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“At least to not regret”: Carriers of Just Transition in European  
Climate Change Adaptation policy dialogue

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<b>Abstract</b> <p>In the current trajectory of human induced global warming, the domains of climate change mitigation and adaptation remain fundamental to the future of human and natural systems. Mitigating the global warming is not only vital but coping with the unavoidable impacts of the global temperature rise will be less disastrous. In terms of the realities of climate change impacts, the climate policies must be implemented. However, the success of mitigation and adaptation efforts might be dependent on how the people and communities are encountered in climate policies. Thus, it is not only crucial how the distribution of climate change burdens and benefits continues, but as important to recognise the multiple entry points to just transition.</p> <p>This thesis contributes to the emerging field of scientific climate justice debate that raises questions of just adaptation and in which ways it is addressed in climate change adaptation policies under the agenda of just transition. The focus of the thesis is particularly on European climate change adaptation dialogue, in the platform of a public consultation organized by the European Commission. With an interpretive approach, the study explores the perceptions of just adaptation in a number of 22 position papers contributed by European and international civic organizations. The analysis is guided by the (1.) the addressment of adaptation injustices and (2.) just adaptation as a transformative pathway. In the prism of environmental and climate justice concerns, and transformative features of adaptation, the results are discussed under the geo-geography of Carriers of Just Transition.</p> <p>The civic organizations who contributed to the public consultation consider adaptation and just transition as important to achieve. At the same time, the civic organizations seem to have adopted a strategy of no-regrets: they actively reclaim on adaptation measures to prepare for the medium and long-term climate impacts while considering that the mitigation efforts of today seem to be failing. At the same time, just adaptation is considered as a way of conserving the present state, while the agenda of just transition seems to be adopted as the desired pathway of fair adaptation. The European adaptation policy dialogue nests in the carriers of just transition – the systemic pathways of consolidating the current European state rather than transformational change.</p>		
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<b>Tiivistelmä</b> <p>Globaalin ja ylisukupolvisen oikeudenmukaisuuden näkökulmasta ilmastopolitiikka on välttämätöntä ilmastonmuutoksen torjumiseksi ja ilmastonmuutokseen sopeutumiseksi. Muuttuvan ilmaston vaikutukset tai ilmastonmuutosta kiihdyttävien tuotantotapojen taloudelliset hyödyt eivät jakaudu tasaisesti. Toisaalta myös ilmastopolitiikan vaikutukset eivät välttämättä jakaudu reilusti, mikä voi olla esteenä ilmastotoimien hyväksymiseksi. Reilun siirtymän mahdollistamiseksi on tärkeää edistää ilmastopolitiikan oikeudenmukaisuustarkastelua, jolla pyritään vähentämään olemassa olevaa epäoikeudenmukaisuutta ja sen rakenteellista jatkumoa.</p> <p>Tämä maisterintutkielma tarkastelee eurooppalaisten kansalaisjärjestöjen näkemyksiä ilmastonmuutokseen sopeutumisen oikeudenmukaisuudesta. Kontekstina on vuonna 2020 järjestetty Euroopan komission julkinen kuuleminen EU:n sopeutumisstrategian uudistamiseksi. Yhteensä 22 kansalaisjärjestön jättämää lausuntoa tarkastellaan ilmasto-oikeudenmukaisuuden ja ilmastonmuutokseen sopeutumisen käsitteistön valossa.</p> <p>Tutkimusaineiston pohjalta käy ilmi, että kuulemiseen osallistuneet kansalaisjärjestöt pitävät oikeudenmukaista sopeutumista ja reilun siirtymän saavuttamista tärkeänä. Ilmastonmuutokseen sopeutuminen hahmotetaan pääosin riippuvaiseksi ilmastonmuutoksen hillinnän onnistumisesta. Täten oikeudenmukaista sopeutumista kuvataan enimmäkseen valmistautumisena nykyisiin ja tuleviin riskeihin lisäämällä eurooppalaista sopeutumiskykyä. Oikeudenmukainen sopeutuminen kietoutuu kansalaisjärjestöjen lausunnoissa omaksuttuna reilun siirtymän polkuna – eurooppalaisen nykytilan säilyttämiseksi.</p>			
<b>Avainsanat</b> Ilmasto-oikeudenmukaisuus, ilmastonmuutokseen sopeutuminen, tulkitseva politiikka-analyysi			
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## Preface

Followed by a Swedish clergyman Lars Levi Laestadius (1800-1861), the doctrine about the word of God and the doctrine about confession and absolution were the absolute principles of my childhood in one of the Finnish Laestadian communities, part of a protestant revivalist movement. Against the common bias, growing up in the movement was secure, loving and surrounded by a strong sense of community. Yet, growing out of the authoritarianism has been a tall order.

The privilege to study has changed the way how I observe and be part of the world. The one I was raised to, has a new ring: The right to question. In the academic world this fundamental freedom might often be taken for granted. The joy of discovery remains in the questions which come with a responsibility. What gets to be asked and what not? For me, the climate change is much about silent questions. The science has been clear for long, but the policies are still falling short. While there's no time for passivity, riding free is not an option.

Writing this thesis has been much about learning how to question. For the considerate guidance, I wish to present my gratitude to the Associate Professor Pia Bäcklund. I would also like to thank Professor Sirkku Juhola and Doctoral Researcher Milja Heikkinen for the close cooperation in the beginning of the thesis project. Furthermore, I want to thank all the lecturers and co-students at the department of geography and beyond. Without you, I would probably have questions about something else.

With love, and forever hope, to friends & family.

Helsinki, March 2022

Saara Leppänen

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## List of abbreviations

<b>Abbreviation</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
COP	Conference of the Parties
EU	European Union
ENGO	Environmental non-governmental organization
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
UN	United Nations
UNCCC	United Nations Climate Change Conference
US	United States

# 1. Introduction

Despite the common metaphor, climate change does not put us in the same boat. The manifestation of human induced global temperature rise presents an immediate challenge of adapting to changing climate, while the burdens and benefits of climate change remain unevenly distributed. Those, who are least responsible for causing the problem, are most likely to be exposed to climate risks with fewer resources to adapt (Roberts, 2009). Moreover, the outcomes of climate policies, might often fall short in avoiding further injustices (Lamb et al., 2020).

To address the growing concerns of environmental crisis, and the overarching dissatisfaction on the efforts to tackle it, a range of actors have adopted the idea of just transition. Originally, the concept roots somewhere between environmental and labor policies, to express a socially fair transition to post-carbon era (Velicu & Barca, 2020; Morena et al., 2020). For example in Paris Agreement, the imperatives of just transition refer to workforce and creation of decent jobs (UNFCCC, 2015). At present, the transition talk has been expanding to multiple sectors. Especially in the European Green Deal, which holds a set of policy initiatives to achieve climate neutrality in the European Union by 2050, by declaring ‘just transition for all’ and ‘leaving no one behind’ (European Commission, 2019).

By the time the very first initiatives of the European Green Deal were being proposed by the European Commission in 2020, I was conducting an internship in one of the regional EU offices in Brussels. While most of the glory of an internship at the capital of European decision-making was lost due to the outbreak of covid pandemic, I had plenty of time learning about the new climate initiatives of the EU. One of the first initiatives of the European Green Deal, probably not by coincidence, was the proposal of Just Transition Mechanism: A funding scheme to support decarbonizing the carbon intensive territories of the EU.

The proposal was some-what appreciated for the aim of harnessing those of the member countries, who remain heavy on fossil energy, to the EU’s climate targets. However, the reception of the new mechanism was scattered. The coal-bloc with

Poland, Hungary and Czechia in the front, quickly adopted the new narrative, but insisted not to lose the existing funding on other sectors such as cohesion fund. At the same time, the net-payer countries were not keen to appoint fresh funds for the unambitious climate coffers.

Rather than being a complementary framework to address climate change, the ‘just transition’ seems to include a risk of consolidating the present means of livelihood (Velicu & Barca, 2020; Morena et al., 2020). Yet, the acceptance of climate policies is related to the different ways of what is considered fair (Ciplet & Harrison, 2020). During my internship, I got especially intrigued by the framework of just transition in relation to climate change adaptation. If the framework of just transition simply maintains the creation of present means of livelihood, what kind of adaptation is considered fair?

As an intern, one of my duties was to communicate on the public consultations of the EU, which are designed by the European Commission to provide a channel for public contributions in legislative preparation. Whether or not the consultations should be considered as a mere clause to prove the foundational values of democracy (Alemanno, 2020), they are one of the important channels of influence for the lobbyists at the EU hub. Through the online platform called ‘Have your say’ (European Commission, 2022), there has been a growing emphasis to reach out for the contributions of individual citizens as well.

In May 2020, the European Commission launched one of the online consultations to revise the original EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change (2013). Based on the international agreements of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Paris Agreement and Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the EU Adaptation Strategy guides the integration of European climate change adaptation into sectoral policies such as the European Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Besides the global regime, the strategy was now to be aligned with the European Green Deal – including the just transition agenda.

In this thesis, my interest is to explore the perceptions of fair adaptation in relation to the European adaptation policies. Thanks to the time spent in Brussels, I found

out that the public consultation of the EU Adaptation Strategy provides a fruitful source of data for interpretive content analysis. In total, the consultation received a number of 956 contributions from various actors including individual citizens, private sector companies, civic organizations, public authorities and academia from a total of 36 countries in 23 languages (European Commission, 2020). Besides the diversity, the consultation characterizes as a platform for European climate change adaptation dialogue, while it is part of a continuum of revising the initial Adaptation Strategy (2013) through the inclusion of various stakeholders.

To contribute to the emerging need of understanding of justice and equity in European climate change adaptation policies, I explored a number of 132 pages of statements conducted by 22 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the public consultation of the EU Adaptation strategy in 2020. The content analysis was guided by two research questions which enabled me to focus on the (RQ1) addressment of adaptation injustices and (RQ2) adaptation as a pathway of change.

*Table 1. Research questions of the thesis.*

<b>Research Questions</b>	
<b>RQ1</b>	What kind of perceptions of just adaptation are implicated in terms of environmental and climate justice concerns?
<b>RQ2</b>	What kind of transformative pathways are related to just adaptation?

In this chapter of introduction I've covered the background of research topic in terms of scientific and societal relevance. In the following chapter 2., I walk through the conceptual framework of climate change adaptation, environmental and climate justice and transformative features of adaptation. In chapter 3., I further introduce my approach to the study and description of the source of data and form of analysis. In this chapter, I've also included the limitations of the research. In chapter 4., I present the results with a discussion. In the final chapter 5. I conclude the thesis with a summary of the main observations and suggestions for future research on the topic.

## 2. Climate Change Adaptation in Climate Justice Praxis

Climate change adaptation is a natural part of all life on earth. Yet, the human-induced global warming increases the risk and reduces the capacity to adapt. According to Daniel Morchain (2018, 3), linking the vulnerability of peoples and systems to climate variability is a highly contested socio-political process which creates both winners and losers. Morchain (2018) further argues, that the framing of adaptation as a process has considerable implications for development outcomes. Who gets to participate in the decision making and how is the adaptive measures justified and operationalised? In practical level, this has also much to do with the acceptance of climate policies, which is related to the different ways of what is considered fair (Ciplet & Harrison, 2020).

According to Fünfgeld & Schmid (2020), adaptation to climate change is about solving either functional questions of *how* desirable futures can be safeguarded or normative questions regarding *which ways of life* will be supported under the current and future climate risks. While this kind of approach aims to structure the understanding of adaptation, the paradoxality of it has been contemplated by the growing interest in the socio-political nature of adaptation in general (Eriksen et al., 2015; Nightingale, 2017) and further conceptualization of maladaptive outcomes (see, for example Juhola et. al, 2016).

The paradox remains in the framing of adaptation outcomes unplugged from the normative backdrop. In this thesis I focus on exploring the normative boundaries in the form of perceptions of just adaptation. Inspired by a study by Schlosberg, Collins & Niemeyer (2017), which explores how public engagement can assist in the development of just adaptation processes and outcomes, I found it important to take a look on the theoretical intersection climate and environmental justice, adaptation and transformation. Sultana (2021) describes climate justice as a critical praxis of theoretically informed practice to pay attention to the different, uneven and disproportionate impacts of climate change. As concluded by Rice, Burke & Heynen (2015), the climate justice praxis demands systemic changes to address structural inequality and destabilize power systems that produce climate injustices. By

drawing on this and the existing literature on the concept of adaptation, the following chapters are guided by the research questions on the (1.) addressment of adaptation injustices and (2.) transformative features of adaptation.

## **2.1 What is adaptation to climate change?**

Since 1970s, the field of adaptation research has been rapidly growing by a vast scope of approaches and the adaptation science itself has been evolving through the multitude of literature (Nalau & Verrall, 2021). Profoundly, the climate change adaptation literature has been embattled by the “problem of dependent variable” which refers to the extensive concept of adaptation and what makes adaptation effective and how (Nalau & Verrall, 2021). Rather than being embattled, I consider that the field of adaptation research has not included only one but various definitions and framings of adaptation.

As the interdisciplinary field of adaptation holds various approaches to adaptation, I found it important to take a look on the specific definitions and framings of adaptation. According to Morchain (2018), a central tension among the definitions has been the link of vulnerability of peoples and systems to climate variability, which in highly contested socio-political process has created both winners and losers. Like Morchain (2018) challenges, one should be asking under which priorities adaptation is approached and why? Who forms the knowledge of adaptation and what has been discarded beyond the chosen framework?

In the international arena of climate governance, adaptation has been commonly defined as “*adjustments in ecological, social, or economic systems in response to actual or expected climatic stimuli and their effects or impacts.*” and “*changes in processes, practices, and structures to moderate potential damages or to benefit from opportunities associated with climate change.*” (UNFCCC, 2021). In the latest assessment report of IPCC (2022), which aims to guide the climate regime from top to bottom, adaptation is referred as adjustments to reduce exposure and vulnerability to climate change in ecological and human systems. With exposure, the IPCC (2022) refers to presence of people or economic, social and cultural assets that could be

adversely affected by climate change and its impacts. Vulnerability in turn, refers to ‘propensity or predisposition’ and lack of capacity to adapt (IPCC, 2022).

What is interesting in the UNFCCC (2021) definition and in the approach of the IPCC report (2022), is the underlining of adaptation as a response to the climate impacts under the main framework of risk. With this framing, IPCC (2022) proposes to provide understanding on the interconnected and irreversible impacts of climate change, as the risk refers to the potential for adverse consequences for human or ecological systems. Taking into account that the term ‘adaptation’ simply takes away attention from the overall set of stressors related to adaptation as a process (Ribot, 2011), I consider that the risk as the encompassing framework highlights the response and burden of adaptation on those who remain exposed to climate impacts. Moreover, framing climate change with an impacts-based approach of risk, lacks the acknowledgment of climate change as an already occurring condition of ecological and human systems.

In terms of scientific literature, the concerns of justice in adaptation has been evolving from the fairness of adaptation by Paavola and Adger (2006), developed by the emphasis on social justice by Eriksen et al. (2011), and the exploration of transformative features (Park et al., 2012; Mustelin & Handmer, 2013; Pelling et al., 2015). In the literature concerned of equity, adaptation is primarily defined in the view of vulnerability; a degree to which a system is susceptible to, or unable to cope with adverse effects of climate change (Paavola & Adger, 2006).

According to Adger (2001) and Paavola & Adger (2006), the climate justice debate within adaptation literature began to develop from early 1990’s political ecology and disaster literature, where the emphasis of hazards as focus of the research might have had an influence on the impacts-based approach. As per Aspinall, (2010) and Burnham et al. (2013a; 2013b), the geographical trajectories of justice concerns in adaptation research have been focused on conceptualising vulnerability in environmental hazard contexts and investigating the spatial distribution of environmental burdens (and benefits) as well as the exploration of adaptation in the context of conservation and development projects in Global South. Suggested by Byskov et al. (2021), the overall focus of adaptation literature has been in ‘what is

owed after the occurrence of environmental change and the extinction of natural resources'. In comparison, the mitigation-weighted climate justice literature has been examining 'what is owed to other people and future generations in terms of access to environment and natural resources',

Later, a growing attention has been on the relation of the environment and climate system which are not considered as symptoms of existing injustices, but necessary conditions to achieve social justice (Schlosberg & Collins, 2014). In geographical debate, one of the central discussions has emerged around the debate on whether climate should be considered as a 'condition' rather than an objective (Bulkeley, 2019b, 2019a). According to Castree (2019), this has been more or less the *modus operandi* of the broader field of disaster literature, which is based on the interpretation of human-nature relations as conditions rather than 'issues'. In geographical debate, the Bulkeley's view has been criticised for missing the core of climate justice debate as an ever-evolving field of approaches (Paterson, 2019) as well as for lacking critical engagement on climate change in human geography (Jones, 2019).

## **2.2 Addressing the adaptation injustices**

Rather than focusing on defining what kind of adaptation to climate change is fair, I considered interesting to focus on the addressment of injustices tied in adaptation. While the scientific climate justice debate has been largely considered as a continuation of environmental justice movement (Jafry et al., 2018; Lee, 2019), I decided to incorporate the principles initially developed by environmental and climate justice movements (Schlosberg & Collins, 2014) Another approach to the addressment of adaptation injustices would've been the capabilities approach promoted by Schlosberg (2012). While these approaches are not conflicting, rather complementary, I considered important to underline the work of civic movements in the development of climate justice debate and the initial bottom-up framing of a rights-based approach to climate change.

Regarding to the extensive work of Dorceta Taylor (2009; 1997) the environmental justice concerns were issued in North American industrialising cities since 18<sup>th</sup> century. What Taylor found out, was that the lifestyle and cultures of the poor and marginalised people were often blamed for the spread of diseases. Notably, the occurrence of epidemics was reduced while the living conditions of the poor counties were improved after environmental reforms (Taylor, 2009). As one of the significant starting points for the broader environmental justice movement, scholars Schlosberg & Collins (2014) propose the 1982 protests due to the disposal of toxic waste at a landfill located in a poor, majority African American community, in Warren County, US North Carolina. This specific protest, which emerged to larger movements of environmental justice, was considered to bring together civil rights activists, political leaders as well as environmentalists for the first time since 1960s civil rights movements (Schlosberg & Collins, 2014). Considering Taylor's work, it is important to note that the environmental justice concerns were issued long before the 1980s (and probably not only in Northern America). Still, the Warren County protests (and the Anglo-American entry) were essential to the development of the environmental justice movement and further elaboration of climate justice principles among scholars, social movements, and policy makers.

While the North American movements have been strongly rooted to the environmental justice conceptualisation, the European climate justice movements have been considered as a cross-national diffusion of the many varieties of conceptions (Scholl, 2013). According to Wallgren (2021), the European climate justice movements were especially influenced by the "summit hopping" and shadow conferences besides the UNFCCC conferences since 1990s. Scholl (2013) describes, that in the run up of protests prior to the Kyoto Protocol (1997), the main concern was to rally for global measures against the human induced temperature rise and to criticise the application of market-based mechanisms. During 2000s, the annual climate action camp was formed as a result of G8 forum in 2005 and yet broader movements became involved around the 2007 COP13 in Bali. The mobilisation of European climate justice movements gained momentum again in 2009, when the COP15 in Copenhagen failed to meet the agreement on the second phase of the Kyoto Protocol related to the carbon speculation market. As per Wallgren (2021)

interestingly points out, the European movements have been characteristically keen to address systemic injustices through practicing civil disobedience.

According to Schlosberg & Collins (2014), the term climate justice was first referred in scientific literature by environmental lawyer and legal scholar Edith Brown Weiss (1989) in relation to intergenerational justice. Most often, climate justice has been articulated by scholars in terms of unequal impacts of climate change or as the normative framework of international climate governance. For example Okereke (2010), highlights that the justice concerns in international climate policies are rooted in historical differences between countries' greenhouse gas emissions, vulnerability to climate change and in the ability of mitigating and adapting to climate change. As argued by Castán Broto & Bulkeley (2013), the focus in international climate policies has been mostly in the share of responsibility and thus failed to recognize and address the needs of plural communities. Like Fisher (2015) proposes, this might have led to the focus of nation-states as the key actors in the addressment of climate injustices and limited the alternative claims of climate justice.

Turning to the justice concerns in adaptation, the addressment of injustices tied in adaptation have recently focused for example on energy justice (Sovacool et al. 2019) and urban adaptation (Shi et al., 2016). The tripartite of distributional and procedural concerns by Schlosberg (2007) and recognitive concerns for example developed by Williams ja Doyon (2019) have more or less become established as the essential dimensions of environmental and climate justice. Instead of leaning on the traditional concerns over distribution of resources and responsibilities among people over time and space (Rawls, 1971), the classification of procedural concerns and recognition aims to include the alternative claims of justice. In terms of adaptation, the distributional concerns of environmental and climate justice relate to the burdens and benefits of climate change and climate change adaptation policies. What are the burdens and benefits and for whom do those distribute? Are there options for compensating the resulting burdens of climate change impacts?

With procedural concerns, for example Schlosberg (2007) refers to the fairness of adaptation policies as a process in terms of inclusivity and transparency of the

decision-making. How inclusive and transparent is the process and what kind of opportunities are there to participate during the process? For whom? The cognitive concerns in turn, relate to the notions of representation and participation in terms of the distribution of climate change effects and decision-making processes (Fraser, 2010). Who, where and what kind of needs are taken into account and how's adaptation framed in first place? According to Schlosberg (2007), the cognitive dimension should not only be concerned of human beings but recognizing the nature and other species as well.

The latest assessment report of the IPCC (2022), which has a special focus on adaptation, has also defined the concerns of justice for the first time accordingly to the tripartite of distributional, procedural and cognitive concerns. Importantly, the report reminds also about the normative boundaries set by the society: "*Justice is concerned with setting out the moral or legal principles of fairness and equity in the way people are treated, often based on the ethics and values of society.*" (IPCC, 2022). In my view, the three dimensional classification is certainly not all-encompassing. For example Meikle et al. (2016) have concluded a wide range of approaches beyond, such as inter- and intra-generational equity as well as gender and energy equality. In geographical research, for example Sultana (2021) has contributed feminist perspectives to further advance the critical concerns of justice. Rather than aiming to a static ideal of classifying the dimensions of justice, I find it important to note, that the concerns of climate justice remain constantly evolving. Multiple perspectives need to be reached out for the claims of indigenous people, women, LGBTQIA+, and racialized people on the frontline of the least responsible for, yet among the most affected by, the ecological crisis.

### **2.3 Towards transformative adaptation**

A central discussion of the scientific adaptation literature has been related to the transformative trajectories of climate change adaptation (Lonsdale, Pringle & Turner, 2015). Primarily, climate change adaptation is a natural part of all life on earth. Yet, the human-induced global warming increases the risk and reduces the capacity to adapt. According to Krause (2018, 514), adaptation to climate change is

more easily adopted in the discussion of transformative change while it remains in the intersection of resilience and development. In comparison to mitigation, however, adaptation seems to be doomed to the ‘no-regret’ solutions to bring additional – risk-driven securization for social development (Krause, 2018, 514)

Suggested by Lonsdale, Pringle & Turner (2015), the term ‘transformational adaptation’, refers to the adaptation as pertaining to transformation and ‘transformative features’ to the actions intending, or leading to, transformation. According to Krause (2018, 514-515), there are still rather few studies focusing on the radical social change, while most of the existing research has been focused on the deliberate scales of change. For example in previous studies for example by Fünfgeld & Schmid (2020) and Schlosberg, Collins & Niemeyer (2017) the intersection of adaptation and dimensions of environmental and climate justice has been framed through transformative scales of change, rather than social change.

According to Mustelin & Handmer (2013), there are multiple ways to interpret transformation in terms of the concept, purpose, and place of transformation. A definition by Thomton & Comberti (2017), on the concept of transformation, proposes that transformational adaptation may only be required in cases where the impacts of climate change are particularly rapid. While this definition maintains the view of hazard-driven adaptation and lacks the understanding of climate change as an occurring ‘condition’, Park et al. (2012) have proposed that transformation is a process of fundamentally (necessarily not irreversible) changing the biophysical, social or economic components of a system to enhance the capacity of desired values to be achieved in the present or future environment.

As further distinguished by Mustelin & Handmer (2013), the degree of targeting the root causes of vulnerability through adaptation measures varies within the scale of change which is often contemplated in the axis of incremental and transformational change. In some cases, a level of systemic, or transitional, or reformist change is also acknowledged to broaden the spectrum of only two-laned framework. For example in a study by Smit & Skinner (2002), a typology of incremental, systemic and transformative features of change is used in a case study focused on agricultural context. In the level of incremental adaptation, the changes remain smaller, discrete

and within the existing systems. The transformational adaptation in turn refers to system wide changes, often described as the ‘paradigm change’. In practice, for example climate justice movements have distinguished transformation with the common statement of “*System change, not climate change!*”. The systemic or transitional feature remains somewhere in between, to support the understanding of adaptation ‘neither black nor white’.

While my interest in this thesis, is to explore perceptions of just adaptation, I explicitly refer to adaptation as a social and political process which facilitates continuous adjustments to actual or expected changes. Rather than a passive response to climate change, I consider that the continuous adjustments are inherently resulted by moral and normative foundations while the need for adaptation derives from the global climate crisis. With ‘rather than passive’ I refer to the adjustments as active human adaptation to enhance the desired values in the present and for future. In this view, the characteristics of transformative features in adaptation are in key-position to contribute more equitable future (Krause, 2018, 515).

As the analytical lenses of the ‘moral motivation’ for adaptation, I’m distinguishing the environmental and climate justice concerns of distribution, recognition and procedural inclusion as per suggested by Schlosberg (2007). While the tripartite of justice dimensions remains largely limited and rather reinforces the problematic structures of current state (Velicu & Barca, 2020), I further explore the desired pathways for adaptation through transformative features of incremental, systemic and transformational change. Considering the transformative features, I refer to the incremental change as discrete changes within the existing systems and with transformational to the system wide change. The criteria for these features is applied in accordance with a distinguishion of Mustelin & Handmer (2013). With systemic change I refer to transitional/reformist level of adaptation in between incremental and transformational pathways as distinguished by for example, Waddell (2011).

### 3. Methodology

The methodological orientation of this thesis draws on interpretivist approach to explore civic organizations’ perceptions of just adaptation in the context of EU public consultation (European Commission, 2020) on the revised EU Adaptation Strategy (2021). What makes the public consultation a relevant initiative to explore, is not only its topicality but its characteristics as a platform for European climate change adaptation dialogue. In practice, the European climate change adaptation dialogue in this thesis limits to a number of 22 position papers conducted by NGOs during the public consultation of the new EU Adaptation Strategy. The process is considered dialogic, as the statements participate in a continuum of European Commission’s communication between the European stakeholders to revise the initial Adaptation Strategy (2013).

*Table 2. Materials and methods of the research*

<b>Research Material</b>	<b>Context</b>	<b>Methodological orientation</b>
<i>Statements/ position papers submitted by NGOs in the public consultation of EU Adaptation Strategy (European Commission, 2020)</i>	<i>European climate change adaptation policy dialogue: The revisioning process of the EU Adaptation Strategy</i>	<i>Interpretative policy analysis: Perceptions of just adaptation are explored with environmental and climate justice dimensions (Schlosberg, 2007) and transformative features (Pelling et al., 2012).</i>

The overall process of inquiry in this thesis is iterative as more knowledge has been gained throughout the study. The general method for analysing the statements is a content analysis where the emphasis stays on the level of what is implicated in the statements and how the NGOs describe the dimensions of just adaptation. With content analysis, I explicitly refer to an analysis process where the source of data is thought with, rather than bounded by, a theoretical perspective. As suggested by Salo (2015), this approach enables one to with-think the source of data without losing the flow of meanings. Rather than being locked into the theoretical

perspective or the common pitfalls of qualitative coding, I consider that the interpretive content analysis enables to identify both meanings inside and outside the analytical lenses (MacLure, 2014). Moreover, I propose that my own entry point as a researcher (see the introduction for more) prevails an unique approach to the exploration of the just adaptation perceptions.

In the following chapters, I introduce the methodological orientation and description of the data and analysis. To support the overall transparency of the research, the iterative analysis process is reported in separate stages and a critical reflection on the limitations of the research is provided in the chapter 3.3. In the below table 2., I've summarized the material, context and methods of this thesis.

### **3.1 The interpretive approach**

There are as many ways as there are researchers to carry out an interpretative analysis. For guidance and inspiration, I studied the work of Wagenaar (2014), Yanow (2000) and Schwartz-Shea & Yanow (2012) as well as some of the applications of interpretive approaches by Häikiö & Leino (2011) and Blyton & Franklin (2011). Whereas Wagenaar passionately calls the interpretative policy analysis a 'tenet' and even a 'doctrine' (2011, 4), I prefer to account it as a methodological orientation which focuses on actors, practices, and meanings in the formulation of policymaking.

According to Häikiö & Leino (2014, 11-12), the interpretive approach gained attraction after the established practices of public institutions and governance were challenged due to a more pluralistic understanding of governance and its dispersive structures. By the time, some of the limitations of classical policy analysis were met after it was acknowledged that the policy processes were no longer happening only in stages but between the different actors and networks of the society. Acknowledging these kind of limitations is particularly relevant for the complexity of climate change related issues, which can be addressed in many different ways through language and discourse (Wagenaar, 2014).

The need for climate policies, the measures of mitigation and adaptation, is unquestionable in terms of global equality and intergenerational justice but the ways in which climate change is mitigated or how it should be adapted to, are subject to individual and shared perceptions. The interest of the interpretative policy analysis often relies in these kinds of arenas of multiple meanings, where the dynamics of policy processes alternately close down and open up (Häikiö & Leino (2014, 11-12). For example, a concept such as just transition is interesting in the view of discourse analysis, as it has intersecting meanings in different arenas of definition. The focus of interpretative approach, however, is not in the arenas but in the meaning-making – seeking to contribute to the knowledge about individual and collective sense of particular worlds (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012, 46-47).

Wagenaar (2011, 21) refers to meanings as the ‘expressions of the carriers of social meaning’. With this conceptualisation, he aims to capture the nature of meaning as an individual and shared interpretation where the ‘expression of the carrier’ appoints how the meanings participate both delivering and formulating meanings. Notably, this conceptualization strongly draws from the view of language and discourse, which in linguistic-practical frameworks are considered as the mediators of meanings. According to Wagenaar (2011, 41), there are two philosophical traditions through which the hermeneutic meaning can be approached. In this view, the interpretive approach (the methodology) and the hermeneutic meaning (the method) situates in between classical hermeneutics and phenomenological research orientations. While the classical hermeneutics highlight the reflectivity of human experience, the phenomenological orientation aims to focus on the structure and nature of pre-reflective human experience.

In the phenomenological orientation, the researcher’s position is understood as the carrier of the hermeneutic default setting. Therefore, the meaning-making remains threefold: 1.) Subjective experience, 2.) subjective experience in connection to intersubjective meaning structures and 3.) an individual entry point to the study (Wagenaar, 2011, p. 52). Yet the meaning-making is not only aided by the hermeneutic interpretation but discursively and dialogically (Wagenaar, 2011). For example, what the anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1983) has termed ‘local knowledge’; “*The mundane, expert understanding of and practical reasoning about*

*local conditions derived from lived experience*”, describes how the meaning is not produced in a vacuum of hermeneutic meaning.

According to Wagenaar (2011), the discursive meaning includes a theory of the discourse itself which performs in the language. If I consider this in relation to hermeneutic meaning, the discursive meaning accounts the meaning structures beyond the discursive entity. While the meaning is approached through the mediation of language, the discursive approach considers that meanings are produced in the action of language – the discourse. Whereas the discursive conceptualisation of meaning is based on the idea of relational meaning, the dialogical approach to meaning emerges in relation to the interpreter. As per Wagenaar (2011, p. 54-57) has explained, the meanings are held by individual agents but formed in shared agency. In this shared agency, the meaning is constructed not only by individuals, but through a shared understanding of interaction between others.

While strongly building on the subjective ontology where hermeneutic interpretation is recognized as the grounding epistemological grid and the meaning as both discursive and dialogical method of interpretation, I noticed the lack of consistency in relation to the paradigm of transformational adaptation. In terms of interpretive policy analysis, the transformational paradigm has been highlighted by Creswell & Creswell (2018), Sweetman, Badiee & Creswell (2010) as well as by Mertens (2007). According to these scholars, the nature of reality and how it can be known is derived through dialogical involvement, even advocacy, of participants in the construction of multiple realities. For example, Creswell & Creswell (2018) propose that the aim of a research is therefore to bring forward the ‘new’ reality which constructs from the participants’ values and beliefs. From the axiological point of view, it is further highlighted that the values and beliefs of the participants remain influential to the further actions taken.

One could argue that the transformational take does not give much on top of discursive and dialogical meaning. But while the hermeneutic, discursive and dialogical understanding of meaning highlight the construction of meaning, the transformational perspective aims to underline the aftermath of meaning-making.

The relevance of the transformational approach has been emphasized for example by Hinkel et al. (2020) who've argued that the dominant 'doom and gloom' narrative has been successful in bringing climate change onto the political agenda, but the extent of mobilizing effective climate responses has remained less effective. The meanings have been a sought-after method for interpretation, such as 'just transition', but remained nothing more than a 'gaze' (see, Gadamer). In this view, the meaning becomes contemplated by the transformative paradigm; Isn't 'seeing' the meaning an action itself with an intention?

Therefore, my interpretative approach in this thesis builds on the constructivist-transformative nexus of interpretive approach. The 'meaning' is (simplifiedly) considered three fold: (1.) My own iterative expression of the just adaptation perceptions (2.) aided by the statements of the NGOs (3.) in the continuum of European climate change adaptation policy dialogue. Importantly, the meaning-making is not limited to the contents of this paper. As a student who conducts this thesis study with the guidance of instructors and co-students, I find it crucial to emphasize the dialogical nature of a thesis project beyond the writing. Hence, my individual entry point to the study has derived from iterative premises throughout and beyond the research process. The resulting research (with its limitations) positions in the discursive dialogue; to the 'grid of possibilities' as Wagenaar (2011) cherishes.

### **3.2 Description of the data & form of analysis**

To explore the perceptions of just adaptation in the context of European adaptation policies, I decided to undertake an explorative content analysis. Originally, content analysis has been a common tool for scrutinizing the contents of written, oral and visual sources of data, such as speeches, newspapers and advertisements (Salo, 2015, 169). A common critique towards the form of analysis has been appointed to the quantitatization of qualitative content which often operationalizes through qualitative coding (Salo, 2015, 177). Even though there are many pitfalls to avoid when practising qualitative coding, Maggie MacLure (2014) has suggested not to abandon but to cherish the method as a form of explorative thinking. A not-too-tight

coding enables one to get absorbed into the data, yet guided by the theoretical understanding (Salo, 2015, 181). To put it in other words, the coding enables one to with-think the source of data. Before this, the theoretical seatbelt should be properly fastened.

Besides with-thinking, qualitative writing has been a formative tool in the analysis. Rather than just ‘writing it up’, I consider the writing process as an embodied part of the overall research (DeLyser, 2010). In this view, the method manifests in the system of signs (Wagenaar, 2011, p. 108) with past and future linkages to the discursive and dialogical sphere. Drawing back to the transformational paradigm, I consider that the qualitative writing is not only a mediator of the action, but action itself. Like de Leeuw (2017) suggests, writing is about righting and geo-graphing: transmitting understanding of the world.

In this thesis, the content analysis was guided by the research questions on (1.) addressment of adaptation injustices and (2.) transformative features of just adaptation. Getting absorbed with the source of data was inspired by what Philip Adu (2019) calls ‘phenomenological reduction’. In this method, the content is first explored thoroughly and the relevant information is identified with the research questions in mind. The first research question was operationalized with initial rounds of reading and a descriptive coding scheme. After this, I examined the relationships between the perceptions of just adaptation in terms of procedural, distributional and recognitive concerns of environmental and climate justice. Finally, the second research question was approached with the synthesized meanings of just adaptation. In this stage, I examined the relationships between the meanings of just adaptation in terms of transformative features. In the following sections of this chapter, I first walk through the description of the data. Followed by this, I present the detailed description of the analysis process.

### *3.2.1 Statements of the NGOs in EU public consultation*

The revision process of the EU Adaptation Strategy provided a topical framework for analysing the perceptions of just adaptation. The original EU Adaptation

Strategy was first proposed by European Commission in 2009 and adopted in 2013. During 2016-2018, the strategy was evaluated through an online public consultation and evaluative Adaptation Preparedness Scoreboards delivered by the EU member states. After this, an evaluation package was published in 2018 to prepare the further revision process. In May 2020 the European Commission launched an online consultation as well as an online feedback period to renew the Adaptation Strategy as part of the European Green Deal – the grand objective of the EU to become climate neutral by the year of 2050. The revised Adaptation Strategy was finally adopted in February 2021.

Due to the fact that the respondents were not identifiable in the feedback data, I decided to focus on the consultation as the primary source of data. The consultation was organized online by the European Commission during 14 May 2020 - 20 August 2020 as a questionnaire of 181 open and close-ended questions related to the experience of climate change impacts and adaptation to climate change. Besides the questionnaire, the respondents had a possibility to submit an attached position paper – a written statement – in relation to the revisioning of the strategy. In total, there were 956 contributions received from various actors including individual citizens, private sector companies, NGOs, public authorities and academia from 36 countries in 23 languages. By the time of the study, the dataset is available with an open access via European Commission's website for public consultations (European Commission, 2021).

As my interest in this thesis remains in the perceptions on just adaptation, I decided to focus on the attached statements contributed by the respondents. Whereas the questionnaire was mainly constructed with close-ended questionnaire, the attached statement provided a channel for open-ended position papers. As I learned during my internship in relation to EU advocacy (see the introduction for more), the position papers are an important form of expressing opinions about specific issues related to decision-making. Commonly, the position papers are coordinated by the umbrella organizations, to implicate the views of a larger network of organizations in specific sector such as academic institutions of trade unions. From the total of contributions in the public consultation of EU Adaptation Strategy, a number of 120

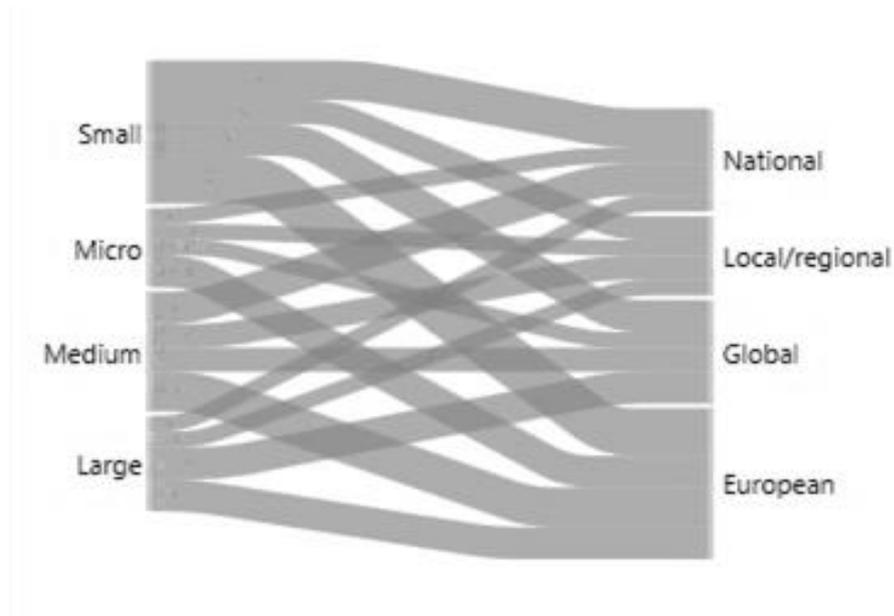
respondents had an attached statement included, largely by citizens and NGOs (see Table 3. below).

*Table 3. Number of contributions and attached statements in the online consultation of renewing EU Adaptation Strategy (European Commission, 2020).*

<b>Contributor</b>	<b>Contributions</b>	<b>Contributions in English</b>	<b>Attached statements included</b>	<b>Attached statements in English</b>
Academic/ Research Institutions	36	24	6	5
Business Association	39	29	16	12
Companies/ Business organisation	29	23	7	6
Consumer Organisation	1	-	-	-
EU Citizen	182	51	9	4
<b>NGOs</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>22</b>
Non-EU Citizen	4	4	-	-
Other	24	12	11	8
Public authority	29	12	11	4
Trade Union	8	6	3	3
(Type of contributor left blank)	544	181	26	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>956</b>	<b>385</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>79</b>

In this study, my prior interest was to explore a wide range of perceptions from a variety of respondents. In the view of the important role of civic movements in the development of climate justice principles, I found it most interesting to focus on the statements contributed by civic organizations. Therefore, I further outlined the statements contributed by NGOs. In this study the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) represent civic organizations which are organised on multiple levels to address issues in support of the public good. Importantly, I lean on Souza's (2013) conceptualisation of NGOs as not equal to social movements but part of them: "-- [social movements are] something which can be adequately understood only at another 'scale level'-- a larger or smaller part of an entire society, a part which does not accept its 'place' in the existing 'social order' and sometimes does not accept the 'social order' itself (that is, the 'system' as a whole)".

In total, the final dataset of this thesis consists of 22 statements including 132 pages. The length of each statement varies from 2 to 14 pages and the form of statements is heterogenic in terms of the structure of the texts and the use of fonts, pictures and figures. Including only statements submitted in English language was reasonable because of two things: First, it is the dominant language of the European NGOs and on the other hand, a shared language among the heterogenic statements enabled me to compare the perceptions of adaptation expressed by the contributors and thereby support the transparency of the research. In section 3.4, I further discuss on the matter of language in interpretation in the light of methodological limitations (see, for example van Nes et al., (2010)).



*Figure 1. Size and scope of the NGOs in local and regional, National, European and Global levels (EU Transparency Register, 2022). The size is based on the following criteria of EU Public Consultation (2020): Large 250 or more employees; Medium < 250 employees; Small < 50 employees; Micro < 10 employees. (See Appendix 1 for details.)*

Most of the NGOs included in this research are European or international level umbrella organizations. The selected statements were submitted by NGOs who are active in the European level of policy making. Around half of the organizations were addressed as more active in local to European scale and the other half in European-global scale in the EU Transparency Register. Out of the 22 NGOs, 11 are located in Belgium (Brussels) which indicates the activity of the organizations in EU

policies. In the above figure 3., I've indicated the scope of the NGOs by level of activity in local and regional, national, European and global levels as well as the size as indicated in the consultation. As we can see from the figure, the organizations active in European level are somewhat highlighted in the dataset – yet, none of the classified groups remains dominant.

### *3.2.2 Content analysis and geo-graphing*

In the first stage of the analysis, each statement was given at least two preliminary rounds of reading. The purpose of these initial readings was to familiarize myself with the data, and to ensure the statements were appointed in relation to the revision process of the EU Adaptation Strategy. This was an application of a 'spooling out', a method suggested by Maggie MacLure (2013), which enables to scroll down the source of data without further intentions. During the first round I noticed that 3 out of the 22 statements were submitted either in other languages than English, did not fulfil the criteria of an NGO or did not relate to the EU Adaptation Strategy. Based on this observation, these three statements were dismissed from the primary dataset (see Annex 1 for details). During the second round, I captured some preliminary comments and first impressions of the statements. This round created a further level of familiarity with the content of the statements and enabled me to make notes on the interesting phrases that stood out in the text without attempting to make meaning of what was said. For example, the below phrase in the statement submitted by the World Horse Welfare was preliminary noted as "interesting", while the EU was appointed into a key role of protecting people and the planet both in Europe and beyond.

*"The European Union (EU) has a key role in protecting people and the planet against the impacts of climate change through its policies within Europe and beyond." (WHW, 2020)*

The exploratory two rounds of reading created a level of awareness of the ways in which the dimensions of just adaptation could and could not possibly be interpreted in the statements. Based on this, I started to compile all the significant phrases in

terms of environmental and climate justice concerns. This kind of approach was chosen while words such as justice, fairness or equity were not present in the statements. To identify the procedural, distributive and recognitive concerns, I used an application of auxiliary questions as proposed by Adu (2019). With the questions summarized in table 4., I continued reading and coding the statements with the Code Manager function of Atlas.ti software.

*Table 4. Descriptive codes and auxiliary questions to identify the concerns of environmental and climate justice*

<b>Descriptive code</b>	<b>Dimension of just adaptation</b>	<b>Auxiliary questions</b>
<b><i>Distributive</i></b>	Distribution of resources and responsibilities among people over time and space (Rawls, 1971).	What kind of burdens and benefits are implicated in relation to adaptation measures?  How's the distribution of resources and responsibilities implicated in relation to adaptation measures?
<b><i>Procedural</i></b>	Procedural concerns of representation and participation in climate change adaptation related decision-making. (Schlosberg, 2007).	What kind of procedural concerns related to adaptation measures are expressed?  What kind of concerns of representation are implicated in relation to decision making?
<b><i>Recognitive</i></b>	Recognition of socio-economic factors (Schlosberg, 2007).	What kind of needs are recognized important in relation to adaptation measures?  What/who is considered vulnerable to climate change?
<b><i>Compensative</i></b>	Compensation of the unfair effects of the implemented climate change adaptation policies (Schlosberg, 2007).	What kind of concerns of compensation are implicated in relation to adaptation measures?

As emphasized by Salo (2015), a common pitfall in qualitative analysis is to avoid those parts of research material, which do not adjust under the developed book of codes. Keeping this in mind, I aimed to include in the coding for example visual content which was found in the statements during the readings. Like McLure (2014)

suggests, this turned out to be ‘productive disconcertion’ in terms of the overall understanding of the source of data. Moreover, my experience was that maintaining the coding scheme with rather few descriptive codes enabled to leave room for thoughts.

After the multiple rounds of reading and descriptive coding, I further examined the relations between the expressed concerns of environmental and climate justice. As per proposed by Salo (2015, 169), this stage of a content analysis is commonly called thematizing. For example Adu (2019) calls this ‘phenomenological reduction’, while the aim is to create structural descriptions of the identified interlinkages between the descriptive codings. In practice, this stage of the process was strongly driven by the iterative rounds of reading, thinking and writing with the help of the explorative Atlas.ti functionalities such as Co-Occurrence tables. In a way, this stage of the process was about opening and closing doors between the statements of the NGOs with a connection to the literature of the research themes. Some of the doors led to new rooms while others were acknowledged as the back doors. Therefore, this stage of the analysis was also a stage of giving up on some of the interpretations to move on to the others.

After syntetisizing the underlying meanings of just adaptation, I further operationalized the second research question in terms of the transformative features. In comparison to the earlier stages of the analysis guided by the first research question, the overall analysis process was similar. To avoid what MacLure (2014, 175) calls ‘saturation’, or getting exhausted with the content, I decided to approach the second research question with the resulting meanings of just adaptation. Like in the first phase, I used an application of auxiliary question proposed by Adu (2019), to help identifying the transformative features. In the table 5. next page, I’ve summarized the descriptive codes and auxiliary questions for incremental, systemic and transformational features of adaptation. As one can see, the auxiliary questions were not divided per feature, to avoid creating leading questions.

Table 5. Descriptive codes and auxiliary questions for incremental, systemic and transformational features of adaptation.

<b>Descriptive code</b>	<b>Transformative feature</b>	<b>Auxiliary questions</b>
<b><i>Incremental</i></b>	Change within the existing systems (Mustelin & Handmer, 2013)	<i>What kind of problem structuring is implicated in terms of just adaptation?</i>
<b><i>Systemic</i></b>	Enhancing the existing systems towards system wide changes (Waddell, 2011)	<i>Is there a temporal aspect in the perceived adaptation agenda? What kind of?</i>
<b><i>Transformational</i></b>	System wide changes, potentially not irreversible (Mustelin & Handmer, 2013)	<i>What kind of outcomes are proposed for just adaptation?</i>

As I've now concluded the analysis in simple stages of a linear analysis process, I find it important to highlight the role of writing as the formative tool of qualitative research (DeLyser, 2010). Including all the necessary entanglement with the source of data (MacLure, 2014), thoughts, feelings, interactions (DeLyser, 2010) and even being a little lost here and there is an important part of the research, yet impossible to write up in detail. Based on this view, I decided to report the 'results' of the analysis together with discussion. This was done for two (yet not separate) reasons. First, while writing is a method for discovery and analysis (Richardson & St Pierre, 2000, 923) the part which devotes to the writing of the results is part of the analysis itself. Second, the premises of this thesis are in the meaning as the method of interpretation. Therefore, the results of the analysis are discussed under the 'resulting' meaning of just adaptation – the proposal of method for further interpretations.

### **3.4 Limitations of the research**

According to Schwartz-Shea & Yanow (2012, 94), the limitations of an interpretive research should not be discussed with the common terms of validity, reliability and

replicability which only make sense in the context of positivist assumptions. Like in this study, the interpretative presupposition is that the research(er) only reflects the surrounding world, rather than presents only one meaning behind words, talk or other forms of data. Therefore, it is central for interpretive approaches to appoint critique towards pure inductivism by arguing that there is no research without theoretical perspective (Salo, 2015, 181). To review the limitations of my own research, I propose to consider it in terms of a proof of conception, rather than a proof of evidence. In the following parts, I aim to answer to the questions of what kind of knowledge is produced and how the results should be used? With these auxiliary questions, I hope to provide an intake to this thesis as an interpretive conception of the meanings derived from the source of data.

While the object of the study is to explore what kind of perceptions of just adaptation are implicated in the European climate change adaptation policy dialogue, it is important to note that the analysis does not provide evidence of actual thoughts of people. Instead, the analysis provides an interpretation of the meanings of just adaptation based on the theoretical perspective and source of data. In the light of earlier research, I consider that the theoretical intersection of adaptation, environmental and climate justice and transformation does not provide a unique perspective. Yet the source of data (and my individual entry point to the study) enables to product new knowledge on the previously revised topic.

While the results are based on a source of 22 statements, it should be taken into account that the knowledge in this thesis is produced from only a narrow range of perspectives. First and foremost, it is important to consider the contributors of the statements (for full description, see section 2.3 and Appendix 1.). Secondly, the public consultations of the EU, which is the platform of the source of data, has been criticized in the light of equality. According to Alemanno (2020), the consultations are EU's oldest participatory channel, but often described as a mere clause to proof the foundational values of democracy. In practice, the consultations are subject to the European Commission's principles for preparing new initiatives and managing and evaluating existing legislation (European Commission, Better regulation Guidelines and Toolbox, 2021). In comparison, the feedback mechanism of the European Commission does not fall under the guidelines, nor it is based on specific

close-ended questions. However, in the consultation it is possible to identify those respondents with publicity consent, while the feedback remains as an anonymous source. Overall, it should be taken into account that the statements represent only a perspective, with limitations, on the topic of consultation in question (Graham et al., 2017). Therefore, I propose to consider the resulting conception of the meanings of just adaptation only in relation to the revision process of the EU Adaptation Strategy.

## **4. Results & Discussion: Carriers of Just Transition**

The civic organizations who contributed to the public consultation consider that adaptation and just transition are important to achieve. At the same time, the civic organizations seem to have adopted a strategy of no-regrets: they actively reclaim on adaptation measures to prepare for the medium and long-term climate impacts while considering that the mitigation efforts of today seem to be failing. At the same time, just adaptation is considered as a way of conserving the present state, while the agenda of just transition seems to be adopted as the desired pathway of fair adaptation. In this view, the European adaptation policy dialogue nests in the carriers of just transition – the systemic pathways of consolidating the current European state rather than transformational change.

Aligned with the research questions, the focus of the analysis was guided by the (1.) addressment of adaptation injustices and (2.) transformative features of just adaptation as a pathway of change. Under the geo-geography of Carriers of Just Transition, I discuss the results with critical climate justice praxis. In the following sections, I first focus on the addressment of environmental and climate justice concerns in the statements of the NGOs. Followed by this, I further discuss the meaning of just adaptation and conclude the discussion with the identified pathways for transformation.

### **4.1 Concerns of environmental and climate justice**

Expectedly, the concerns of environmental and climate justice were expressed through all the analytical dimensions including procedural, distributive and recognitive concerns. Due to the context of the statements, which remains in the revision process of EU Adaptation strategy, the procedural and distributive concerns were most highlighted whereas detailed statements of recognition and compensation were few and far between. With procedural concerns, I explicitly refer to the to the fairness of adaptation as a process in terms of inclusivity and transparency of the decision-making (Schlosberg, 2007). With distributive concerns, I refer to the

distribution of resources and responsibilities among people over time and space. Potentially, the highlighted role of procedures and distribution is in connection to the technical nature of EU public consultation, and the technical form of the background document (the blueprint). In the following parts of the section I describe in more detail, how the environmental and climate justice concerns were implicated in the statements of the NGOs.

Based on my interpretation the distributional dimension was mostly expressed through regional, generational (time), socio-economic and knowledge-based perspectives. Interestingly, adaptation was considered as a crucial measure to patch up the uneven distribution of climate impacts especially between the rural and urban areas as well as in Europe and outside the Europe. Considering that the source of data is focused on the region of EU, it is still notable that the traditional set-up of nation-states as the key actors (Fisher, 2015) was absent in the concerns – an the regional distributive perspective seemed to be based in Europe an outside Europe arrangement. The concerns of distributive justice were thus not tied into the adaptation, but adaptation was considered as an important (social) tool for achieving the distributional benefits. This is what Krause (2018, 514) has also noted as the link of adaptation and ‘no-regrets’ solutions. In this view, the adaptation is considered as the add-on benefit for wellbeing.

The intergenerational concerns were mostly referred in relation to mitigation efforts – yet with a relation to adaptation. In terms of intergenerational justice, the role of adaptation was considered as dependent on the mitigation. Therefore, adaptation seemed to be considered as the key initiative to prepare future generations for unavoidable climate impacts. Apart from the intergenerational perspective, the concerns over the climate change related knowledge-gaps were strongly identified and mainstreaming the adaptation knowledge and practices were considered crucial. In comparison to the regional and intergenerational perspectives, the distribution of knowledge was not considered as a tool for patcing up the lack of mitigation, but a tool for enhancing the mainstreaming of adaptation.

Under the compensatory perspective, I identified two types of concerns which were both heavily focused on the economic influence of climate impacts. Firstly, the

concerns over compensation was focused on economic insurances for those who suffer from the current and future climate shocks. Secondly, the compensation was approached through additional support mechanisms, such as for agriculture to go forward by aligning to the changing climate. The difference between the insurance and support mechanisms relies in the way of approaching the effects of climate change. While the prior focuses on supporting after the event of climate hazard, the latter focuses on preventing the risks beforehand.

This is a familiar dichotomy from the international encounters, where the responsibility of compensation is appointed through the winners and losers of climate risk (Birkmann et al., 2011). Due to the context of the statements, the responsibility of the EU was highlighted. In a way, the responsibility of the EU was considered as the framework for the local levels to be able to conduct adaptation solutions in practice. Hence, the responsibility was considered to apply in multiple levels: EU as the coordinating institution in international level, EU member states in national and EU-level and the regional and local levels as the implementing field. In terms of the unfair effects of climate change policies, the considerations related to compensation were missing. Some of the statements did bring out the concept of 'grey adaptation', which refers to the potentially negative effects of adaptation measures, but the ideas of compensating these effects was not present in the statements.

Based on my interpretation, the procedural dimension of just adaptation was identified in terms of procedural concerns of representation and participation in adaptation related decision making. The procedural concerns mostly took form around the overall idea of "being in this together", a certain sense of convergence. In many of the statements, the procedural concerns were reflected in terms of horizontal and vertical integration of decision making. In this sense, the involvement of multiple stakeholders and the bottom-up perspective were expressed as the key approaches in adaptation planning and implementation. Nevertheless, the vulnerable groups were often required to be considered in the phase of decision making, yet there were little notions on the involvement of vulnerable groups in the actual adaptation related decision-making processes. In the view of the intergenerational concerns, it was interesting that there were no concerns implicated on the participation of

youth in adaptation related decision making. Due to the nature of the NGOs as the representatives of certain sectoral agenda, the cognitive concerns were mostly related to the fields of advocacy, such as agriculture, fishing industry etc. Across the statements, the role of scientific advisory was nevertheless considered crucial to recognize in the decision-making procedures.

Recognition of socio-economic factors and vulnerability in terms of just adaptation was mostly implicated through the sectoral agenda of the NGOs. In the statements, the needs which were considered important to recognize in relation to adaptation measures varied largely. What was common, was the expression of European community and the communities beyond Europe as the vulnerable groups. Issues of gender, age or level of income were expressed in only few of the statements. More often, the statements were keen to ‘shape adaptation for those who are at most risk’ but not by them.

#### **4.1 Just adaptation: Canned in Just Transition?**

Those NGOs, who participated in the public consultation of the EU Adaptation Strategy, seem to have largely adopted the agenda of just transition as the desired form of fair and just adaptation. Rather than being a complementary framework to address climate change, Velicu & Barca (2020) and Morena et al. (2020) have argued that the ‘just transition’ includes a risk of consolidating the present means of livelihood. In terms of adapting to climate change, the mitigation and adaptation measures are not equitably distributed (around the world) and progressively harder to implement with global temperature rise beyond 1.5°C (IPCC, 2022). Keeping this in mind, it is surprising that the just transition seems to be adopted by both; the EU and by those NGOs, who participated in the public consultation.

In terms of the perceptions of just adaptation in the public consultation, it is important to note, that the concept of just adaptation and just transition are often used in a combined form in the documentation of the EU. This was especially present in the public consultation, while the background document (the blueprint) refers to just adaptation in combination with just transition.

*“Finally, solidarity and convergence across and within Member States have a key role to play for adaptation and ensuring a just transition and just adaptation” (European Commission, 2020)*

In practice, the blueprint is a sort of a cover letter of the EU to inform various agencies about the public hearings. Another example of the use of just adaptation and just transition in combined form was in the questionnaire as part of the public consultation. While it is interesting that around half of the total of respondents considered just adaptation and just transition important (see Table 6. below), it raises more questions on the perceptions of just adaptation. In what way do the respondents consider of just transition and just adaptation? Equal?

*Table 6. Importance of achieving just adaptation and just transition with EU Adaptation Strategy based on “How important is it for a new EU Adaptation Strategy to achieve ‘just adaptation and just transition’?” (Public consultation of the EU Adaptation Strategy, 2020)*

<b>Organization</b>	<b>Hard to Say</b>	<b>Not Important</b>	<b>Rather not Important</b>	<b>Neither Important nor Unimportant</b>	<b>Rather Important</b>	<b>Important</b>	<b>Do not know</b>	<b>Total</b>
Academic/ Research Institution	-	1	1	9	9	16	1	37
Business Association	2	-	1	6	17	5	8	39
Company/ Business organisation	-	-	1	4	11	12	1	29
Consumer Organisation		-	-	-	-	1		1
Environmental Organisation	-	-	-	1	2	8	2	13
EU Citizen	3	5	4	17	32	107	14	182
<b>NGOs</b>	-	-	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>45</b>
Non-EU Citizen	-	-	-	1	1	2		4
Other	3	-	2	-	6	11	2	24
Public authority	1	-	-	2	8	18	1	30
Trade Union	-	-	-	-	2	6	-	8
(blank)	7	7	15	61	138	278	38	544
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>231</b>	<b>497</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>956</b>

Based on my interpretation, the NGOs largely formulate the meaning of just adaptation through a consolidated agenda of holding on the current status of European society. In this trajectory, the meaning of just adaptation becomes expressed through the shared sense of preparing for climate impacts ‘to not regret’. This resolution was based on the concerns of environmental and climate justice, which were often expressed in relation to the potential failure of mitigation efforts as well as to ensuring the current state of Europe through prevention of risks. The relation to the potential failure of climate change mitigation, was expressed for example in a statement by Climate Action Network Europe:

*“Unfortunately, current emissions projections will result in a global temperature increase of more than 3°C, which will lead to irreversible environmental and economic devastation. It is therefore essential that the EU pursues effective and coherent adaptation and disaster risk reduction efforts together with its mitigation action.” (CAN Europe, 2020)*

Moreover, the role of adaptation in relation to mitigation was often emphasized as the long-term solution for expected and new climate variables. Hence, the meaning of just adaptation was constructed through a more systematic way of start doing things in a new way for future purposes, while mitigation was proposed as the immediate form of action. This was expressed for example in the following statement submitted by World Wide Fund:

*“Therefore, WWF vies the mitigation of climate change and building a climate neutral society as soon as possible as fundamental investments in Europe’s future. Keeping that in mind, adapting to climate change is a necessity to increase the resilience of our societies, ecosystems and economies, and the Climate Adaptation Strategy should be a cornerstone of all current and future initiatives of the European Union.” (WWF, 2020)*

The need for adaptation (due to the potential failure of mitigation) was interestingly related to preserving the current European state. For example, in the statement by Surfrider Europe, the role of adaptation is described crucial for European society.

*“Even though mitigation must remain the absolute political and economic priority in dealing with climate change, designing a viable and sustainable adaptation strategy is crucial for European society.”(SE, 2020)*

The European state of art was often separated from the surrounding world. While climate change was acknowledged as the global challenge to tackle, adaptation was considered as the necessary measure to prepare for the impacts in the EU. In this view, the adaptation was often appointed more alarming in the regions beyond Europe. While adaptation was described as preparations to restore the European status quo, the role of adaptation beyond Europe is expressed with a more distressed discourse. In a statement by the Nature Concervancy, these two views are even connected as it is advised to prepare EU for the climate impacts beyond Europe through international efforts.

*“Finally, the new Adaptation Strategy should consider how to prepare the EU for the effects of climate change in third countries and support more international adaptation efforts to increase resilience and sustainable development through the establishment of a new international framework.” (TNC, 2020)*

Although many of the NGOs acknowledge the negative impacts of climate change already in the present state, the need for adaptation is appointed more often in the medium or long term than immediately. As in the statement by Red Cross EU Office, adaptation is highlighted as a way of preparing for the upcoming, yet inevitable, climate impacts.

*“It is key to prepare for the increase of climate shocks that are now known to be inevitable. -- Therefore, governments and donors cannot*

*afford to miss the opportunity of supporting more adaptation – in the EU and worldwide.” (Red Cross EU Office, 2020)*

In this section I have argued that the agenda of just transition could be the desired form of fair and just adaptation for many of the NGOs who took part in the public consultation. Rather than using the concepts of environmental and climate justice, which have become somewhat established in scientific climate justice literature, the NGOs seem to have adopted what I call ‘agenda’ language. International agreements were often pointed out as the means of rights and the Brussels jargon was much present. Therefore, one could ask if the NGOs have adopted the language of the EU to strive for the sectoral goals important to the members under the umbrella organizations. In the light of this notion, the ‘canned’ agenda of just transition as the perceived form of just adaptation has two sides. On the one hand, it creates a shared arena for the dialogue of just adaptation but on the other hand, it lacks the plural concerns of justice beyond the booming transition talk.

#### **4.2 Pathways for transformation**

Based on my interpretation, some differences exist between those NGOs that construct just adaptation at the scale from incremental to systemic and those NGOs who express the just adaptation measures in a scale from systemic to transformational. While those statements in the incremental-systemic scale were focused on the maintenance and development of the existing systems, the systemic-transformative approach was expressed through the paradigm change and urgency of absolute actions.

In the statements of the NGOs, the incremental-systemic features were expressed more commonly than the transformative features. Considering the size and scope of the NGOs, there were no significant differences, yet slightly more medium sized NGOs active on the European, local and regional levels who expressed the incremental-systemic approach. The shared sense of “getting ready” was especially grounded in the scale of incremental to systemic transformation. Especially the maintenance and development of the existing adaptation systems and measures were

highlighted, as it is stated in the statement by World Horse Welfare in the context of addressing adaptation measures

*“Whereas all communities are at risk from climate change, it is the poorest that are often most vulnerable and least able to cope to its impact. However, when assessing how best to address climate change, we suggest it would be useful to identify existing sustainable approaches already in use which can be better supported through policy ---” (WHW, 2020)*

Besides the ‘well-planned - half done’ discourse, the incremental-systemic features were often related to future risks. For example, in the following statement, the systemic approach is underlined in relation to preparedness and emergency response needs to reduce risks.

*“Systemic adaptation combined with disaster risk management can limit emergency response needs in the first place and help reduce risks, bolster preparedness, and anticipate and respond more effectively to the consequences of climate change.” (Red Cross EU Office, 2020)*

While the maintenance and building on the existing system was considered essential, the EU was expected to take the leadership and provide the framework for climate change adaptation measures. Considering the source of data, the EU’s agency was expected to become obvious, but when compared to the systemic-transformational approaches, the EU’s agency was less highlighted. As was stated by The Nature Conservancy, the EU was even expected to have global leadership in adaptation planning and implementation.

*“TNC commends the European Commission for its global leadership and welcomes the initiative of the European Commission to review, improve and adopt a new, more ambitious EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change as part of the European Green Deal to increase the EU’s climate ambition for 2030 and 2050.” (TNC, 2020)*

Yet the EU was expected to enhance synergistic and convergent approach in Adaptation Strategy. In this view, mainstreaming the information related to adaptation was considered important as well as the vertical cooperation between European and international stakeholders. As was stated by European Environmental Bureau, the synergistic approach was often considered as the way of providing win-win solutions while addressing the hazardous climate change impacts.

*“The update of the strategy provides an important opportunity to develop solutions that address a range of hazards and vulnerabilities while also offering opportunities for win-win or at least no-regret solutions in addition to climate adaptation such as climate mitigation, biodiversity, air, water and soil quality as well as human health and wellbeing. A focus on such synergistic approaches is demanded not only by the urgency of the planetary crises, but also by the need to contribute to the protection of human health and to enhance the resilience of ecological and social systems. It is also a simple question of cost-effectiveness.” (EEB, 2020)*

The systemic-transformative features were less common in the statements of the NGOs. Considering the size and scope of the NGOs, there were barely more large and global organizations. In the systemic-transformational statements, the construction of just adaptation was most often related to human, environmental and cosmopolitan rights approach as well as to the urgency of actions. Therefore, the problem structuring of climate change was slightly different than in the incremental-systemic statements. For example, the statement by European Environmental Bureau challenges the ‘merely encouraging’ current state of adaptation measures

*“Adaptation Strategy that must go beyond merely encouraging the existence of national strategies and should therefore set clear and measurable targets, proper implementation mechanisms and indicators for adaptation measures and establish a monitoring. Especially for Nature-based solutions, measurable targets are needed to translate growing theoretical acceptance into practice.”*

Like in the above statement, the ‘paradigm change’ was mostly nested in direct measures such as legislation and monitoring. At the same time, the transformational pathways were also considered as parallel measures, as stated by The Nature Conservancy.

*“Europe requires transformational pathways that focus not only on solutions but also on preventive responses to increase resilience for comprehensive risk management.” TNC, 2020)*

In this chapter I have described my interpretation of the two transformative pathways of just adaptation. In the table 7. below, I’ve indicated a summary of the incremental-systemic and systemic-transformative pathways of just adaptation in the statements of the NGOs. While the pathways of transformative adaptation take many forms subject to divergent framings, problem structurings, adaptation agendas and implementations (Mustelin & Handmer, 2013), the aim of the summarization is to provide an overall understanding of the potential pathways of just adaptation.

*Table 7. Summary of the transformative pathways of just adaptation in the statements of the NGOs.*

<b>Adaptation criteria</b>	<b>Incremental-systemic</b>	<b>Systemic-Transformative</b>
<b>Framing</b>	Complicated, need to be ‘tried’	Complex, open-ended
<b>Problem structuring</b>	Maintenance & development of the existing systems	Paradigm change, ‘all-hands on the deck’ approach
<b>Adaptation agenda</b>	Future uncertainty is acknowledged but not built into decision-making	Urgent actions for long-term change, no return to the prior
<b>Implementation</b>	Mainstreaming of adaptation knowledge through enhancing horizontal cooperation	Horizontal & vertical cooperation

In the incremental-systemic features of transformational adaptation, the scale of change remains in the maintenance and development of existing systems and future uncertainty is acknowledged. Yet, the future uncertainty is not built into the desired

decision-making processes. Therefore, the framing of just adaptation as an agenda remains in the implementation of the management and power relations of change, and the mainstreaming of adaptation related knowledge and enhancement of horizontal cooperation is emphasized.

While the statements in the incremental-systemic scale were focused on the maintenance and development of the existing systems, the systemic-transformative approach was expressed through the paradigm change and urgency of absolute actions. The systemic-transformative statements distinguished the framing of transformational adaptation as complex and open-ended process of change. The scale of change was expressed through the common phrase of ‘paradigm change’, which refers to the fundamental and long-term actions without easily going back to the prior (or at all). In comparison to the incremental-systemic axis, the statements emphasized both horizontal and vertical cooperation in the management of just adaptation measures. In terms of the transformative scales of change which I’ve identified in this research, there were no signs of radical social change (Krause (2018, 515). This is probably partially a result of the criteria of the transformative features, which included only three stages of transformative pathways.

## 5. Conclusions

To address the growing concerns of environmental crisis, and the overarching dissatisfaction on the efforts to tackle it, a range of actors have adopted the idea of just transition. Rather than being a complementary framework for addressing climate change, the agenda with multiple meanings includes a risk of consolidating the present means of livelihood (Velicu & Barca, 2020; Morena et al., 2020). In this thesis, my interest has been in the framework of just transition in relation to climate change adaptation. If the framework of just transition simply maintains the creation of present means of livelihood, what kind of adaptation is considered fair?

The focus of the research is particularly on European climate change adaptation dialogue in the platform of a public consultation of EU Adaptation Strategy which was organized by the European Commission in 2020. With an interpretive approach, I explored the perceptions of just adaptation in a number of 22 position papers contributed by civic organizations. The exploration was guided by research questions based on (1.) the addressment of adaptation injustices and (2.) adaptation as a pathway of change, which I approached through the prism of environmental and climate justice principles and transformative features of adaptation. The meaning of just adaptation was discussed with climate justice praxis, under the geo-geography of Carriers of Just Transition,

The NGOs who contributed to the public consultation consider adaptation and just transition important to achieve. Based on my interpretation, the NGOs seem to have adopted a strategy of no-regrets: they actively reclaim on adaptation measures to prepare for the medium and long-term impacts while considering that the mitigation efforts of today seem to be failing. Therefore, it seems that just adaptation is described as the cut and glue measure, to patch up the flood with a suitable barrier.

At the same time, just adaptation is considered as a way of conserving the present state. In this sense, the NGOs are generally satisfied with the EU's aims to lead the way in the adaptation policies of the Europe and beyond. In this view, the political agenda of just transition seems to be adopted as the desired pathway of fair

adaptation in the European climate change adaptation dialogue. Therefore, the meaning of just adaptation largely nests to the carriers of just transition – systemic pathways of consolidating the current European status rather than transformational change.

Now turning back to my initial question of what kind of adaptation is considered fair in terms of the just transition agenda, I find myself within despair. If just transition is being carried away without the inscribed transformation, who demands the systemic change to address structural inequality and destabilize power systems that produce climate injustices? Looking for alternative windows of ecological solidarity, like Velicu & Barca (2020) and Huttunen & Rekola (2021) suggest, might open some new views for the different ways of what is considered fair. But is this the transformative praxis we need to adopt?

With this thesis, I have contributed to the emerging need of acknowledging the concerns of fairness and equity in adaptation policies. As I've argued that the research of adaptation itself needs to be developed in the transformative praxis, I further suggest that while there won't be no single ideal of just adaptation for all, the art is in the becoming of (Sultana, 2021). While time is running out, there's no time for passivity.

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## Appendix 1

Scope and size of the NGOs by level of activity in local & regional, national, European and global levels (EU Transparency Register, 2022). Size of the organization as indicated in the consultation. (Large 250 or more employees, Medium < 250 employees, Small < 50 employees, Micro < 10 employees).

NGO name	Local/ regional	National	European	Global	Size of the NGO
1. <i>Our Fish</i>	x	x	x	x	Micro
2. <i>Local Governments for Sustainability, European Secretariat (ICLEI)</i>	x	x	x		Medium
3. <i>Fundacja EkoRozwoju (Foundation for Sustainability)</i>	x	x	x		Small
4. <i>Surfrider Foundation Europe (SFE)</i>	x	x	x	x	Small
5. <i>International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, EU Office (RDCEU)</i>	x	x	x	x	Large
6. <i>Action Against Hunger (AAH)</i>	x	x	x	x	Large
7. <i>Climate Action Network Europe (CAN)</i>	x	x	x	x	Small
8. <i>Climate Disclosure Standards Board (CDSB)</i>		x	x		Small
9. <i>Euromontana - European Association of mountain areas (EMAM)</i>	x	x	x	x	Micro
10. <i>World Wide Fund for Nature, European Policy Office (WWF)</i>			x	x	Small
11. <i>Compassion in World Farming International, EU Office (CWFI)</i>		x	x	x	Medium
12. <i>World Horse Welfare (WHW)</i>			x	x	Medium
13. <i>BirdLife Europe (BE)</i>		x	x	x	Small
14. <i>European Environmental Bureau (EEB)</i>	x	x	x	x	Medium
15. <i>European Landowners' Organization (ELO)</i>	x	x	x		Small
16. <i>European Federation of Allergies and Airways Diseases Patients' Associations (EFA)</i>			x		Micro
17. <i>The Nature Conservancy Europe (TNC)</i>			x	x	Large
18. <i>Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)</i>			x	x	Large

19. <i>Wetlands International European Association (WIEA)</i>			x		Micro
20. <i>Centre Européen de Prévention du Risque d'Inondation*</i>	x	x	x		Micro
21. <i>German Professional Association for Agroforestry*</i>	x	x	x		Micro
22. <i>Central Union of Agricultural Producers and Forest Owners MTK*</i>	x	x	x		Medium

\* Statement dismissed from the study because of use of language or insufficient content.