists to seriously contemplate the outlines of a new society. Thus, just when the end of the world seems upon us, we must instead realize that new utopias are near at hand” (Vettese & Pendergrass, 2022B). However, 'Half-Earth Socialism' presents no ideas or tactics for their utopian vision and political project to gain support or how the powers that be are transformed. They build their utopia on the hypothetical context of a post-anticapitalist revolution and what their ideas would be from that point on. As such, they reflect very little on how this political struggle is won, who would join their fight, and how this vision would be received. To expand on this issue and relate it to Pötz’ theory on the potential for combining utopian visions, either fictional or strictly political, with social movements and political activism, the vision and activism of Den Grønne Ungdomsbevægelse and their, perhaps, somewhat similar political visions will be examined.

Through analysis of their expressions and handling of ecological problems, I’ve concluded an imperfect but significant presence of ecocentric philosophy within 'Half-Earth Socialism'. Additionally, I would argue that examined theories on anthropocentric ontology and political

philosophy argue the need for radically transforming, or moving beyond, capitalism to avoid alleged insufficiency and dangers in neoliberal environmentalism. A conclusion that 'Half-Earth Socialism' seems to share and address throughout the vision. By not only linking the necessary changes to society to the fabric and need for dismantling capitalism historically, politically, and scientifically, but also to the overall ability of humankind to imagine and be ontologically liberated from such constraints, they argue for the need for bringing a discussion of radical rewilding and transformation of view of nature into the political and socialist spheres.

The fight for a green just future

'En Grøn Retfærdig Fremtid' [EGRF] (2022) by Den Grønne Ungdomsbevægelse is far shorter and less expansive than 'Half-Earth Socialism' and it differs in many ways, especially regarding the scale and degree of proposed transformation. But as EGRF deals directly with visions for changes in a Danish climate political context, it will be used to bring the examined potential of political utopias into a more specific contemporary local context and to compare it to the ecomodernist environmentalism of the Danish government. The citations from which will be translated from Danish from here on. Furthermore, Den Grønne Ungdomsbevægelse and their campaign around EGRF will be used to discuss the role of activism and social movements in spreading and utilizing political utopias as a change-making tactic.

In terms of expressions of ecocentric philosophy and ecological problems, their ontology is most directly found in their vision to: "(...) create a just world where humankind isn't raised above all other living organisms" (EGRF, 2022: 17). Hereby sharing the basic premise of Morton's the mesh and a view of entities as being non-hierarchically situated within a more flat ontology. Like 'Half-Earth Socialism', DGUB's view of nature is expressed through proposed policies and ideologies towards issues of land-use and biodiversity. Here, EGRF proposes that 1/3 of the Danish area should be reverted and conserved as nature-reserves, as its: "(...) only in creating more space for nature that the future landscapes can become much more diverse than today" (Ibid.: 18). This is in quantitative opposition to the presented policies of Socialdemokratiet, who proposed a 1,5% uncultivated protection of the land-area, without addressing a regulation or reduction of the land-use of Danish agriculture (Socialdemokratiet,

2019). DGUB expands by asserting that a: “(...) new, living, and interconnected nature in Denmark”, is contrasted with the current conditions of monocultural cultivation of over half of the Danish land-area, and to the dispersed and ultimately cultivated patches of regulated forest (Ibid.: 17). Hereby, agricultural ecosystems are deemed as poor and problematic from a biodiversity standpoint, tying in with Leopold and Moore’s critique of humanizing and capitalizing nature as labor and resources. In terms of the anthropocentric discussion of humanity’s perceived dominion and knowability of nature, EGRF argues for the need to completely protect ecosystems through laws that overall forbid human activity within these areas as: “(...) nature will reestablish the landscape’s natural processes and halt the loss of biodiversity if we let it work in peace” (Ibid.: 18), and argue that the cited 10-14% of current Danish nature reserves are ecologically problematic as they are mostly regulated cultivation of monocultural trees and that only the 0,5% of Danish nature that is left alone by law can be deemed as conservation. Somewhat similar to conclusions of Half-Earth, in that the apparent least anthropocentric political strategy is to leave these areas out of human interaction as much as possible, and thereby to unbuild human cultivation. Aside from the benefits to biodiversity and environmental purification from conserving and rewilding 1/3 of Denmark, EGRF argues for the need for the carbon sequestration potential of forests and ecosystems as opposed to uncertain technological alternatives in that they: “(...) need no technology and is cheap and safe” (Ibid.: 17). Despite these similarities, the rewilding politics of EGRF are less far-reaching than 'Half-Earth Socialism' and wouldn't live up to Wilson's biological argument for 50% areal conservation and rewilding, although a significant deviation from the politics of Socialdemokratiet (Vettese & Pendergrass, 2022: 11).

On the role of technology, they argue against the current government’s hockey-stick strategy and overreliance on technological solutions by arguing that a plan for reaching Denmark’s climate goals in time would implement the known reduction-techniques and solutions recommended by Klimarådet and others, and at that point: “(...) new technology can be an extra asset when it has one day been invented” (EGRF, 2022: 23). As such, the Promethean belief in the extraordinary potential of future developments is deemphasized, and they echo 'Half-Earth Socialism' in their assertion of the unknowability of ecosystems, and the dangers of attempting to take control via geoengineering schemes: “We therefore need to use technologies that make it possible for natural processes to be strengthened and remain – not those who

venture into trying to replace, simulate or manipulate them. This means that geoengineering, which manipulates our sensitive ecosystems, is not responsible to use” (Ibid.: 24). Additionally, the ecomodernist vision of technological societies akin to that of the present richest nations as a universal human right, and the global trajectory for creating a great Anthropocene is challenged: “Many indigenous peoples around the world have built societies that live in accordance with nature and the climate without abundant use of technology. And we need to be open to other courses than massive technological development to lead us toward a transitioned society” (Ibid.: 23). Within their theory on the Capitalocene, Frantzen and Moore likewise highlight the need to address the ecological crises as not a problem caused by the Anthropos or the human species, which is a “false universalism”, but by the ways of life, history, and society of imperialist capitalist nations and the technological products and energies they rely on (Frantzen, 2020: 10). In Moore’s walkthrough of the development of capitalism and its relation to nature, he likewise asserts the role of colonization in eradicating native cultures that historically were built on more ecocentric philosophies and accompanying relation to ecosystems (Moore, 2010: 123-135). This deviates from the explored ecomodernist politics of Socialdemokratiet, who attest to the universal benefits of the industrial and technological developments of Danish society, and its great potential to decouple economic growth and the footprint of modern society from environmental impacts. Herein, their hockey-stick strategy has been observed to strategically plan on the developments of technologies in the future, rather than present-day reductions.

In line with the critiques of consumption-levels in rich countries like Denmark, EGRF argues that: “(...) the way we consume is draining the planet of its resources and it is not inherently making us a more content society. We need to work against over-consumption” (EGRF, 2022: 40). Although this goes along with the sentiments of Moore and his theories on unequal historical responsibility in global consumption and the role of consumerism within the ecological crises, it is not politized to the same extent as within 'Half-Earth Socialism', where energy-quotas and market-less planning would transform these trends. EGRF proposes that Denmark should be run on “(...) far less energy than today” but argues for the need for energy-efficiency and clean technologies, rather than specific energy-quotas like Vettese & Pendergrass (Ibid.: 20-21). In this way, EGRF doesn’t specify how they deviate drastically from

Socialdemokratiet in their energy policies, although they assert that: “(...) the best energy is the one that we don’t use” (Ibid.: 20). But when asked to expand this on the show *Debatten* on Danish Public Radio, Elise Sydendal from DGUB argues that: “(...) we have lived beyond our means. It’s about bringing down the energy consumption of every individual. The average Danish citizen uses 17 tons of CO₂ per year, and we need to reduce it to 2-3 tons to stay in line with the Paris agreement” (Sydendal, 2022). As such, they share the goals of Vettese & Pendergrass, and see the need for consuming less as essential, but have not specified in what way they see this transformation happening.

In terms of the need for abolishing markets and a socialist revolution, EGRF rather proposes regulating the fossil industry, divesting private and governmental funds from emissions-heavy sectors, supporting more sustainable companies, and transforming the economy’s structure away from BNP as a parameter. (Ibid.: 28-31) They hereby desire a post-growth economy within the general structures of current society where a: “(...) societal economy is independent of economic growth, but measured and regulated on ecological indicators and limitations, and indicators of human well-being” (Ibid.: 28). As such they challenge the ecomodernist notions of free-market regulation, consumption-levels and technological dependence, and address some of the same problems in ecology. But with no explicit reference to going beyond capitalism and a market-based economy. According to Moore’s definition of capitalism and its organizing of nature and exploitation however, such systems would not be surpassed without putting an end to the market at large. (Moore, 2016) Whereas EGRF would believe in a regulation of economic indicators and investments to enable: “(...) humans and a stable climate to coexist” (Ibid.: 28). In terms of challenging the ecomodernist vision, their arguments for a post-growth paradigm and the incompatibility of economic growth with ecological systems oppose the central notions of decoupling within ecomodernism and the principles of current Danish climate policies like the Climate Law and carbon tax to secure economic growth and a stable financial sector above reducing GHG-emissions. As such, some of the dominating factors of capitalism and its relation to nature and the ecological crises are addressed, however less explicitly, in EGRF. Whether the less controversial or radical proposals of EGRF, is due to strategic considerations of making a more realistic or less-alienating vision for people to rally behind, is unknown. But as presented, Pötz argues that balancing transformative and radical visions with obtainable and credible strategic goals is part of translating utopianism into a

political movement (Pötz, 2021: 142). This balance and questions of strategy will be further examined in the discussion.

Den Grønne Ungdomsbevægelse overall envision a future not governed by economic growth, with consumption-levels and energy-use within planetary boundaries, heavy regulation of fossil fuel industries, criminalization of excessive destruction of nature, and the conservation and rewilding of 1/3 of the country by reducing agricultural animal production (Ibid.). By the intersectional scope of which they aim to underscore that: “(...) the solutions to the ecological crises need to become the foundation for all future political visions and decisions. In that way our green transition will lead to a society that is so much more than just a place with fewer CO₂-molecules in the air” (Ibid.: 42). As they share central characteristics of more ecocentric politics, and with the addition of other alternatives to ecomodernist environmentalism, EGRF could still be considered a potential vision in breaking from many of those traits and ecological problems.

As examined, the text was published to answer the question of what the movement wanted, rather than what they opposed, but also as a strategic tool to be used in its campaign around the Danish general election of 2022 (DGUB, 2022E). Notably, in the activities of October 10th to 14th wherein EGRF was implemented in a reoccurring happening with meeting politicians from many of the leading Danish parties on a raft in a lake in central Copenhagen, culminating in a demonstration with a couple hundred activists. According to Pötz, utilizing utopias in strategic activism: “(...) is an important step in translating the idea of utopia from literature and other art-forms into a strategy of achieving fundamental change that can be applied by activists on the ground” (Pötz, 2021: 142). In terms of being applied on the ground, DGUB used the title of EGRF in the reoccurring slogan: “Vælg en grøn retfærdig fremtid” [“Choose a green just future” in the same graphic style as the book], which was spread around the walls and balconies of Copenhagen on bootleg election posters and painted onto large banners that was used throughout the election (DGUB, 2022B). The vision was also translated into a series of 14 video-explainers (DGUB, 2022G) and released as a physical book in Danish online bookshops (DGUB, 2022H).

The concept of the happenings of the meetings was, that the most relevant politicians from all parties were invited to join activists from DGUB in a: “Meeting room of the future” as a banner

said on the floating raft, symbolizing the rising sea-levels that current pathways predict, and framing the discussion of the future according to the activists (Funding, 2022). Four leaders of the left-wing parties, two others from Socialdemokratiet and SF, and two from right-wing parties accepted the invitation and joined DGUB on the raft to discuss the alternate future that the young activists envisioned, on the basis of EGRF which was sent to all politicians beforehand (DGUB, 2022F). Whether the successful turnout of politicians was due to the approachable nature of optimistic utopian discussion, as proposed by Pötz, or because of other factors is hard to conclude. As Pötz suggest, it could play a role in providing: “(...) the goal or the "for" part as juxtaposed to the "anti" part of activism”, that might be more inviting in reaching out to politicians often criticized for doing too little (Pötz, 2021: 132). Nonetheless, the seven conversations, that were all released on the movement’s social media, revolved around bigger transformative topics, and made the connections between their different visions for the future and the ambition-levels they require of the political systems, and the specific political demands they asked of the politicians to support leading up to the general election. Moreover, the symbolic value of the evoked imagery of dystopic future environmental conditions with young activists demanding a different more hopeful and prefigurative course for politics, as to avoid such scenarios, could have the potential to bring the explored transformative effects of speculative fiction from literature into the lived world. This imagery was expanded upon in the demonstration that was the conclusion to the week’s happenings, where around a hundred activists from DGUB walked into the lake in waders with big banners on beams that read: “Choose a green just future” and a large floating banner controlled by activists in kayaks, saying: “The oceans are rising, vote for climate action” (DGUB, 2022F). Here, the symbolism of activists in the water was used in a different way, in that it evoked the imagery of demonstrations in the future, moving the usual visual of young climate activists with banners, signs, and megaphones from the streets and square outside of the Danish parliament to waste-high waters with some of the signs that read: “Choose a green just future” partly obscured by water.

In terms of the benefits to mobilization and wellbeing within the groups and movement, as observed and argued by Pötz, the cause for the various developments is hard to determine. But as reported by DGUB, the movement experienced the greatest numbers of newcomers at their on-boarding meetings since their establishment in 2018 during the campaign, and the EGRF-

themed demonstration in the lakes gathered a hundred DGUB activists and some 300 spectators, which was the movement's largest self-organized event in the election campaign (DGUB, 2022B). As the move towards using the transformative politics of utopian visions is still relatively new to the movement's rhetoric and strategy, it might benefit the movement's political goals and mobilization more still. Additionally, Pötz suggests that working with utopian visions, and the process of imagination it entails, might motivate and stimulate the hope for an alternate future that activism is built on, akin to the theory of radical hope by Adorno, and its necessity in creating prefigurative political movements. As well as the possible self-educational processes for the activists working with these types of political philosophies that, according to Pötz, often require engaging with more critical and holistic theories than usually occupy the everyday political discourse (Ibid.: 134-140). This seems to be reflected in the closing remarks of EGRF in which they express the hope that the work will: "(...) invite conversations on a new way to think and shape the green transition. Conversations where everyone can participate and where the climate, environmental, and biodiversity crisis is thought into all sectors, rather than being limited to corners by themselves" (EGRF, 2022: 42). In this way, they aim to expand the climate debate towards more transformative and broader visions, as well as echoing Vettese & Pendergrass's sentiment that the work is not meant to have all the answers or be an all-encompassing legislative proposal, but a suggestion for a different discourse and support for an alternate political vision: "These are the first chapters and hopefully the first steps on the road towards a green just future" (Ibid.).

Discussion

Following the examination of the political and ecological philosophy of ecomodernism and its presence within contemporary Danish climate politics, the analysis of the political utopia 'Half-Earth Socialism' in relation to its ecocentric philosophy and radical rewilding, and its political alternatives to Prometheanism and capitalism, and lastly the analysis of the vision of 'En Grøn Retfærdig Fremtid' and its more specific relation to Danish climate politics and political activism, I will now discuss some of the questions and connections I find to need further reflection. Mainly, the dichotomy between the philosophical theories and their descriptions of the perceived necessary extent of ontological transformations, and the strategic considerations of their place and implementation in political struggles towards achieving these political utopias within the temporary boundaries of the ecological crises. In other words, because we are in an emergency, should the extent of ecocentric philosophy and anticapitalist theories be compromised to raise the chances of reaching a better, but not perfect, political transformation in our time? As an example: Should the argued immediate scientific benefits to combatting the ecological crises through radical rewilding and conservation like Half-Earth trump the problems of ecology seen in critiques of stewardship and anthropocentric notions of knowability and control of nature? Following this, I will relate the examined potential of political utopias to similar trends of speculative fiction and art that, through ecocriticism and other academia, has also been analyzed for their potential to communicate new philosophies and values to its recipients. As well as compare these mediums and contexts from a change-making standpoint. Moreover, I wish to further discuss the role of social movements and other strategies to spread utopian visions, and how various mediums, be it science fiction, art, or manifestos, can figure into these political and philosophical struggles.

Through the ecocritical analysis of ecological problems in the case-materials, I more than once encountered contradictions or conflicting philosophies in trying to distill a politics of ecocentrism from the works. Mainly, the ethical controversies in constituting a more ecocentric alternative to the political structures of humankind's relationship and place within, or outside, ecosystems in political questions of land-use, conservation, and rewilding. It seems difficult to ultimately conclude how a rewilding scheme is less Promethean than other more overt or technologically founded geoengineering efforts, as they, through the unrelenting ecocentric

lens of Morton or other OOO thinkers, are still solutions made within the ontological sphere of human rationality and in the end mostly engulfed in the motivations and instrumental value to human society: What Fox addresses with his anthropocentric fallacy (Fox, 1995). To strive towards a flat ecocentric ontology to present itself in political initiatives, it will inevitably be steeped in these contradictions or shortcomings of truly creating an interconnected relation to all other species within the mesh. This dilemma is explored and exaggerated by the late speculative fiction writer Ursula K. Le Guin in her essay 'A Modest Proposal: Vegempathy' (Le Guin, 2012), wherein she portrays a manifesto by a fictitious social movement called "Oganism" that, in the face of the realization of ultimate ecocentric ontology and how the anthropocentrism of relating to other species, however well-meant, ultimately comes at the behest of other species. Biologically constrained by the need to consume other matter, and as even veganism is ethically indefensible in light of the logical extreme of ecocentrism, the movement decides to only ingest oxygen and water, as the purest responsible action against anthropocentrism. An inherently short-lived movement, as: "Ogans, ingesting only the unsullied purity of the O in the atmosphere and in H₂O, will live in true amity with all animals and all vegetables, and will proudly preach their creed for as long as they possibly can. It could be for several weeks, sometimes" (Le Guin, 2012). This essay seems meant as a satirical comment on the well-meaning but confusing intent to strive towards living philosophies, ecocentric or otherwise, to their logical extremes. A formula that could produce an alternative to 'Half-Earth Socialism' where humanity shuts down all of their production and collectively composts themselves in effort to initiate a truly ecocentric rewilding of Earth. The point is, that it seems ultimately impossible to truly create a politics of ecocentrism. An effort that is perhaps also beside the point of philosophical theories such as dark ecology in their effort to describe reality, rather than develop an ultimate solution. As Morton perplexedly assert: "(...) the position of hunting for anthropocentrism is anthropocentrism", and that anthropocentrism in itself is the notion that a human being is situated in a "nonspace" both within and outside the mesh from what position it, in this case, suspects others for being anthropocentric (Morton, 2010: 76). This ultimately seems to align with Warwick Fox' anthropocentric fallacy, as examined through various points of the analysis, who similarly would brush off such accusations as conflating a trivial sense of anthropocentrism, with a significant one (Fox, 1995: 21). As well as that the human perspective does not inherently delegitimize the perceived ethical value of other living beings reflected in more ecocentric efforts to consider their interest.

Morton ultimately concludes, despite obscurity, that the efforts to save the planet on the basis of scientific consensus, however fraught with anthropocentrism, is not only the best compromise to a difficult epistemological puzzle, but the infinite responsibility of conscious beings in relation to others: “Worrying about whether we're being stewards or tyrants or pilots of Spaceship Earth is window dressing. If we have a future, we will have decided to look after all sentient beings” (Ibid.: 96).

As examined in this thesis, political utopias in their speculation and lack of restraints have the potential to change people's values and philosophies as they are urged to imagine alternate and desirable futures that stray from the constraints of the expected trajectory of development. According to Sargent, this is partly because of the medium's narrative and fictional qualities that can be applied to political utopian writings like the ones explored in this thesis that stay within the physical realities of the present and, at least in majority, are written and presented as non-fiction or political manifestos (Sargent, 2021). But can also more commonly be applied to the tradition of utopian fiction and art throughout culture, that lay the foundations of Sargent's theory on utopianism (Sargent, 2010). This relates to Garrard's theory of ecocriticism that is a general method for analyzing ecological problems expressed in any medium but is more thoroughly defined on the tropes and trends of fiction and art (Garrard, 2004). As such, a range of analysis and research on the ecological expressions and transformative potentials of art, science fiction, cli-fi (climate-fiction), poetry, and similar creative mediums can be found. I here refer to the work of Danish thinkers like Gregers Andersen (Andersen, 2016), Mikkel Krause Frantzen (Frantzen, 2020), and *Ny Jord* a Journal of Nature-criticism (Carstensen et al., 2020) that point to the philosophy and ecological problems in Danish and international artworks. As well as international thinkers like Rebecca Solnit (Solnit, 2021), *The Dark Mountain Project* (Du Cann et al., 2022), and Timothy Morton (Morton, 2010). To refer back to Morton, they argue that: “Art's ambiguous, vague qualities will help us think of things that remain difficult to put into words”, and they frequently use cultural and literary references as metaphors and tools in their writing, to explain and communicate their theories on dark ecology (Ibid.: 60). But likewise assert that: “reading poetry won't save the planet. Sound science and progressive social policies will do that”, which brings me to the choice of ecocritically reading political utopias instead of art (Ibid.: 60).

For although the potential and importance of the role of art in transforming ecological thought is not to be discredited, it can perhaps seem too obscure or interpretative to be the main arena of progressive ecocentric philosophies, without the political theories and strategies to make them manifest throughout society. Especially considering the temporal confines of the ecological crises. According to Mark & Paul Engler's historical analysis in 'This Is an Uprising' (2016), most if not all major systemic political changes towards progressive ideologies and justice have come from the ground up, following the organizing of discontent citizens that developed into political movements with clear goals and strategies (Engler & Engler, 2016: 22-50). Throughout their outline of some of the most successful political movements throughout the last century, they refer to the importance of culture, and especially hope, in the fabric and motivation of these mass-movements (Ibid.). As well as the amalgamation of countless political ideas, struggles, experiences, icons, and hard work, to gather under a shared vision and belief in change. As Pötz argues, and as examined throughout the thesis, the role of gathering the diffuse dreams, values, indignation, and imagination of a smoldering collectiveness into a political theory, plan, and strategy that is lofty enough to stimulate motivation through a desirable and adequately transformative vision, but specific, thorough, and realistic enough to build solid long-lasting campaigns towards obtainable goals, is the key for social movements to win (Pötz, 2021). The role of utopias, and by extension the artworks that are deemed potential in transforming thought and new ecological ideas, seems to be to join and nourish these movements and developments and ground themselves in change-making strategies. Likewise, it must be the role of the political manifestos, goals, and strategies of these movements, to reflect and manifest the scope and transformation of truly progressive utopian visions and encompass the unbuilding and reshaping of ecological ontology. We may not save the planet by reading poetry, or by indulging in outlandish utopias and philosophies, but we may also not save it without it.

Finally, I wish to discuss some meta-reflections on the process and challenges in this thesis, leading up to my conclusion. Overall, the thesis set out to answer a research question that inherently was quite lofty in terms of philosophical and political scope, and speculative in the vein of utopianism and political visions. As such the ability to adequately answer the part of the research question on the "potential" of the utopian cases was never perceived to be quantitative or definite. But through the examination of the theories of Sargent, Lear, Adorno and the

theories on social movements, I found more theoretical support, and significant similarities in the cases, than anticipated. However, the question of connecting this strategic or theoretical change-making potential with the many different aspects and considerations of the ecological problems asserted by the theories on ecocentrism and anti-capitalocentrism, was at times somewhat diffuse and overwhelming. Herein was the reoccurring need for reevaluating the limits of the scope of the thesis, and to choose the angles and arguments throughout the analysis in accordance with the perceived priorities of the main theorists: Mainly Morton (2010) and Moore (2016). Throughout the analysis it was difficult to balance the arguments of various theories, either in focussing on the analysis of 'An Ecomodernist Manifesto' without bilaterally referencing 'Half-Earth Socialism' too often, or in choosing what theoretical counterarguments to include and how intensive to examine it. Because of this, I found that the analysis could perhaps diverge too broadly or lose focus, which I tried to combat by continually writing meta-transitions from one topic or theory to the next or following the structure of the given case or text. However, I would argue that with the goal of examining a text like 'Half-Earth Socialism' that spans widely in arguments and references, a meaningful inclusion would have to follow along with addressing lofty topics with many, but shortly conveyed, references and theories. In any case, it personally gave me an extensive overview of many of the select theories and ideologies. As well perhaps enable some of the at times convoluted or inaccessible ecocentric philosophies to be discussed more broadly as to not lose sight of their relation to combatting the ecological crises at hand. In vein of the discussed reflections on the role and balance of philosophy and strategy.

In terms of finding and utilizing necessary sources and literature, it was not a problem to find relevant theories and angles, aided in part by my previous acquaintance with some of the texts throughout my Bachelor in Humanities from Roskilde University, various courses in MSc in Climate Change, and personal interest in nature philosophy and activism. In fact, the issue was more that of filtering these inputs, leading to various theories and cases to be left behind throughout the process. It could perhaps for future reference be worth considering using fewer theories, and to instead use them more thoroughly. However, as some of the merits of the analysis was to tie connections between, say, the ecocentrism of Morton or Leopold to the anti-capitalist political philosophy of Jason W. Moore, to qualify and mimic the method of 'Half-Earth Socialism' with a wider range of theorists and writers.

In turn, the utility of having chosen two cases for the analysis also led to considerations of balance and necessity. There were similarities between the two that could lead to repetition if analyzed equally, as well as divergences that were perhaps mostly a question of the length of the texts. As such I chose to focus less on the theoretical analysis of 'En Grøn Retfærdig Fremtid', as 'Half-Earth Socialism' was more extensive and theoretical by format, and instead mostly focus on its implications for the usage of utopianism in social movements, that was deemed a fruitful addition to the conclusion on the potential of such visions and in grounding the philosophical analysis in a case of political struggles in the real-world. The same can be said for the level of focus put upon the climate politics of Socialdemokratiet, which could also at times seem repetitive or shallow through its sources, in comparison to ecomodernism. At least in terms of the global and ontological scale of such political and philosophical discussion. But ultimately, I hope the inclusion of these Danish cases could aid in shifting the analysis between various levels of abstraction and scale, and to move closer to any conclusions on the research questions that could be useful in implementation or debate in relevant contexts. As well as nearing what a more ecocentric political campaign could entail.

Conclusion

Throughout this thesis, I examined examples of opposing environmentalist philosophies as they are expressed in works of political visions. This on the basis of the ecocentrist theory of Timothy Morton and their problemization of the nature/culture-dichotomy and anthropocentric philosophy, in favor of a flat ontology. As well as the role of capitalism, or capitalocentrism, in ecological problems and the ensuing humanization of ecosystems, as theorized by Jason W. Moore and others. Which I used in exploring how these problems manifest themselves in contemporary handling of the ecological crises, as well as how they are addressed in alternate utopian visions.

To this end, I chose two seemingly opposing positions in ‘An Ecomodernist Manifesto’ (2015) by Asafu-Adjaye et al. and ‘Half-Earth Socialism’ (2022) by Troy Vettese and Drew Pendergrass, and additionally ‘En Grøn Retfærdig Fremtid’ (2022) by Den Grønne Ungdomsbevægelse. The first of which was chosen as representative of one of the dominating theories of western environmental politics. In turn, I compared this political philosophy to expressions of the current Danish climate politics, mainly exemplified through the statements and political initiatives by Socialdemokratiet in their tenure between 2019 and 2022. Here I found significant similarities in their belief in economic and environmental decoupling, mainly prevalent in the examined hockey-stick strategy, as well as low amounts of effort to conserve or rewild Danish natural ecosystems by preserving the current state and size of the Danish agricultural sector. Opposing theories and ‘Half-Earth Socialism’, criticize this political philosophy for its market-based solutions, significant anthropocentric view of nature, and reliance on uncertain future technological solutions to decouple economic growth from its environmental footprint.

As such, I analyzed the alternate political vision of ‘Half-Earth Socialism’ and its relation to the chosen theories through the method of ecocritical reading of ecological problems by Greg Garrard. (Garrard, 2004) Here I examined the possible suggestion of a more ecocentric philosophy manifested as a utopian vision through a proposed “radical rewilding” of half the globe. They address the ethical controversies of Prometheanism and the knowability of humankind to control natural ecosystems from the perspective of a flat ecocentric ontology,

and found that, although challenged by various environmental philosophies, their proposed rewilding effort could be deemed as a more ecocentric political effort through its benefits to a more diverse range of living beings and geophysical systems. Additionally, I examined Vettese & Pendergrass' argument for connecting the Half-Earth theory with a socialist transformation of the global economy and political system, and found several similarities with the theory of anti-capitalocentrism by Moore and others, and deemed their utopian vision to address the issues of unequal distribution of resources, departure from a reliance on uncertain future technologies through energy-quotas, a rapid end to fossil fuels and polluting industries, and transformation of the agricultural industry towards freeing land for conservation through widespread veganism. However, 'Half-Earth Socialism' seemed to be missing a strategy for these visions to gain support and political victory in its implementation, although they argue for the speculative nature of their proposals as part of the utopian tradition.

To this end, an analysis of 'En Grøn Retfærdig Fremtid' showed similar expressions of alternate proposals to ecological problems as anthropocentrism and ecomodernist climate strategies, but was deemed to be less radical in their political ideologies and less specific about the philosophical discussions of relationship and conservation of nature. However, their utopian vision is also accompanied by a political activist campaign by the social movement Den Grønne Ungdomsbevægelse, which in addition to the explored potential of utopianism by Lyman Tower Sargent and others, was found to entail traits of the benefits to social movements in utilizing utopian visions as political tools.

In the end, this thesis found that these cases of political utopias have the potential to contribute to philosophical and political change. Through an ecocritical reading, I found significant reflections on the philosophical controversies and political proposals that should be considered as a noteworthy alternative to the ecomodernist ideology, in spite of the complexity of ecocentric philosophy and anthropocentric conundrums. The conclusion of the thesis thus becomes that, if one accepts the findings of the theory of utopianism as described here, including utopias in political proposals have a potential for instilling ecocentric ontology and transformative political change throughout society.

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