

Age as an intersectional concept in ecofeminism

*Gen Z environmentalism and a theoretical approach towards an interdisciplinary
ecofeminism*

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Introduction

This thesis works on the intersections of ecofeminism, intersectionality theory (with a focus on age as an intersectional concept), dark green religion and other related subjects such as queer theory in order to analyse, and describe potential powerful collaborations with, Gen Z environmentalism. Through this endeavour, I hope to re-evaluate important ecofeminist concerns, study how age as a factor of intersectionality unites and divides, and how generational generalizations function in approaches to gender, worldviews, and spiritualities. The extent to which the woman/nature nexus functions in a way that man/nature does not is astounding and ubiquitous; pondering the material of this thesis, I was looking out of my kitchen window onto concrete gardens below and suddenly remembered a geography test I took during high school. One of the questions on the exam had us explaining how women's emancipation was responsible for the concreting of gardens, which in turn led to worse ground quality and induced risk of flooding; the answer that my teacher desired was that in our current society, women were spending less time on garden work due to their increased job opportunities outside of the home. Concrete gardens, as a 'solution' with disastrous consequences, was neatly aligned with female neglect and desire to distance womanhood from natural environments in order to pursue the 'cultural', implicitly pointing to masculinist waves of feminism as a form of attack on nature. Even though I never forgot this particular question (mostly because I was annoyed that the question had nothing to do with our study material), the full extent of the ridiculousness of this train of thought did not cross my mind until I started studying ecofeminism. That ecofeminism makes particular additions to feminism in general that are now as relevant as they were in ecofeminism's golden days is one of the topics discussed in this thesis, which will be argued mostly by means of theoretical discussion through literature study, but will be expanded on by the discussion of the case study of Fridays For Future. This movement, interesting for all scholars of environmental issues, combines concern for the environmental crisis with countless other societal problematics that need to be addressed in order to ensure a global, green revolution. Perhaps the most characteristic aspect of the identity of the movement is its backbone and target audience; students, ranging from elementary schools to universities (therefore often called Gen Z in this thesis). Not only characteristic for the movement itself, but also for the strong criticisms and downright foul attacks that Fridays For Future and Greta Thunberg (its founder) have had to endure is this aspect of age; a questionable practice in itself, but even more painful in light of the rather seemingly justified behaviour of diminishing professionals or experts who are just as qualified as older colleagues for their age (something I have heard most often related to events in the medical field, on a sidenote). It is because of the importance of this aspect that I discuss age as an intersectional concept, using theory from the particular subfield of intersectionality, to look at Fridays For Future and its identity and opposition, and combine this with the ecofeminist practice of and interest in overcoming dichotomies. Finally, I analyse another aspect that is strongly represented in Fridays For Future's agenda and 'methodology'; the unfaltering belief in the victory of 'science' and its use in the movement's arguments and against other ontologies and world-framing narratives specifically. I test the usefulness of applying thought on dark green religion and similar concepts on Fridays For Future and its followers, not only because of my background and interest in religious studies, but also because I think there are important connections between movements such as Fridays For Future and the formation and expression of spiritual tendencies amongst the generation that is most affiliated with it. Yet again, I turn to specific ecofeminist ideas and theories that may give form and direction to the simmering thoughts I detect in this multifaceted environment. The discussion of these subjects will take the following form.

First, I discuss the history of ecofeminism, and how ecofeminist ideas are present (though not always named as such) in current academic contexts. In chapter two, I turn to intersectionality; a general introduction to the field leads up to chapter three, in which I discuss age as an intersectional concept specifically. The conclusions of this chapter should be helpful in chapter four, where I discuss Fridays For Future as a case study; after a short historical account of the development of the organization, I turn to its ways of identifying

through the material that is displayed on the movement's website, and to its discussion in the (news) media for an evaluation of its reception and societal impact. Insights in this current revival of environmental concern are then discussed with regard to the topic of ecofeminism, as I assess what gaps ecofeminism can help fill and how it should comply to current interests and demands. Then, after the final chapter on Gen Z environmentalism and dark green religion, there should be ample ways in which to answer the following central research question: How can the study of age as an intersectional concept enrich ecofeminist thought and aid in understanding the nature of Gen Z environmentalism?

Chapter 1: Ecofeminism - A historical reconstruction

Ecofeminism has a relatively brief, but profound history and its many influences, sources, and historical ties make it an incredibly multifaceted construction. Even though ecofeminism can be seen as an ‘amalgam of feminism and environmentalism constructed in different times and places in different ways’¹, there are a lot of things to be said that speak for (almost) all of ecofeminism’s variants.

Concerning the feminist roots of ecofeminism, Charlene Spretnak states that it takes over most of its foundations from ‘radical, or cultural, feminism (rather than from liberal feminism or socialist feminism)’, and their consequent argument that behind every expression of patriarchal culture lies the dominance of male over female.² Noël Sturgeon provides a detailed account of the many origins (both in theory and movement) that have led to different expressions of ecofeminism in *Ecofeminist Natures*; she describes how certain strands of ecofeminism arose as feminist alternatives to ecological movements that displayed sexist notions (deep ecology, for instance, was accused of celebrating and even further expanding the male ego).³ Sturgeon’s account, on a sidenote, also shows how some paradoxes within ecofeminism are traceable, explicable, and do not necessarily lead to a necessary rejection of ecofeminism as a whole, or of certain theories in particular. That ecological concern, a need to fight the environmental disaster of the last age and other human-related devastations of vulnerable natural sites are on the forefront of ecofeminism’s topics is self-evident, but ecofeminism far transcends the denomination of a simple reactionary movement. Far from being a combination of ecology studies and feminist critique alone, it makes particular claims and, through these claims and stances, forms a new perspective and methodology to apply to countless issues. The following concerns are typical and prevalent in ecofeminist thought.

In the history of Western modernity, dualistic modes of thinking have been preferred and used for centuries in order to form ‘sensible’, ‘rational’ worldviews and systems. The divisions of humankind and the rest of nature, mind and body, culture and nature and countless others have functioned to explain the ‘nature’ of things: something is what its counterpart is not, and vice versa. Innocent as this way of categorization may seem, its consequences go much deeper than the mere act of distinguishing; in it, there is an underlying power play (or so ecofeminist thinkers claim) that makes the two sides of the dualism unequal not only in terms of supposed ‘nature’, as one is continuously placed above the other instead on the same level with regard to value and power. Culture was celebrated as the overcoming and cultivation of brute nature, reason as trumping emotion, mind as superior to the dull, unintelligent body, and so forth.

It is not only this kind of ‘and/or’-thinking that ecofeminism attacks.⁴ It has been noted that these dualisms themselves have been linked in order to form another system of contrasting terms, an overarching dualism in a way: mind, culture, rationality, and ‘man’ as sides of the dualism-axis have been associated with each other just like body, nature, emotion and ‘woman’ have been.⁵ The examples of these associations and their outcomes, unfortunately, are innumerable; logical systems leaning on this dualistic, inherently power-dividing and role-assigning frame have facilitated and justified the exclusion of women in many societal and political spheres and have denied women status and even the right to decide over their

¹ Susan Buckingham, ‘Ecofeminism in the Twenty-First Century’, *The Geographical Journal* 170 (2004) 146-154, 146.

² Charlene Spretnak, ‘Ecofeminism: Our Roots and Flowering’, in: Irene Diamond & Gloria Feman Orenstein eds. *Reweaving The World: The Emergence of Ecofeminism* (San Francisco 1990) 3-14, 5.

³ Noël Sturgeon, *Ecofeminist Natures: Race, Gender, Feminist Theory and Political Action* (New York 1997) 40-50, and Charlene Spretnak, ‘Radical Nonduality in Ecofeminist Philosophy’, in: Karen J. Warren ed. *Ecofeminism: Women, Culture, Nature* (Bloomington 1997) 428.

⁴ Robert Sessions, ‘Deep Ecology Versus Ecofeminism: Healthy Differences of Incompatible Philosophies?’, *Hypatia* 6 (1991) 90-107, 100.

⁵ Greta Gaard, ‘Toward a Queer Ecofeminism’, *Hypatia* 12 (1997) 114-137, 116. Using work by Val Plumwood, 1993.

own bodies. Ecofeminism, then, tries above all to overcome injustices that are built in an often unconscious or 'self-evident' logical system that, through certain crooked connections, has led to power imbalances.

Karen J. Warren, in her philosophical ecofeminist work, has posited the following premises upon which every variety of ecofeminism seems to be built, or must agree with: '(i) there are important connections between the oppression of women and the oppression of nature; (ii) understanding the nature of these connections is necessary to any adequate understanding of the oppression of woman and the oppression of nature; (iii) feminist theory and practice must include an ecological perspective; and (iv) solutions to ecological problems must include a feminist perspective'.⁶

Ecofeminists have traced the expressions, origins, and ramifications of these associations in their research that incorporates insight in historical phenomena, legislation, religion, philosophy, literature, and cultural patterns and many other facets of everyday life. This reflects ecofeminism's character, its strength and its greatest challenge; the enormity of its scope. In figuring out how to dismantle a societal system (patriarchy) and to prevent a global crisis from developing even further, it has developed a historical overview⁷ of the thousands of years of thought and practice that have led to the malfunctioning of current societies. The fact that ecofeminists agree on the association of woman and nature (among many other things) and their joint subjugation leads, however, to quite different conclusions when it comes to disbanding this logic. Some ecofeminists recognize and appropriate this association as some sort of alliance – taking it over, or almost 'reclaiming' this idea, they try to turn it from a negative association that allows denigration and subjugation into woman's special ability or natural superiority that deserves celebration and privilege. Other ecofeminists wholeheartedly fight this particular connection and everything it implies; its underlying systems, hierarchies and philosophies, although sometimes not because they believe it is intrinsically something bad for woman to be associated with nature, but it is bad if woman *alone* is associated with nature, or woman is associated with nature *alone*. Again others find an intermediate position, acknowledging the negative effect of the woman-nature association in political contexts but, for themselves, finding meaning and (spiritual) healing in ideas that are quite related to this very association (goddess religion/spirituality have often been incorporated into ecofeminist thought). It could be argued that these seemingly paradoxical notions relate to different domains of one's experiences (in the same way that 'natural' scientists are sometimes devout Christians); at the same time, it evokes questions on the soundness of arguments or the validity of the surrounding theories when there is no consensus among ecofeminists on spirituality as a phenomenon that strongly modifies or permeates the desired worldviews expressed by ecofeminism. The different ways in which spirituality has been expressed in an ecofeminist language and environments and possible adaptations in the twenty-first century will be discussed further in the final chapter, 'Gen Z Environmentalism and dark green religion'.

Returning to general ecofeminist characteristics, there is a recurring theme of relatedness and relationships which clearly stems from environmentalism's and ecology's insights into the connectedness of all things,⁸ although ecofeminism expands this concept to not only include natural bodies and processes but also other forms of dependence and interrelatedness. Ecofeminism, like any other ecological philosophy, believes in the inherent value of nature, and views it as an entity with rights and needs that need to be respected and with whom humans need to cooperate in a peaceful balance. Adding its gender analysis to this belief, ecofeminism argues that both anthropocentrism and androcentrism are the cause for environmental and societal injustices.⁹

⁶ Karen J. Warren, 'Feminism and Ecology: Making Connections', *Environmental Ethics* 9 (1987) 3-20, 4-5.

⁷ 'For ecofeminism not only comprehends the problem of anthropocentrism, but adds the crucial dimension of history – the actual ways in which the logic of domination has been used against particular beings and systems', Sessions, 'Deep Ecology Versus Ecofeminism', 100.

⁸ Chandra Alexandre, 'Integral Ecofeminism: An Introduction', *Integral Review* 9 (2013) 40-45, 41.

⁹ Sessions, 'Deep Ecology Versus Ecofeminism', 100.

From the history just described, an image arises of ecofeminism as an academic discipline that, because of its widely applicable methods and universally relevant aims, finds fertile ground for development in countless scientific areas. Outside of academia, however, it has led a life of its own. Attracting a large following and uniting people who felt that a liberation of both women and nature needed to be effectuated through their everyday experiences, ecofeminist activism developed in a distinguished way – a development often discussed or problematized by ecofeminist critics, who pointed to the need of reciprocally informed activism and academics. As scholars debated, critiqued and pondered over the theoretical differences between their philosophies and were attacked for the lack of unity within the movement they represented, in the ‘outside world’ there lived an activism that apparently had a base firm and compelling enough to find traction in both academics and non-academics, and where slightly deviating differences in standpoints seemed to be of little importance. Some of the critiques and criticisms within academia, within as well as outside of ecofeminist circles, may have proved to be more memorable than some of the original ecofeminist ideas and theories.

Criticism

Ecofeminism has had to cope with and react to countless criticisms, misunderstandings, and denigrations over the years, although (as with most cases of criticism) some of these proved to be quite constructive for ecofeminism’s continuous development. I will name some of the most prominent critiques, as well as helpful refutations that aimed to overcome them. One of the most famous critiques came from Janet Biehl, who once identified as an ecofeminist herself, but had abandoned it for social ecology. After this turn, she wrote *Rethinking Ecofeminist Politics* as an indictment against ecofeminism’s alleged mysticism, paradoxes, and irrationality.¹⁰ Even though some of her concerns about ecofeminism are legitimate, she is shown to be uncritically constructing a limited, extremely radical kind of ecofeminism against which she can offer social ecology as the better alternative.¹¹ One of the main flaws ecofeminism was ‘accused’ of was its essentialism; even though essentialist notions are not on the forefront of every form of ecofeminism, and are for that matter not exclusive to ecofeminism alone, a simple reference to ‘essentialism’ was often enough to discard ecofeminism entirely in academic circles, and make the term ‘ecofeminist’ one that could, for scientific reliability, better be avoided.¹² It is peculiar that ecofeminism in particular has suffered from the essentialism discussion for its connections between women and nature (even though most of ecofeminism is about uncovering or disempowering the societal consequences of these associations). For, when Sturgeon asks: ‘How can feminist coalitions be created without assuming (or requiring) that all women are the same in some essential way, relying on some notion of natural or universal female characteristics?’¹³, she shows that the ‘danger’ of essentialism is present in really any expression of feminism, and with feminism countless other categorizations or theories that revolve around either unifying or defying particularities.

Another dimension in which ecofeminism has been said to fall short is that of acknowledgement for factors that cause and sustain oppression and difference other than the male-female distinction and the consequent woman-nature association. Often seen as a feminism for white, middle-class American women, it did not (initially) find traction in

¹⁰ Janet Biehl, *Rethinking Ecofeminist Politics* (Boston 1991).

¹¹ Excellent refutations of Biehl’s complaints in *Rethinking Ecofeminist Politics* have been made by Ariel Salleh, ‘Second Thoughts on *Rethinking Ecofeminist Politics*: A Dialectical Critique’, *ISLE* 1 (1993) 93-106, and Noël Sturgeon in *Ecofeminist Natures*.

¹² Sturgeon recounts multiple instances of encountered uneasiness with the term in *Ecofeminist Natures*, 6, and Greta Gaard starts off her ‘Ecofeminism Revisited: Rejecting Essentialism and Re-Placing Species in a Material Feminist Environmentalism’, *Feminist Formations* 23 (2011) 26-53, by recounting how scholars working on the feminism/environmentalism intersections were ‘fearing their scholarship would be contaminated by association with the term “ecofeminism”’, 26.

¹³ Sturgeon, *Ecofeminist Natures*, 16/17.

circles that suffered not only because of a certain womanhood, but also because of discrimination based on race, class, wealth, sexuality, or gender (which should be seen as more complex and diverse than the mere women as 'not-men' and part of nature association work on 'gender' that is present in every kind of ecofeminism). Theorists such as Sturgeon and Spretnak have thoroughly discussed the importance of incorporating multiple perspectives and the interests of more than those of developed countries and privileged peoples into the ecofeminist agenda, but the stigma of exclusivity has haunted the field of ecofeminism persistently nevertheless. This, in turn, leads to the question whether ecofeminism is able to truly present itself as inclusive and representative in words and statements alone, countering feelings (for things like 'feelings' and intransigence retain the right of not being affected by stone-cold logic, statements, and arguments) of reluctance and resentment that ecofeminism has encountered based on its past and its various and continuous reinventions of itself.

I feel that a twofold approach in this case proves to be the most fair and constructive assessment. Purely sex-wise, the more essentialist expressions of ecofeminism can still make a lot of valid points; Diamond and Orenstein noted how women's ' (...) bodies are important markers, the sites upon which local, regional or even planetary stress is often played out'¹⁴. This helps drawing attention to how too often still, men are in charge of women's bodies, leading to lack of (for example) medical care, abortion regulations, and recognition of the essentiality of sanitary products. However, there does seem to be too little self-reflectiveness in this regard, because ecofeminism is ironically the field much too informed by gender studies and theory to make such claims on sex and superficial politics alone without incorporating gender in these claims. That makes it a bit of a weird contortion, and allows critics who accuse ecofeminism of unclarity to stand in their right. Still, it has also been noted that ecofeminists have aptly responded to their critics (find quote again), a justification that apparently did not inspire new responses (or at least not a very notable or rememberable ones), permitting the discussion to slowly and quietly fade away during the first decade of this millennium.

There are, however, certain premises that can aid in approaching this question. From an ecofeminist perspective, the non-restricting nature of ecofeminism (or, ecofeminism as it should be) comes to light in the following quote by Ynestra King, who provided a possible answer in a debate on biological determinism as used in patriarchy: so long as the prerequisite is that 'nature is understood as a realm of potential freedom for human beings', then 'both women and men (...) act in human history as part of the natural history of the planet, in which human intentionality and potentiality are an affirmed part of nature'.¹⁵ This idea shows that, for example, a use of binary systems/terminology need not exclude other appearances of human life and understanding. In this debate on inclusivity, intersectionality theory is of extreme importance; this topic is therefore further addressed in the next chapter. On a sidenote, in this context of criticism I would also like to raise awareness for Foster's notion that 'abandoning a school of thought because it includes some less palatable aspects, after all, is not replicated in other (male-dominated) fields of political theory or philosophy'¹⁶; treating ecofeminism with nuance without immediately 'cancelling' it at the slightest hiccup transcends common decency and becomes a feminist cause. Following the trend of 'cancel culture' with regard to academic disciplines seems in no way to contribute to an environment of scientific growth where mistakes are learning possibilities.

Ecofeminism and the 'post'

¹⁴ Irene Diamond & Gloria Feman Orenstein eds. *Reweaving the World: the Emergence of Ecofeminism* (San Francisco 1990) x.

¹⁵ Ynestra King, 'What is Ecofeminism', *The Nation* (1987) 702. As read in Sturgeon's *Ecofeminist Natures*, 45.

¹⁶ Emma Foster, 'Ecofeminism revisited: critical insights on contemporary environmental governance', *Feminist Theory* 22 (2021) 190-205, 200.

More recent feminist texts discussing the topics above do not easily or quickly identify with ecofeminism (anymore), which can make it hard to assess whether they can be counted as part of ecofeminist thought or not – without full disclosure of the authors themselves, I think it will be up to the reader to interpretate this.

Charlene Spretnak, in *The Resurgence of the Real*, seems to base her entire argument around how to arrive at an ‘ecological postmodernism’¹⁷ from the starting point of ecofeminist thought (without necessarily abandoning ecofeminism in itself), and this way of thinking could be regarded as one of the expressions in which ecofeminist concern is mostly expressed nowadays. The amazing abundance of the prefixes seems to be one of the most popular trends ecofeminism leaves as a legacy.

Donna Haraway, a renowned name in many circles, is mostly known for her creating of a way of thinking and integrating thought, academic methods and creative processes that has inspired (and continues to do so) ecofeminists and non-ecofeminists alike. Haraway’s place in an ecofeminist context is, however, contested, her work being interpreted as an ‘outsider’s critique’ of ecofeminism as well as ‘inside “ecofeminism”’ and ‘expanding the purview of ecofeminism from within’.¹⁸

Her work conflates all kinds of planes on which power struggles take place, and transcends limitative patters, binaries, and structures. It is therefore that Rosi Braidotti notes her as one of the most prominent precursors of what she calls the ‘posthumanities’, which could be interpreted as another reworking of ecofeminist material in alignment with similar strands and updated with later insights and an even broader scope. In this context, Braidotti formulates a theory of postanthropocentrism, which critiques the species hierarchy made and operated by humankind, and posthumanism, the historically amazingly formative paradigm that treats ‘Man’ (man specifically, not mankind) as “measure of all things”.¹⁹

All these things are, in some way (or so I see it) a form of post-ecofeminism, although this term is not operated and, in the line of earlier caution, scholars may still be wary of being associated with any kind of ‘ecofeminist’ terminology.

However, despite my heading and the frequent use of the ‘post’-prefix, these discussed feminisms (including ecofeminism) are in no way closely tied to post-feminism, which has been regarded as antithetical to feminism in the worst case, and as strongly distinct from it in the best.²⁰ Following the expression of famous ecofeminist Maria Mies, ecofeminism (as nearly all other feminisms) will ‘be a post-feminist in post-patriarchy’,²¹ and no sooner.

Opportunities and gaps

The previous discussion, the refutations of critiques, and recent ‘unofficial’ ecofeminist work hopefully already suffice for making the conclusion that ecofeminist thought and legacy deserves thorough and attentive revisitations. I will, in addition to this, briefly discuss a few minor subjects that ecofeminism could yet take up.

One of the most prominent issues I recognize is the attention ecofeminism directs towards an overcoming of dualisms, which is one of its most powerful abilities and absolutely vital to its core and approaches. One of the dualisms that ecofeminism has, to my knowing, barely (if at all) discussed is the one that creates a sharp tension between ‘old’ and ‘young’, with problematic assumptions and extremely general negative stereotyping working in both

¹⁷ A very useful and quick guide to her thought on the matter can be found in this table: Charlene Spretnak, *The Resurgence of the Real: Body, Nature, and Place in a Hypermodern World* (Reading MA, 1997) 73.

¹⁸ Stacy Alaimo’s and Sturgeon’s perspectives respectively in: Sturgeon, *Ecofeminist Natures*, 187.

¹⁹ Rosi Braidotti, ‘Posthuman Feminist Theory’, in: Lisa Disch and Mary Hawkesworth eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theory* (New York 2016), 673-698, 673.

²⁰ Jane Kalbfleisch, ‘When Feminism Met Postfeminism: The Rhetoric of a Relationship’, in: Devoney Looser and E. Ann Kaplan eds. *Generations: Academic Feminists in Dialogue* (Minneapolis 1997) 250-266, 251-252.

²¹ https://www.reddit.com/r/Feminism/comments/mk9xb/violence_is_the_secret_of_patriarchy_you_cant/, 15-08-2021, 15:34.

directions. This is the reason that this thesis will focus on age as an intersectional factor in the context of ecofeminism, with the use of Fridays For Future as test case in which thoughts about these intertwined topics can be tested.

Another point of discussion is the way in which ecofeminist holism bears a strong similarity with pan(en)theist thought, in that it (even in its secular expressions) neatly approaches the line of spirituality by proclaiming the belief in a value and agency to the world around us. This emphasis is central in any expression of ecofeminism, also when there is really no question of explicit spiritual concern; Braidotti uses this distinction in a way that is secular but similar when she notes how in her posthuman feminist theory 'The emphasis on immanence marks the rejection of transcendental universalism and mind-body dualism'.²² This fine line between spiritualities and 'secularities' deserves reflection especially in light of a growing ubiquity of dark green spirituality, which will be readdressed in the final chapter.

Although some strands of ecofeminist thought can be viewed as 'evolved' into other disciplines (as in the previously discussed 'posthumanities'), it is not the case that the name ecofeminism is not at all present in current academia anymore, although most of the texts that outspokenly deal with ecofeminism acknowledge its outdated status and revisit it only to pick out a few aspects that they would like to see returned in current theories or methodologies.

Emma Foster, for example, makes an interesting observation when she what she calls a 'change in emphasis in environmental governance', signifying a shift from 'civil society/women's inclusion in environmental decision making to a problem-solving approach rooted in market-based and technological solutions'.²³ Even though this shift in itself may not immediately be alarming since the outcomes are commendable, trends such as these which focus on market-based solutions may lack depth or lose the morality surrounding their aims out of sight through the pressure of other concerns involved (of course, there is always the issue of financial gain and loss). Also, it calls to mind the particular (and certainly stereotypical) gendered conflict in which men are accused of jumping to the offering of solutions in situations where women only want a mere acknowledgement of the fact that there is, indeed, a problem. The fact that 'present-day environmental governance finds more in common with the symbolically masculine realms of economy, technology and science, making it a timely juncture to reconsider the relevance and value of those classic ecofeminist works that have been widely discredited by contemporary feminists'²⁴ is an exemplary argument to which I will return in chapter 5.

Without dismissing previous generations and all the richness in experience they bring, it should be concluded that if ecofeminism is to continuously make its mark on future generations and positively alter the problematics of both equality and environmental crisis, it should attune to other current concerns and stances that are typical for this day and age. Its greatest (and most) works stem from the eighties and nineties; even though many of its criticisms were refuted, these refutations didn't seem to have the same resonance as the works they were defending or expanding on. Even though ecofeminist legacies may have lived on through certain (here described) evolutions, the name ecofeminism deserves reappraisal.

²² Rosi Braidotti, 'A Theoretical Framework for the Critical Posthumanities', *Theory, Culture & Society* 36 (2019) 31-61, 34.

²³ Foster, 'Ecofeminism revisited', 192.

²⁴ Idem.

Chapter 2: Intersectionality, queer theory, and ecofeminist overlap

Ecofeminism, as should be clear by now after the first chapter, tries to substitute dualisms and and/or thinking for what in its own terminology is often called more ‘holistic’, or less divisive, shattered thought. Even though the most prominent battleground may appear to be that of gender because of the second half of its name, ecofeminism works on uncovering the power structures that simultaneously suppress women and nature, but for the sake of more than nature and women alone. In its struggle to find equal attention for other places of oppression, but perhaps even more so in trying to bring ecofeminist thought from the academia to the world, ecofeminism could very well be (or is) aided by the field of intersectionality theory to bring critical reflection as well as hopeful, constructive methods to the table.

In this chapter, I discuss the field of intersectionality theory in general, but finetuned to the overlaps with and opportunities for (or so I believe) this discourse has with regard to ecofeminism, guided by useful insights from previous infusions of intersectionality theory in queer theory and feminist theory in general.

Strikingly enough, for this discourse as well as for ecofeminism, the activism expressed by society is a driving factor in the development of the academic environment. Examples of this are provided by Ange-Marie Hancock, who acknowledges that the field of intersectionality theory arose from multiple activist circles, while personally focusing on how the activist movements combatting violence against women contributed to this development.²⁵

Hancock’s perspective brings to the surface the ways in which women of colour have spoken out in the context of violence-against-women activism, adding their oppression based on race to the analysis of their oppression based on gender. Overlap may become extremely visible in the wording of Anna Carasthatis’ definition (making use of K. Davis’ thought), stating that ‘axes of oppression are not separable in our everyday experiences and therefore must be theorized together’.²⁶

Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, a Black feminist scholar who is also one of the founders of Critical Race Theory, is credited with the coining of the term,²⁷ and through her work the roots of intersectionality are shown to lie in (decades of) Black feminism.²⁸ Crenshaw developed her thought when she noted how the intersectional identities of women of colour were the reason of their marginalization in the discourses of both feminism and antiracism.²⁹ She argued that these identities were more than a simple adding up of the gender and race dimensions by themselves, and although these two factors of intersectionality bear particular importance in her work, she reminds the reader of other intersections as well (she names class and sexuality as examples).³⁰ She criticizes what she calls a ‘top-down’ approach to discrimination, and instead argues for an approach in which the most disadvantaged group is taken as a starting point for the design of an improved world, from which the singularly disadvantaged would automatically benefit.³¹

²⁵ Ange-Marie Hancock, *Intersectionality: an Intellectual History* (New York 2016) 39-40.

²⁶ Anna Carasthatis, *Intersectionality: Origins, Contestations, Horizons* (Lincoln 2016) 1.

²⁷ Idem.

²⁸ As do, according to Reagan, similar social theories: in the cases of intersectionality as well as social totality and complementary holism, he states, the element of interrelationality in each cases finds its roots in Black feminist thought. Michael Beyea Reagan, *Intersectional Class Struggle – Theory and Practice* (Chico 2021).

²⁹ Kimberlé Crenshaw, ‘Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color’, *Stanford Law Review* 43 (1991) 1241-1299, 1244.

³⁰ Crenshaw, ‘Mapping the Margins’, 1245.

³¹ Kimberlé Crenshaw, ‘Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics’, *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1 (1989) 139-167, 167.

Intersectionality theory has, over the years, proved its universal importance as it has transcended the status of a field on its own (in academia), and it is used and implemented as methodological tool in many scientific and social discourses.³² Its influence, or something at least stemming from the same concerns may be also detected in the (recently popularized) practice of disclosing very detailed background information of scholars before they proceed to lay out their theories, in order to explain, justify, or nuance the development of their thought and the role their position in society (or even in the world) played in its formation. Here, the same characterising formative circumstances and their conjunctions are recognized as crucial to understanding of modes of thinking and working, and intersectionality theory assesses exactly these interplays in examining contexts of oppression and discrimination. Its relevance and complementarity in queer theory may be especially insightful for the following discussion, since queer theory and ecofeminism share some of their methods and have successfully been integrated in the past.

In the case of a combination of queer and intersectionality studies, a synthesis of methods is often pursued, which is simultaneously understandable because of the aimed for representation and inclusivity of both research fields and can still come across as more of a sentimental logic than a truly automatic correlation of tenets. An example can be found in Aristeia Fotopoulou's work, where she clearly distinguishes between the different aims of the two research fields, and argues that an approach centred around hybridity is a possible solution for the risk of 'constituting all-encompassing systems which can create new kinds of fixed categories and, with them, new kinds of power systems' that both fields encounter.³³ James L. Olive sees overlap in that both queer theory and intersectionality 'seek to address marginalization in its various forms', and has developed a diagram that is a visual conflation of queer and intersectionality theory, developed for the use of analyzation of experiences and situations.³⁴

Duong, in his examination of what queer theory insights can offer intersectionality studies, makes a very useful distinction between two ways in which intersectionality is used: what he calls 'descriptive representation' and "'critical" intersectionality'.³⁵ Descriptive representation, he states, revolves around 'making invisible people visible', whereas critical intersectionality 'maps out the complexity of identity as a way of diagnosing (the) larger world-historical structural contexts'.³⁶ He fears that 'we have often failed to articulate within the scope of intersectional research the specifically political quality of collective identities, (...) to acknowledge that what is "common" and what is sensed as "shared" within a political group like queers is not a purely descriptive element nor a common underlying historical process'.³⁷ He concludes that 'one of queer theory's lessons for intersectional research is that the gap between an empirical/historical category and political collectivity exists because the latter is brought into existence through world-making, that is, the struggle to create a commonality (...)'.³⁸

Surely, there are many interesting points of comparison and overlap in these studies and the issues ecofeminism has examined. What Duong describes as critical intersectionality might be closest to ecofeminist endeavours in the two he distinguishes, as ecofeminism examines how, throughout history, gendered discriminations have been produced and perpetuated by

³² Dannielle Joy Davis et al. eds. *Intersectionality in Educational Research* (Stirling 2015) describes the use of intersectional theory and method in the fields of sociology, women's studies, leadership studies, and justice studies among others.

³³ Aristeia Fotopoulou, 'Intersectionality Queer Studies and Hybridity: Methodological Frameworks for Social Research', *Journal of International Women's Studies* 13 (2012) 19-32, 29.

³⁴ James L. Olive, 'Queering the Intersectional Lens – A Conceptual Model for the Use of Queer Theory', in: Dannielle Joy Davis et al. eds. *Intersectionality in Educational Research* (Stirling 2015) 19-30, 22-23.

³⁵ Kevin Duong, 'What Does Queer Theory Teach Us about Intersectionality?', *Politics & Gender* 8 (2012) 370-386, 372-378.

³⁶ Duong, 'What Does Queer Theory Teach Us', 374, 376.

³⁷ Ibidem, 377.

³⁸ Ibidem, 381.

systems of logic based on sex and identity (see: Sessions, note 7). Duong's attention for 'world-making practices' as a way of viewing identities or subjects in order to prevent essentialism is an equally fit suggestion for the field of ecofeminism.³⁹

On a quite different note, in Greta Gaard's version of queer ecofeminism, the focus seems to be directed less to the 'world-making' aspect of queer theory, and more on the process of extreme eroticization that queer persons and phenomena have been subjected to. Gaard's queer ecofeminism, however, clearly displays an intersectional approach when she proposes the following methodological system; 'From a queer ecofeminist perspective, then, we can examine the ways queers are feminized, animalized, eroticized, and naturalized in a culture that devalues women, animals, nature, and sexuality. We can also examine how persons of color are feminized, animalized, eroticized, and naturalized. Finally, we can explore how nature is feminized, eroticized, even queered'.⁴⁰

Queer theory reminds the subject that reclaiming a 'rightful place' in the current system means yielding to faulty system (for it was broken to begin with), and ecofeminism is all too happy to comply with the wish for kicking out that system (read: patriarchy) and to shake up what is often held for 'normalcy'. In both of their celebrations of diversity and figuring out ways of functioning without totalitarian structures, intersectionality theory provides useful tools, and does not lose sight of the actual people and their positions in the corollaries of the thought of the other two fields, when they are at risk of getting caught up in the abstraction, pretentiousness or theoretical nit-picking of academia.

Intersectionality, as a theoretical plane of research with clear and direct ties to activism (which leads to benefits for both sides of the spectrum), thus proves to be as relevant as ever in a time where distorted power relations, discrimination and abuse are publicly discussed and defied through worldwide movements such as BlackLivesMatter and #MeToo.

BlackLivesMatter confronts societies all over the globe with the police brutality that is based on racist treatment and other forms of institutional racism – however, intersectional approaches are, despite the fact that intersectionality theory has been developing for decades, still lacking prominence in these anti-discriminatory contexts. BlackLivesMatter has been described as using African American male teenagers as its main 'visual', and the relatively limited success of its sub-branch #BlackGirlsMatter represent how gender issues are seen as either unrelated, or inferior to racial discrimination.⁴¹ Intersectionality theory's contemporary relevance for activist movements also becomes apparent through its discussion by another very mainstream activist movement; Fridays For Future. Its importance in this environment will be further discussed in chapter four.

Ecofeminism and intersectionality theory: implementations

Although ecofeminism's endeavours and aims might be wholeheartedly intersectional, not much of the intersectional literature is consistently used and adapted and few bridges have been laid out to combine the two highly analogous fields. Even though intersectionality theory might not be automatically environmental, ecofeminism has to be outspokenly intersectional in order to live up to its expectations of itself. Through intersectionality theory, a bridge can be laid between ecofeminism and Black Feminism that is yet to be located or redefined. Ecofeminism might not set out to be an all-inclusive variant that offers its own account of narratives discussed by all other strands of feminism; there are no ecofeminist 'reflections' or versions of every other expression of feminist thought, since this may not be relevant at all to ecofeminist aims or projects. Black Feminism can, however, not be counted among one of those distinct projects to which ecofeminism is too far related in the family of feminism. Even though the discussed academic circles may not have been able to recognize the 'cross-pollinations', it has (reassuringly) been noted recently how 'women of different

³⁹ Ibidem, 383.

⁴⁰ Gaard, 'Toward a Queer Ecofeminism', 119.

⁴¹ Mary J. Henderson, 'Black Girls Matter: Black Feminisms and Rita Williams-Garcia's One Crazy Summer Trilogy', *Children's Literature in Education* 50 (2019) 431-448, 431.

classes and races variously embraced and enacted ecofeminist thought and often worked closely with communities of color'.⁴²

Even though '... there is little disputing intersectionality's theoretical contribution to feminist research in the past decades',⁴³ in ecofeminist circles its influence or an approving response is rarely truly spoken out. Sturgeon's *Ecofeminist Natures*, for example, which with its amazing depth, scope and nuance has guided me through the many tribes and tribulations ecofeminism has endured, discusses bell hooks (seemingly because of her intersectional approach and for her combination of race issues with both 'feminism' and black feminism), but neither the term intersectional(ity) or its godmother Crenshaw are found in this ecofeminist 'bible', something that cannot be excused by a narrow time gap between the published works of these authors (which is a matter of years). I do not automatically take this to be another erasure of black voices and their importance, for Sturgeon is certainly not guilty of this, but now that its neglect is at least mentioned once, I will go on to a more positive and constructive evaluation of the intersection of intersectionality theory and ecofeminism.

One of the examples of how the subjects of ecofeminism, intersectionality and their interests overlap but have not yet worked together becomes visible in the work and experiences of bell hooks. She describes how, during a lecture in 1987, she spoke as a Black Feminist scholar for an audience of young black women who, collectively, argued that sexism was not an issue in the black community, and that the battle they were all fighting revolved around racism purely. Only when hooks shared her experiences with sexism did the students agree to their own similar struggles concerning sexism in multiple contexts. hooks recognizes this initial denial as a sort of coping mechanism, a form of 'heritage' with which people who have been treated as 'less' than other-coloured fellow humans have denied any lesser 'humanity'. Contrary to the envisioned aims of strategies such as these, hooks argues that it is the denial of toxic, patriarchal values and structures within black communities that perpetuates the backward position of black people in society.⁴⁴

Granted, Black Feminists who have rejected feminism in general for its particular 'white' image (remember that this was one of the strongest claims made against ecofeminism, as discussed in chapter 1) may feel, yet again, passed aside as feminists turn to the liberation of the non-human world before (inter)human relations are universally ethically and equally grounded. On the other hand, ecofeminism's neglect for subgroups of women in its quest for justice for nature is a consequential, superficial 'error' or wrong than a structural, core-related issue with regard to its philosophy. Its philosophy calls for expansions and reworkings, rather than for total rejection.

Intersectionality's claim that there is a 'focus on the most privileged group members' that 'marginalizes those who are multiply-burdened'⁴⁵ is especially pressing for ecofeminists when they wonder 'how to reconcile women's biological particularity while affirming women as agents of their history'.⁴⁶

The difference in the two approaches seems to be focus of attention; whereas ecofeminism mostly focuses on power relations (the inequality within power distributions, the power structures themselves), and has all too often applied theories on these structures on certain ideas of women alone (and most notably white, Western, upper- and middle-class women), intersectionality theory seems to focus on the actual persons and their experiences. Intersectionality theory might therefore be regarded as more specific, more situational than

⁴² Teresa Lloro-Bidart & Michael H. Finewood, 'Intersectional feminism for the environmental studies and sciences: looking inward and outward', *Journal of Environmental Studies and Sciences* 8 (2018) 142-151, 144.

⁴³ Duong, 'What Does Queer Theory Teach Us', 371.

⁴⁴ bell hooks, 'Black Women and Feminism', in: Barbara A. Arrighi ed. *Understanding Inequality: The Intersection of Race/Ethnicity, Class, and Gender* (Lanham 2nd ed 2007) 35-40, 35/36.

⁴⁵ Crenshaw, 'Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex', 140.

⁴⁶ Rosi Braidotti et al., *Women, the Environment, and Sustainable Development: Towards a Theoretical Synthesis* (London 1994) 167.

ecofeminism – something ecofeminism seemingly wants to be associated with as well, but in its all-encompassing endeavours might accidentally distance itself from. Furthermore, ecofeminism might pay attention to all different kinds of oppression through power play and use its method of seeing how one power dynamic is used in different contexts as well, but often does not pay attention to how the different kinds of oppression *interact* (or, how they are transformed through interaction) and form identities and structures that cannot be analysed by single, segregated strands of identification.

Even though work containing and combining all of these topics, theories, and their consequent methodologies could be branded as hard to materialize, there are indeed some discussions in which these insights are combined, the subfields mutually enriching each other. Richard Twine has described the relation between intersectionality, feminism and ecofeminism in particular and with special regard to Haraway's work, as he notes how 'categories of 'nature' and animality have contributed a power of disgust to intra-human constructions of hierarchy and separation'.⁴⁷ This is a brief though important reworking of a certain subfield of ecofeminism (mostly concerned with the consumption and production of 'meat') and a useful entry point for intersectionality (Haraway's work can also be characterized as debating the 'more-than-human intersectionality'⁴⁸); this way of thinking about the human and nonhuman is also very much in line with the recent 'posthuman' theories. Through powerful coalitions such as these, there is renewed attention for the sides of ecofeminism that were often forgotten because of the negative associations ecofeminism was stigmatized with due to the essentialism-debate. A quirky thing about Twine's work, however, is his continuous discussion of humanism, which in many (eco)feminist circles has already long been done with due to its anthro- and androcentric, racist, and generally discriminatory nature expressions throughout history – another way, perhaps, of interpreting the term 'posthumanities'. In the end, Twine argues that 'the emergence of feminist new materialism ought to usher in a renewed conversation between feminism and ecofeminism due to shared interests'⁴⁹, which brings to mind material ecocriticism⁵⁰ which is another interesting combination of much of the topics here with, again, an entirely distinct focus and its own melting pot of methodologies. One of the last statements Twine makes in his article is an observation of the fact that much of recent feminist work on intersectionality ignores ecofeminist theory – it should be noted that this article was written a little over a decade ago, but it should be questioned whether a lot has changed in the meantime.

After this discussion, which started with a plain overview of the main tenets of intersectionality theory but has listed several other academic fields and their personal affiliations with its theories (most notably, of course, ecofeminism), the following concluding thoughts and questions can be formulated.

First of all, the dazzling amount of combinations of theories and fields with similar interests and aims, which cannot be ignored with academic integrity and aspired interdisciplinarity in mind, can be quite overwhelming. In discussing topics like feminism, nature, the environment, racism, and intersectionality, each one of the named theories must have been critiqued or appropriated by countless other emerging subfields and theorists, and I have only discussed a few of the related answers to the questions that intersectionality and ecofeminism pose. When a synthesis of all of these insights is effectuated, it could be questioned under which heading it would fit most or best, or whether yet an entirely new denomination ought to be in place. Perhaps the classic combination of an adjective and a

⁴⁷ Richard Twine, 'Intersectional disgust? Animals and (eco)feminism', *Feminism & Psychology* 20 (2010) 397-406, 399.

⁴⁸ Twine, 'Intersectional disgust', 400.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, 402.

⁵⁰ That of Iovino & Oppermann, for example, which partially developed out of the ecological postmodernism of Charlene Spretnak already discussed in the first chapter. Serenella Iovino & Serpil Oppermann, 'Material Ecocriticism: Materiality, Agency, and Models of Narrativity', *Ecozon@* 3 (2012) 75-91, 78.

noun in which the noun depicts the most important theoretical ground is needed to fully comprehend the many perspectives described above; would that make the desired synthesis an intersectional ecofeminism, a queer intersectionality, an eco-intersectional queer materialism, or something else? With all of the discussed in mind, I state that ecofeminism deserves the noun position. What makes a fitting combination of all these theories specifically ecofeminist first and foremost would be its goal of inevitably overcoming the environmental crisis, to which black liberation, non-totalitarian equality that encourages diversity, and celebrations of bodies and so forth are inherently incorporated as they are part of the formation of a new system that is a negation of the current, faulty one that led to the problems described by all of the discussed fields. The final goal of an ultimately informed, intersectional, queer (etcetera) ecofeminism remains tackling the environmental (in multiple senses of the word) crisis, which asks for new system, in which intersectional insights and queer methodologies and values are indispensable. Ecofeminism on its own makes a useful first step which can be built on; its origins may be middle-class and white, but the very act of including nature is its major premise of opening up that is exemplary of further intentions.

Chapter 3: Age as an intersectional concept

In the previous chapter, I have looked at intersectionality theory and the ways in which it interacts to a rewarding conclusion with ecofeminism, especially if it incorporates queer theory insights in the formulation of its goals and worldviews, and finally at the way a combination of methodologies fits within current academic environments.

In the media and popular culture, many factors of intersectionality are now getting their rightful (though often long-overdue) attention; discrimination on the basis of race has gained worldwide attention by movements like BlackLivesMatter, and the #MeToo movement has shed light on the sexual harassment occurring on work floors (although the movement does not specifically delineate its focus, its central tenets seem to revolve around power abuse in professional environments, with women as its main victims). In studying whether age as a factor of intersectionality has received enough attention, which is what this chapter aims to do, I do not mean to say that other dimensions deserve any less. I also do not aim to provide an account of valorisation of factors of intersectionality in any way, although I recognize that there have been strongly diverging consequences of these factors in the context of discrimination and negative stereotypes. The question that this chapter (and consequently, this thesis) aims to research is how a study of age as an intersectional concept is mutually enriching for the topics discussed. Needless to say, I will use the framework of ecofeminism in order to both explain the manifestations and the importance of these viewpoints, for this is an important theoretical ground for the discussion of the case study later on.

Many of the texts that discuss either intersectional identities or identity formation in feminist and posthuman contexts do not focus on the role age plays as one of the intersectional factors. General premises can, however, aid in laying out a formation on which to build a viewpoint on age and its relationality to other similar identity components. I will therefore revisit some key concepts that I believe to be auxiliary in the understanding of age in identities.

Crenshaw makes a very useful observation as she notes the twofold nature of intersectionality awareness: identity categorizations are often seen as restrictive, discriminatory, stereotyping ‘vestiges of bias or domination’ that should be ridded of ‘any social significance’, and yet in many of these emancipatory movements, these identifications are treated as ‘the source of social empowerment and reconstruction’.⁵¹

This resonates with Braidotti’s notion of the ‘repressive structures of dominant subject-formations (*potestas*), but also the affirmative and transformative visions of the subject as nomadic process (*potentia*)’.⁵² Braidotti also notes how solutions that are ‘based solely on the experiences of women who do not share the same class or race backgrounds will be of limited help to women who because of race and class face different obstacles’,⁵³ visibly pointing to intersectional theory as well as the usefulness of identifiers as distinguishers in a context of belonging and recognizing larger discriminatory processes.

James L. Olive, briefly mentioned in the previous chapter because of his fusion of queer theory and intersectionality approaches, has developed the QIA model (which stands for Queer Intersection Analysis) in which age is unobtrusively listed as one of the ‘multiple dimensions of identity’. Although he argues that the listed dimensions ‘should not be viewed as possessing greater value or more prominence in the total composition of an individual’s identity’⁵⁴ (... than the dimensions that remain unmentioned), Olive does not disclose whether some of these dimensions are more formative of one’s identity than others, at different times, or are due as much study as others.

⁵¹ Crenshaw, ‘Mapping the Margins’, 1242.

⁵² Braidotti, ‘A Theoretical Framework’, 34. Italics in the original.

⁵³ Crenshaw, ‘Mapping the Margins’, 1246.

⁵⁴ Olive, ‘Queering the Intersectional Lens’, 22-23.

Similarly, in the definition of identity as a 'temporary fixing for the individual of a particular mode of subjectivity',⁵⁵ the adjective 'temporary' is extremely important, for identities are never fixed without being subject to time, to which nothing remains untouched (as many Shakespeare sonnets aptly lament). This makes age, as an exceptionally changeable dimension of identity, an extremely interesting point of entrance for a study examining how different intersections of identity are experienced or viewed.

Age plays a far greater role as an identity building block than is immediately apparent – especially since it is so often left undiscussed and its ramifications are so easily taken for granted. In the field of – for example - psychology, age seems to play an incredibly substantial role in theory on identity and subject formation, for with the acknowledgement of exceptions and variations, subjects are ascribed an identifying categorization (child, pre-adolescent, adult, senior, etc.), that in turn carries generalized expectations concerning physical and mental abilities. In a lot of theoretical discussions about the modern subject, however, age is left undiscussed or unspecified, as if it were either irrelevant, indiscriminatory, a factor of no particular influence in the course of a subject's experiences. These notions lead me to observe the following things about age and its position and its uniqueness compared to other dimensions of identity:

Age is:

- In a way, a social construct: even though someone's years may be kept track of, the meanings, possibilities and obligations that come with these different 'numbers' in age are discursively produced. In this line, young people who act beyond their years may be applauded, and people acting 'younger than they are' may be either appreciated for it or utterly frowned upon.
- Fluctuating/progressing (not unlike gender, but certainly unlike sex. Of course, change is more easily effectuated than ever and completely normal, but this does not happen continuously, as with gender-fluidity. Ageing, however, only can be done in one direction, and involuntarily and indifferently at that).
- Unchangeable and undeniable.
- Unclearly (or randomly) bordered/demarcated.
- Very strongly biologicistic (for age has direct ties with, stems from, and has consequences for corporeality, though almost all of its derivations are made in social settings to legitimate hierarchy, legislation, control, or protection).
- Seemingly non-discriminatory (innocent) as a concept, as it is acknowledged, used, 'lived' by any society, any race, any culture. In social circumstances, however, ageism is very real and under-addressed.
- Hard to undermine. A lot of aspects of our society are grouped or justified through the distinguishing of age. Examples of this practice are schools, regulations and laws concerning voting, the age of (sexual) consent, and the legal consummation of alcohol.
- Irremovable.
- Partially performative, in that people are encouraged to 'act their age' which they should adjust continuously, which in turn leads (in both the case of a successful modification as well as an open refusal to do so) to a direct experience of 'ageing'.

When all of the above is taken together, a picture is painted of an identifier simultaneously static (in its inevitability), variable and unalterable, biological and social, universal and yet with a temporal unique specificity. The interrelations of these different aspects lead, in turn, to much more questions than this chapter could possibly answer. Using age as a prime distinguisher as is often done in countless fields may feel so (bio)logical that its underlying assumptions are not questioned or explicated, but this presupposes some sort of universal, external, incontestable, objective quality of 'age' as well as of 'biology' that is simply taken for

⁵⁵ Chris Weedon, *Identity and Culture: Narratives of Difference and Belonging* (Maidenhead 2004) 19.

granted. More useful ways of using age as a biological concept in social contexts (for example, the insight that due to the fact that the brain is not fully developed until a certain age, people up until that age are not to buy alcohol in order to prevent 'regrettable', long-term damage) are not always clearly distinguished from more random stipulations. Examples of this are the different voting ages around the world (within the US alone there are multiple voting ages) and the age from which someone is allowed to drive a car by themselves (which also differs throughout the world).

Ecofeminism aims for a narrow coalition with biology and similar 'hard sciences' in many respects,⁵⁶ and may have been accused of essentializing with regard to sex and gender, but does not tend to the recognition of raging hormones, physical decline, or mostly any other side-effect of age as a distinguishing factor in specific theories. It could be questioned, however, if not using age as a distinguishing factor leads to missing links and unspoken assumptions in lines of arguing. If ecofeminism focuses on 'women', it automatically makes use of age distinguishing (for a woman is an adult, usually taken to be 18 years or older), and simultaneously misses much of the developments leading to the formation of the universal category of women by not acknowledging how discrimination and the 'becoming' of women is already taking place in different age categories. Even the question of different types of women in different age categories remains unaddressed. Again, these notions do not contradict ecofeminism's core, which is suited perfectly for working out consequent issues. Like queer and intersectional approaches, those connected to age and identities need only to be taken up by ecofeminist thinkers in order to provide more thorough, fitting questions to be answered by further research.

In its struggle against essentialism, the use of age as a formative factor as well as a multifaceted identity dimension can aid in the formation of a test site where thought based on biological generalities is overruled by specific interplays of social constructs, meanings ascribed to temporal and biological realities, and relatedness with regard to other ages and times. With the list above in mind, it can also be noted how hard it is *not* to take age as an intersectional concept in almost any situation.

It is also worth considering (or researching) how and if age is an identity dimension that has different impacts or affect with differing intensities for different sexes. For example, women (still so often defined through familial functions such as 'mother' or 'wife') are much more confronted with (societal pressure considering) the influence of passing time on their abilities to naturally beget children (whereas ageing much less impacts male fertility). Something that transcends the scope of this thesis, but would be an interesting media analysis, would be the researching of the use of age-related remarks, denominations, and adjectives for the different genders. Just like non-Caucasian ethnicities are often mentioned shamelessly in newspaper articles whereas Caucasian-looking people are not similarly described in a country like The Netherlands, showcasing the unconscious 'standard' of whiteness that is prevalent in many Western societies, it could be questioned if women are more easily subject to being 'aged' than other genders. A tragically missing archetypical American adolescent was, in the national media storm circling her search, soon dubbed 'America's daughter'; would a similarly aged, 22-year old man have been 'America's son'?⁵⁷

Age and generation

Having discussed age as an intersectional concept in these categories leads, inevitably, to the question of 'generation'. The two are connected, of course, but their equation or oversimplification may lead to or uncover problematic assumptions. For example, even though people being born in the same year will always be the same age whether they live in the Western Europe or in the North of Mongolia, the concept of generation is so heavily dependent on circumstantial and temporal events and situations that it is hard to ascribe

⁵⁶ Twine, 'Intersectional Disgust', 402.

⁵⁷ <https://www.rtlnieuws.nl/nieuws/buitenland/artikel/5255243/gabrielle-petito-lichaam-gevonden-vermissingszaak-verenigde>, 12-11-2021, 15:29.

them to the same generation without giving specific reasons why they should be. For example, Millennials in the Netherlands may be characterized by the experience of growing up in a world where digital environments were common and generally accessible, whereas the same age group in North Mongolia did not – perhaps only their current adolescents, or the adolescents-to-be will share these experiences, and the children there today may be a ‘generation’ that is more akin to the current Dutch adolescent than the previous generation has been, despite of the age difference. This is far from to say that we should abandon the term generation; it only means that we should approach it with awareness and extremely cautious demeanours. Arguments that point to the refutation of denominating generational generalizations may be as easily made as those in favour of these groupings. However, continuing the ecofeminist trend of trying to form positive identifications that aid in understanding backgrounds and identities while leaving room to celebrate diversity and variation, I take up the endeavour of differentiating between age and generation in order to assess the usefulness of both in a context where they play an understudied yet significant role.

It should also be noted that many aspects of the lists above describing ‘age’ do not apply to generation. ‘Generation’, apart from its meaning in familial succession, is much more clearly a social construct, and has an almost diagnostical function, as it carries with it implications about more than (approximate) age alone. One’s generation, however, moves along with the subject regardless of their age; Gen Z now will (unless a new trend develops, for which I cannot see a clear reason), in decades time, still be ‘Gen Z’. This makes generation as an identity factor an interestingly definitive, ‘rigid’ feature (even though it is a social construct) compared to the fluctuating, biologicistic ‘age’.

Working with generational differentiation is a tricky process for more reasons than the one just outlined; belonging to a certain generation has all too often been used as an excuse for inappropriate behaviour, lack of understanding, and a refusal to engage with concepts that are associated as belonging to another ‘time’. Still, the powerful identification that thinking in terms of ‘generations’ can provide in senses of belonging and differentiation with the aim of not making another’s mistakes should be acknowledged and used for positive formulation of social change.

Marketing research in particular makes a habit of studying Gen Z (those approximately born between 1995 and 2010 – see the final chapter for a more detailed account) in order to determine what current adolescents want (always juxtaposed with how other generations think about the same things), so that targeting this specific age group becomes easier or more successful. Along these lines, and also with the situatedness of knowledges in mind, should we not make Gen Z analyses with age as a primary distinctive factor in order to understand the current, thriving environmentalist concern that circulates amongst this generation, noting both the restrictive challenges and trailblazing opportunities provided by this study?

Although discussions of age and generations have not been completely neglected in feminist studies, works on this topic are scarce, not very recent and do not seem to constitute a bridge between feminist theory and intersectionality theory, despite their relatedness.

E. Ann Kaplan does rail against practices of ageism within feminist discourse by describing how ‘new’ discourses of feminist theory use stereotypical notions of previous feminisms and, again, make up ‘straw women against whom to rail’.⁵⁸ It is hard to escape the impression that this is a tactic used more often when it comes to feminist critique, and not exactly a constructive or academically discrete way of interaction. Fully aware of the dangers of ageist thinking patterns, I will try to approach the following discussion with nuance, while being aware of my own situatedness (and other influences relying on my age) as well as of those whose work I use and discuss.

One dualism that, only now and then, pops up its head in discussions on dualisms that I think would be an important part of this particular discussion is the old/young dualism and

⁵⁸ E. Ann Kaplan, ‘Feminism, Aging, and Changing Paradigms’, in: Devoney Looser and E. Ann Kaplan eds. *Generations: Academic Feminists in Dialogue* (Minneapolis 1997) 13-29, 18.

its not-so-subtle associations. This dualism draws negative conclusions in both directions; too often bodies are praised for their youth and discarded for their age, and minds applauded for their years or not taken seriously for their youth. The insults that Fridays For Future's Greta Thunberg (further discussed in the next chapter) has received confirm all sides of the dualism; she is often scolded for being 'just a girl', which simultaneously ridicules her youth and her gender, and an army of middle-aged, academic (!) men have attacked her for her looks as well, sexualizing a teenager because of their threatened identities. Even though Thunberg is very open about her Asperger's syndrome (it even takes a prominent place in the biography on her Twitter account), the fact that she is somewhere on the autism spectrum is also often used to completely bypass her work and thought in order to focus on her (facial) expressions or competence.

In such contexts, the word 'hysterical' pops up regularly, painfully reinstating the interpretation of female expression of strong emotion or argument to mental illness ('female hysteria' as a diagnosis and method of oppression was used well into the twentieth century).⁵⁹ Here, we can now easily identify how Thunberg's intersectional identity is attacked; her gender, age, and ability are combined to the point that they do not seem to matter enough as she is dismissed for all of them by themselves as well as because of their synthesis.

Much of the same methods of denying agency or meaningful discourse is the larger project of discrimination based on age is also visible in the criticism Fridays For Future as a movement has had to endure. Ageist prejudices and knockdown arguments such as 'wisdom comes with age' or the idea that someone with more educational years behind them knows more or even better than those who are passionate about their subject (for many activist teens, of course, are much more informed than countless other adults who aren't interested in environmental wellbeing in the slightest) are exhaustingly common. The way in which this is formative of Fridays For Future's identity will follow in the next chapter.

In this chapter, I have reviewed how age can be seen and distinguished from or situated amongst other dimensions of identity. Hypotheses like these about age and generalizations in patterns in the forms of generation can be very helpful in defining and explaining personal identities as well as societal groupings, which can in turn lead to an easily found network of positive identification and a collective power to put to good causes. However, these generalizations can also function as smoke screens that hide or justify negative side effects – their consequential discriminative potentialities and the hazards of strong divisive thinking will be discussed in the next chapter, where the topics already discussed theoretically can be recognized in effect in the case study of the environmental (youth) movement Fridays For Future.

⁵⁹ A quick google search is enough to show there are countless opinion pieces describing this phenomenon and collecting these insults directed at Thunberg, which is why I have chosen to only provide this link as an example; https://www.independent.co.uk/news/long_reads/women/greta-thunberg-climate-change-crisis-strike-austism-misogyny-protest-speech-a9127971.html , 28-06-2021, 11:57.

Chapter 4: Fridays For Future and related movements

Before I turn to an analysis of Fridays For Future (henceforth: F4F) with the use of the insights of the previous chapters, a more extensive historical introduction of the movement as well as its embeddedness with regard to other expressions of environmentalist activism are vital in understanding this organization's particular nature.

With a sudden but explosive force, the year 2018 saw an amazing increase in environmental awareness in none other than the youngest of the currently distinguished, 'living' generations. The actions of Swedish environmental activist Greta Thunberg, who skipped school on Fridays so she could demonstrate in front of government buildings in order to raise awareness for environmental decline, led to a global movement that inspired hundreds of thousands of teens to do the same. Widely acknowledged as the voice of a generation (although her followers are not limited to (pre)adolescents alone) with an incredibly far-reaching influence, Thunberg made history as she held a speech at the U.N. Climate Action Summit in 2019 where she voiced the frustration and overcoming of powerlessness she felt and recognized among teens surrounding her. The raw emotion displayed in the speech and Thunberg's success as a representative of a generation whose life expectancies and identities are strongly marked by the environmental crisis has had a worldwide impact that is still growing.

These actions and protestations and their countless ramifications are part of one of the latest (with not too many very recent predecessors) revivals of popular environmentalism and its effects are clearly visible. The international and price-wise accessible clothing brand H&M (often seen as part of the spurned 'fast-fashion' tradition) developed a special 'Conscious' clothing line, McDonald's recently proclaimed that they were permanently replacing plastic spoons with wooden ones, and even gas companies used passive-aggressive advertisements (perhaps under the impression that 'attack is the best defense') such as 'groen pompen of verzuipen', meaning 'pump green gas or drown'. Their highly politicized advertisements can be spotted on nearly every street corner during a walk in town, and they display as well as perfectly tap into the raging environmental concern that is spreading gradually throughout every corner of society. While the line between sincere ecological concern and trying to capitalize off of current 'trends' may be unclear, and the dangers of using 'small' and everyday changes to divert the attention from thorough systemic reform have been pointed out before, it at the very least shows that the environmental cry of the past few years has been heard. A closer look at the exact aims, voicings and executions of the arising initiatives and their main protagonists and plaintiffs will be necessary to research gaps to fill and requirements to comply with for ecofeminism.

In my analysis of the movement and its identification, I will use material from Fridays For Future's website, its discussions and appearances in the major media canals (distinguished newspapers, magazines and nationwide television canals), and will review in particular Greta Thunberg as its main representative (and founder) and as a young woman who identifies as an environmental activist and feminist. With regard to Thunberg, I also use materials of her speech at the UN to identify some of the characteristics I deem most defining for Fridays For Future's identity and expressions. This review should provide an actual overview of Fridays For Future's work, and after an observational account I will continue to point out the ways in which the material and arguments discussed in the previous chapters have particular relevancy with regard to this case study.

The internet, in this respect, functions both as a tool and as a research site in this methodology.⁶⁰

Embeddedness

In order to be able to see how current initiatives or activist identifications fit into a context of previously, similarly circumstantially determined expressions of activism, I'll describe some

⁶⁰ Making use of the described distinctions and definitions made in the chapter 'Electronic Reality II', in David L. Altheide & Christopher J. Schneider, *Qualitative Media Analysis* (Thousand Oaks 2013).

notable examples of previous formations. Although one might automatically think of worldwide environmentalist movements such as Greenpeace or Unicef, I have picked out a few other movements because I believe their specificity informative in a way that will be discussed later.

Sturgeon starts her introduction of *Ecofeminist Natures* describing her own experiences with the protesting of nuclear testing at the Nevada Nuclear Test Site in 1987, where she and other members of her affinity group (including the renowned Donna Haraway) crawled through a self-sewn worm as a symbolic act in sympathy with the life forms suffering human environmental abuse. Other examples of notable environmentalist activism more often discussed by ecological/ecofeminist writers include actions by Earth First! associates, for example engaging with the workers for and organization of the loggers at the redwoods in Northern California, where both obstructive and constructive provocations would take place (Judi Bari, a well-known (eco)feminist would fight for the rights and working conditions of the workers as well as spin yarn between the trees, so that the loggers would be delayed in their work).⁶¹ Similar events took place in the Netherlands during this wave of environmentalist action and, notably, during ecofeminism's golden days. A series on activism published by the Dutch national newspaper Trouw features an article on the environmental activism during the eighties. It describes the hundreds of (mostly local) environmental organizations that started being constructed in the late seventies and the policies they fought during the next decade. The construction of new highways, recreational hunting practices, air-, soil- and water pollution amongst many other practices were criticized. Next to engaging with specific phenomena, activists would actively and physically partake in activism that is in some ways closer to a 'revolt' or an 'uprising' than the mere raising of awareness. Protestors came to the nuclear power plant in Dodewaard to criticize the use and generation of nuclear energy, organizations sailed out to sea to stop illegal whale-hunters and the dumping of toxic waste in open waters, at times fences and construction machinery were destroyed, or in extreme cases people wearing fur in public were harassed by the more 'radical' subgroup of activists. Many of these initiatives proved to be extremely successful; an import ban on seal furs and skins was implemented, the dumping radioactive waste in the Atlantic Ocean was legally prohibited, and even though a planned road that was heavily protested was still built, the activism described above led to a changed plan that involved less logging of trees.⁶² The prominence of environmentalist activism in the Netherlands has, for the past few years, been at an all-time high since the previously discussed activism of the eighties. The way in which this activism is framed and executed, however, is quite different. A quick look at the protests organized by F4F suggests a different angle and aim of current poignancy. The environmental crisis in general is what concerns and unites the protesting teens, and so their complaints are, in many cases, more general. The signs that are held up by the F4F activists certainly attack environmental decline, but the scale and specificity differ. Signs display quotes and one-liners like 'There is only one planet earth', 'We're out of slogans: do something', 'Much talk, few trees', 'Government = guilty', 'Climate action now', 'No nature, no future', and many similar maxims dominate the tone and scope of the protest.⁶³ Criticism is aimed at the government and even though ecological footprints are sometimes mentioned, the target audience does not really seem to be fellow citizens (who, of course, have a fair hand in their ecological footprint outside of government rule and regulation), but the government and its 'empty promises' is what is targeted – which promises are not automatically specified. Of course, much of the earlier critique by environmental activism was also aimed at the government, but more in the sense of a rejection of specific governmental action and legislation. Whereas previous activist groups and initiatives seemed to have been brought to

⁶¹ Sturgeon, *Ecofeminist Natures*, 1-2, 52-56.

⁶² <https://www.trouw.nl/nieuws/80-en-toen-was-er-het-milieu~b9898df7/>, 20-06-2021, 16:07.

⁶³ Pictures with examples were used to illustrate the following articles:

<https://frieschdagblad.nl/regio/Friese-studenten-bij-klimaatstaking-in-Den-Haag-26799040.html>, 20-06-2021, 13:14 and <https://www.parool.nl/nieuws/nederlandse-scholieren-doen-mee-aan-wereldwijde-klimaatactie~beaa18ab/?referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F>, 20-06-2021 13:14.

life because of local problems, specific actions or plans (for example the building of a dam, the cutting of a forest, the construction of a fence and equivalent projects), current revolts seem (or so a first look would indicate) to give voice to a general, ruling concern or the hegemonial Zeitgeist of an entire generation and transcend the criticism of certain practices that are not in line with 'green' rules or restrictions.

In 1999, a report written by Schettler et al. discussing the intergenerational impact of toxic waste on reproductive health made the bitter conclusion that 'environmental justice is not even close to being recognized as a fundamental human right'.⁶⁴ It seems to be exactly this sentiment that is most expressed in F4F's general concerns, arguments, and demands.

Fridays For Future

In many ways, or so this chapter aims to show, Fridays For Future is a product of its time; that is to say that in this movement, much of the characteristics that Gen Z is so often identified with (or perhaps stereotyped, although this bears a rather negative account) with can be viewed as integral to its core and identification.

As I have already described the origins of the Fridays For Future and its main representative, I now turn towards where the organization stands at the time of writing. I will describe the movement's tenets, actions, and beliefs as they are shared on their website, which I believe to be the most fruitful source of their shared material and identification.

Fridays For Future, according to its main page,⁶⁵ identifies as a 'youth-led and -organised movement' that claims expressions in 7500 cities through more than 14 million involved people.

Scattered throughout the entire website, there are many indicators that the organization is not only led by the youth, it expects its audience to be 'young' too. Although it assures the reader that 'Whether you are young or old, it is your planet too!'⁶⁶, its proposed actions and vocabulary clearly point towards a certain age group (although no specifics or demarcations are mentioned other than the young-old distinction). When the website provides tips for striking, it is specifically attuned to skipping school, a direct imitation of Thunberg's actions at the start of the movement, which makes the target audience (for participants, of course) of the movement obvious. An exception is made in the case of a paragraph in which instructions are provided for teachers who want to engage in the discussion and to better the circumstances for the students to have the possibility for school strikes. That the reader is assumed to be a child or (pre)adolescent also becomes clear in some of its other phrasings: on the page 'Take Action – How to Strike, a subchapter 'Your Action – Getting Started' advises the reader to invite '**prominent local people** to strike with you (and let the media know they are coming!). Many *older people* would be flattered to be invited to strike with you' (emphasis in the original, italics mine).⁶⁷ F4F's stance might therefore be identified as a 'youth movement' in a broader sense of the term than it implies in its own identification.

That F4F makes a lot of use of age-related distinctions is clear, but exemplified to the extreme in the case of one of the lengthier texts that can be found on the website.⁶⁸

Under the head 'skipping school', the website advises students to discuss skipping class with principals and teachers, and suggests bringing 'accurate scientific information to these meetings to let them know you are serious and well informed' (this is a very interesting emphasis that will be further discussed under the heading 'Gen Z environmentalism and dark

⁶⁴ Ted Schettler et al. *Generations at Risk: Reproductive Health and the Environment* (Cambridge MA 1999) 311.

⁶⁵ <https://fridaysforfuture.org/>, 10-08-2021, 22:26.

⁶⁶ Idem.

⁶⁷ Idem.

⁶⁸ <https://fridaysforfuture.org/take-action/how-to-strike/>, 12-11-2021 16:25, under the heading 'School Striking', then under the subheading 'Letter to Head teacher'. The document can be found in <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Kkg1Oc7xhQ13SjpeXHrXrIoGa4E1WfTFHOx6WVJZ50/edit> as well.

green religion'). It also offers a sample of a letter to a headteacher written from the perspective of a parent who is letting their child miss school in order to strike, complete with scientific justification, references, a meme, and excerpts from newspaper articles.

Although the name of the writer(s) is not mentioned (nor, if I may impertinently note, their age), this letter seems to be the longest and most detailed account of the motivations, fears, and standpoints of the movement and its propagators.

The document (two pages of text, another page with references, then the article and the meme) is at times almost comical in its melodramatic demeanour and use of hyperbole: sentences such as 'I am also concerned that their predicament could lead them (the children, red.) to seek to turn away from reality and towards drugs to block out the doom' and '... my children's choice to attend this *historic event*' sometimes seem to make jest of the fact that a note from a parent concerning a midday off is often only a formality or carries enough authority as it is.

As stated, it uses the perspective of the parent (read: an 'older person') to describe and emphasize generational differences, the role adults ought to play in their children's activism (and how they have neglected their own responsibilities so far), and in its pathos even evokes dramatic terms such as 'the vast blackness of space' and 'the universal laws of physics'.

This document, in all its extravagant and carefully scientifically substantiated professions, seems to hint at how the environmentalist concern of the younger activists is not only a matter of green engagement, but a way of giving voice to a generational discontent that transcends concern about omissions and global warming. Regardless of this deeper reading with a connotation of wider intergenerational problematics, it is a document that calls out in one breath the need for action, the importance of scientific substantiation of claims, a repudiation of laxity, and a preferred method for the 'elderly' to assist new attempts at making and altering 'history'.

That F4F identifies strongly through the age-dualism is also very much visible in the aforementioned Thunberg-speech at the UN, replete with images of age dualism and generational struggles. Thunberg starts off her monologue with an ominous statement that immediately makes clear that she, at that moment, acts as a spokesperson: 'My message is that *we*'ll be watching you'. 'We' who? Why, the young people, of course! The clash of generations is once again acknowledged when Thunberg accuses the leaders of coming 'to us young people for hope'. Instead of following classes in her native Sweden, she is across the sea lecturing the 'old people' of the world on their responsibilities and behaviours.

After the actors are introduced and the tone is set, the state of the art takes place; Thunberg continues her account by, fully in line with F4F 'rules', substantiating her argument with scientific pillars. After quoting numbers, dismissing meek solutions (halving the current emissions within ten years), and nuancing simplistic statements, she once again returns to the underlying clash of generations. Mediocre measures, she states, 'also rely on my generation sucking hundreds of billions of tons of your CO₂ out of the air with technologies that barely exist. So a 50% risk is simply not acceptable to us – we who have to live with the consequences'. The reversal of the pedagogical roles comes to a climax in the sneering '... you are still not mature enough to tell it like it is. (...) the young people are starting to understand your betrayal'.⁶⁹

If the standpoints and condemnations involving age were not yet clear through the statements on F4F's website, then this quote no longer keeps any doubt still standing.

Whether it is a defence mechanism due to similar ageist discriminations or an method of attack to clearly distinguish the guilty from the innocent, the debate surrounding environmental decline is strongly coloured by the concepts of age and generations as key (though not absolute) dividers for the parties involved.

The generational division seems, furthermore, to give body to a double intention. On the one hand, it is a question of responsibility: when the 'youngsters' are in revolt, they want to bring to the attention that the issue truly lies with the other generation; the younger people protest

⁶⁹ <https://www.npr.org/2019/09/23/763452863/transcript-greta-thunbergs-speech-at-the-u-n-climate-action-summit>, 13-08-2021, 23:23.

to make clear that they do not want to sit and wait until it is their time to solve the environmental crisis, which they did not even create, all by themselves. Not only do they believe it to be too late by that time for structural change, they argue, it would be nothing short of logical injustice. On a second level, it also (not exactly subtly) reminds the accused of the fact that they literally shove, as a legacy or heritage, the generation after them an environmental crisis in their shoes: apart from the negligence that can be assumed from the current generation in rule, this is a question of hope and belief in a sustainable, liveable world, which more than explains F4F's name, and without which other forms of working on or anticipating of a future would simply be futile.

Another aspect that is of particular relevancy of F4F in the context of this thesis is its interest in not only scientific 'results' in the use of justification of statements and pleads, but also of theoretical concepts. In the first edition of its newsletter, issued online on March 15th 2021, F4F discussed the topic of intersectionality, providing its readers with a basic introduction into the concept, its relevance, and MAPA ('Most Affected People and Areas', meaning geographical areas as well as communities and ethnicities).⁷⁰ The article appropriately quotes Crenshaw and both of the writers are feminists and MAPA activists, one of them even identifying as an (intersectional) ecofeminist. The introduction of such highly sophisticated and yet extremely pressing theoretical works to an audience that is young, eager, and willing to become aware and active is not only impressive, but also counters the misapprehension people might have that the movement merely revolves around students with an unchecked anxiety or a mischievous interest in skipping school. Other aspects of F4F's distinct use of 'science' and its almost reverent treatment of the concept of science are also interesting; these will be discussed in chapter six.

So far, the image of F4F as a movement that started as a quest for environmental justice, which seemed to revolve around a greener world alone, but has picked up many concepts along the way. It challenges governments, fights laws, gives voice to a generation through civil disobedience, and perfectly cooperates with the powerful possibilities of social media for international and commanding (visual) effects. The movement vocally expresses the insight that a reduction of omissions and logging, for example, is not enough; in order to create a new and greener world, the old one – along with its traditional and repressing gender roles, materialism and overindulgence – needs to be fully reworked. The Netherlands-based organization WECF (further discussed in chapter 5) recently published a report in which the role of organizations such as F4F is openly acknowledged (though not named or specified); 'It is also important to acknowledge that the recent steps forward taken by decisionmakers on climate did not come about because of civil society. Although environmental organisations at the EU level have paved the way with advocacy and are trying to ensure the adoption of climate policies, it is undeniable that last year's climate reckoning and subsequent climate action from the EU (as apolitical and ineffective as it is) came about because of social movements and young people taking matters into their own hands'.⁷¹

It is not surprising that a movement that tries to effectuate such strong and demanding changes, a revolution almost, receives all kinds of criticism and backlash; there are, of course, a lot of people who profit and thrive in this system, unquestioningly so exactly because of its inherent unfair distribution of possibilities. I now turn to a few examples of these criticisms, for they display the kind of sentiment this movement evokes in societies as well as offer some useful reflection on the core structure and identity of F4F.

⁷⁰ Maria Reyes & Adriana Calderón, 'Newsletter 1', 2021. <https://fridaysforfuture.org/newsletter/edition-no-1-what-is-mapa-and-why-should-we-pay-attention-to-it/>, 23-09-2021, 22:59.

⁷¹ Patrizia Heidegger et al., *Why The European Green Deal Needs Ecofeminism: Moving from gender-blind to gender-transformative environmental policies – Report* (Unknown 2021) 36.

Criticism

Despite the overwhelming amounts of praise that F4F and its followers have attained from countless politicians, parents, companies and other parts of society, the movement could not escape different forms of criticism. In the whirlpool of heated discussions online (Thunberg makes use of Twitter extensively, and reaches and engages with an audience of millions) all kinds of sneers are made, with Donald Trump's reactions to Thunberg's tweets and statements as one of the more prominently noted interactions. Again, the dualism concerning age plays a significant role.

One of the most frequently heard complaints that F4F has had hurled at its core structure concerns the fact that students are missing school in order to demonstrate. Going to school is part of following the rules of society, which 'older' people may expect of younger people, and skipping school is here treated as something which no cause, however big, can justify. Arguments that revolve around this practice are usually made in a belittling way, stating that the only way to solve the environmental crisis is by studying about it (in school). The argument that the protestors need to do their protests in their free time completely bypasses their fundamental statement that their problem is not some casual, spare-time thing to do for fun in the weekends; as already discussed, the protestors view their cause as vital, existential, and going to school is regarded as futile unless the protestors' future prospects change. This criticism thus not only displays a lack of understanding of the motivation and identities of the protestors, but also embodies a serious trivialization of the problem (environmental degradation) in question. It is also worth questioning whether this critique has ever been made for other protesting groups (unions, bus drivers, hospital staff, teachers), or whether this is another discrimination that makes use of privileged power structures based on age (alone) and a defense mechanism employed in generational struggle.

A more constructive criticism, however, is made by Darrick Evensen, who points out the dangers of 'scientization' and treating science as a 'clear arbiter of effective policy', a practice that colours 'unquestioned scientific progressivism of the modern era' as well as 'respected academics' and, unfortunately, the statements of a lot of F4F activists.⁷² Without downplaying the incredible importance of F4F's work and the general value of scientific insight, he notes that '... one does little more than obfuscate the decision-making process if they assert that science can answer ethical and political questions'.⁷³ Evensen concludes that in order to be consistent and true, F4F needs to trade its core message of merely 'start listening to science' to another message; along with the help of ethicists, social scientists, and philosophers, F4F needs to further develop its stances on equity and 'political leaders (...) stealing children's future'. It seems that the recently integrated distribution of F4F on topics such as intersectionality and MAPA prove that his critique is heard, and that F4F continues to grow in its breadth as well as depth.

In this chapter, I have sketched F4F as a movement that identifies as an youth-led environmental organization, but far transcends the narrowness of this description in its attention for (theoretical) topics and target audiences. I have shown its strong use of generational differentiation, which lies at the heart of its methods, arguments, and accusations, and indirectly the importance of age as a factor of intersectionality in F4F followers' identities. It is this last part that the next chapter will take up once more in its revisitation of ecofeminist thought. F4F's curious relation to science will be further taken up in chapter 6.

⁷² Darrick Evensen, 'The rhetorical limitations of the #FridaysForFuture movement', *Nature Climate Change* 9 (2019) 428-430, 428.

⁷³ Evensen, 'The rhetorical limitations', 429.

Chapter 5: Ecofeminism revisited - Fridays For Future and age

I have, in the chapters leading up to this one, used and cited multiple articles with 'Ecofeminism Revisited' as part of their title. My chapter title may therefore not be the most original one, but I retain it simply because I believe it to be important that ecofeminism be revisited time and again by countless different scholars from different perspectives, as mine is different from the two (Gaard & Foster) previously discussed. Continuing with the framework I have built up of ecofeminism in the previous chapters, I discuss specific possibilities and ideas for a contemporary ecofeminism to work with. However, it should also be noted that there already are many interpretations and expressions of ecofeminism 'out there', some of which I will describe, especially with regard to their relation to earlier ecofeminism. Therefore, this part of the thesis is both an observation of different, current ecofeminisms, as well as a theoretical blend of arguments made in previous chapters that combines former ecofeminist strengths with current societal challenges.

First of all, I begin by stating that it is now clear that ecofeminism is neither dead nor dying, even though its focus might have shifted, its popularity slightly faded, and most of the recent texts on the subject of ecofeminism only 'revisit' it to pick out a few attractive ideas and leave the rest as outdated or uninteresting. The shift to newer terminologies, described in chapter 1, may divert the attention to newer fields with names that sound more comprehensive ('posthumanities'), but the issues that ecofeminism initially uncovered are still being struggled with. Acknowledging and adapting the posthumanities' insights need not automatically involve a moving on from ecofeminism altogether. Allowing ecofeminism to evolve, and to bring in its own concerns and histories to modern and enduring debates is important for all participants in the discussion - not in the least because of its wholesome incorporation of room for spirituality (something that is also exactly why ecofeminism has been ridiculed and shunned from academic circles).

After all, 'post-feminism' (its prefix being literal, but with a somewhat pretentious connotation) has all but replaced 'feminism' and its more general expressions. It did call out feminists in keeping them on their toes and their concerns relevant and attuned to current affairs as well as other prominent academic circles, which provides good opportunities, but does not lead to sudden and definitive paradigm shifts.

This would, then, be a good moment to turn to the intersection of current environmentalism and ecofeminism. In a recent wave of 'ecofeminist' texts in the popular media, Thunberg is discussed as a potential rejuvenator of the ecofeminist movement.⁷⁴ Both an environmental activist (one of the most well-known and successful in the entire world, at this moment) and a self-identified feminist, she could be regarded as an ecofeminist in the sense of a portmanteau of the aforementioned terms. Her association with ecofeminism as a theory or movement is somewhat unclear, and should not be disregarded automatically; just like it cannot be assumed automatically. In the words of Noël Sturgeon; 'Most simply put, ecofeminism is a movement that makes connections between environmentalisms and feminisms'.⁷⁵ Someone who sees the environmentalist and feminist sides of their interest and personality apart is therefore not (but could be a great potential) ecofeminist. It also raises the question of the development of a new ecofeminism; one that is less dependent on certain premises and is less likely to focus on historical connections and literary research, but is able to attract an impressively large following and has its eyes set on a cleaner, greener future where younger voices are heard through clear acts of activism. The need for a strong ecofeminist language and frame, however, becomes clear in the case of discrimination on the basis of intersections of age and gender and their interplay with environmental concern

⁷⁴ An example is <https://www.forbes.com/sites/bonniechiu/2019/09/19/the-greta-thunberg-effect-the-rise-of-girl-eco-warriors/?sh=5bb86e97407f>, 30-08-2021, 10:35.

⁷⁵ Sturgeon, *Ecofeminist Natures*, 24.

(which have been discussed in the previous chapter) and other ruling associations and connotations of thought patterns and discriminations (that will be discussed shortly).

A similar, seemingly somewhat too hasty use of the term ecofeminism can be encountered more often. Giacomini et al. list a variety of rising up organizations and social movements surrounding women, suppressed groups, and nature (mostly) alternately (for example, the founding of BlackLivesMatter in 2012, Russian women standing up to domestic violence in 2017, and 'Marichuy', known as a spokesperson of the Indigenous National Congress in Mexico running for president). Since the acts described are mostly of a demonstrative kind and mostly carried out by women, the authors conclude that "These actions indicate that ecofeminism is on the rise. For us, ecofeminism is based on an understanding that women and Nature are exploited by capitalists".⁷⁶

If these premises alone are enough to conclude that ecofeminism is on the rise (coincidentally, do the authors not mean a 'resurrection?'), then certainly Fridays For Future can be part of this ecofeminist rise, and could be seen as probably one of the most outspokenly ecofeminist movements in the list. However, this interpretation of ecofeminism does not necessarily correspond with the ecofeminism discussed in the previous chapters, or at least not ecofeminism as an umbrella term of historical conjunctions of movements and scholars.

In another article published in the same journal, Brownhill & Turner describe how social movements in Africa aim to replace capitalism with an 'alternative political economy' that 'can be characterized as a global, horizontal, subsistence-oriented, decolonized communing political economy, or what we call "ecofeminist ecosocialism"'.⁷⁷ No further explanations as to how the 'ecofeminist' part of this ecosocialism is defined or realized are given – even though these terms are often used in ecofeminist worldviews, one unfamiliar with the field might not automatically see its indebtedness. Again, it appears that the inclusive and seemingly self-explanatory ring of the term attracts those interested in both women's emancipation and environmental preservation, without generating a true revival of (or even awareness of) ecofeminist theory or history. If ecofeminism as a popular term is truly on the rise, then the very least that should be expected of it (or; what we should try to instigate) is a revival of everything ecofeminism entails. Its depth, breadth, interdisciplinary as well as intra-disciplinary debates, even the strands of thought long declared outdated or narrowminded – anything that is able to inform or prevent new ecofeminist attempts from making the same mistakes the former ecofeminist explorations did needs a place in an 'ecofeminism revisited'. A continuation of 'lived' academia in the form of ecofeminist activism can be seen, however, in the case of WECF (started in 1994 in the Netherlands as 'Women in Europe for a Common Future', now broadened to Women Engage for a Common Future due to its global character), an organization that works on 'transformative gender equality and women's human rights in interconnection with climate justice, sustainable energy & chemicals, less toxic waste, safe water & sanitation for all'.⁷⁸ When the visitor of the main page scrolls downwards, there is a slide window with the topics 'ecofeminism', 'intersectionality', and 'womxn'. Here, WECF explains its interpretation of ecofeminism: "For us ecofeminism means, using an intersectional feminist approach when fighting structural barriers that [prevent] us from enjoying a healthy environment. (...) These barriers, among others, include capitalism, extractivism, militarism, gender-based violence and shrinking space for civil society to influence." As an organization that was established in the 90's, it is an example of the perseverance and ongoing relevance of ecofeminist thought and its evolving, adapting potential.

⁷⁶ Terran Giacomini et al. 'Ecofeminism Against Capitalism and for the Commons', *Capitalism Nature Socialism* 29 (2018) 1-6.

⁷⁷ Leigh Brownhill & Terisa E. Turner, 'Ecofeminism at the Heart of Ecosocialism', *Capitalism Nature Socialism* 30 (2019) 1-10, 5.

⁷⁸ <https://www.wecf.org/about-us/>, 30-08-2021, 13:00.

In the past, ecofeminism and related 'environments' knew many figures that were prominent in both activist circles and academic contexts. Roger S. Gottlieb (not an ecofeminist, but a religious environmentalist philosopher) strongly fuses his personal commitments both as a scholar and as a defender of the natural purity of the environment of his home. Using the uprising of his neighbourhood as an introduction to his article 'Saving The World: Religion and Politics in the Environmental Movement', he explicitly shows the intertwined politics, concerns and possibilities of his theories and their related movements. Donna Haraway, Noël Sturgeon, Jane Goodall and other theorists and scholars that are in one way or another connected to ecofeminism and similar movements stood at the frontline of protestations, gatherings, and meetings to transform their academic effort into societal impacts.

If ecofeminism is to engage with Gen Z environmentalism, of which the necessity is part of the argument of this thesis, it will once again need to constitute a bridge between academia and the streets, and can only blend theory and movement if it bypasses the strong barricades that divisive identifiers that age differences have erected.

What is needed is both a more thorough, situated and contextual understanding of current initiatives and their underlying motivations, and an actual stimulus or impetus to bring this understanding into the world of activism it discusses so that is able to function properly and aimfully. In this respect, ecofeminist thought can be a useful tool to enrich and substantiate not only potential new ecofeminist movements as described in the paragraph above, but also to those in one way or another related to either environmental decline or feminist theory, to promote interdisciplinarity and hegemonic power structures at fault.

For example, as well-informed as the WECF seems to be, which makes academic background of employees nearly inevitable – something supported by the overwhelming amount of case studies performed by the organization, as well as other articles and reports published on its website, it still takes certain preconceptions for granted which are extremely formative for its conclusions. For example, WECF acknowledges that 'due to social norms, beauty standards, gendered occupations and biological factors, women are disproportionately affected by chemicals such as those found in cosmetics or cleaning products',⁷⁹ which evokes more critical questions about the performativity of gender (the use of make-up for women alone, for example) as well as questions concerning age as a modifying factor (it could be questioned whether the use of make-up is as common in every age group, as could the use of biological, sustainable products be variable), leading to different approaches concerning ways towards improvement.

Another particularly distressing phenomenon that, up until now, has not been discussed in this thesis are examples of phenomena encountered at random on a daily basis that obnoxiously make clear the need for specifically ecofeminist critiques. A fairly recent (and well-meant) study, executed by marketing researchers, found that men resist ecofriendly products and alternatives when they feel threatened in their masculinity, and instead prefer the non-ecological variants in order to compensate for this 'attack'. The study, after making a case for negative association of femininity and green behaviour or concern, suggests using more "'men"-vironmentally-friendly' products, with 'masculine' fonts, colours, words and images, instead of 'green and light tan colors featuring a tree'.⁸⁰ The authors may not see a (personal) need to further reflect on their findings since they're marketing researchers and are only interested in creating strategies that stimulate the sale of certain products, and could think that this functions well enough as a solution to the problem of men shying away from environmentally friendly choices. This solution, of course, is unfortunately nothing other than a superficial response to a much deeper issue concerning gender stereotyping and a woman-nature association (a negative one, at that). Decades after ecofeminism's introduction, and after endless debates on its tiniest theoretical anomalies, short-sighted and

⁷⁹ <https://www.wecf.org/report-why-the-european-green-deal-needs-ecofeminism/>, 30-08-2021, 18:44.

⁸⁰ Aaron R. Brough, James E.B. Wilkie et al. 'Is Eco-Friendly Unmanly? The Green-Feminine Stereotype and Its Effect on Sustainable Consumption', *Journal of Consumer Research* 43 (2016) 562-582.

toxic societal structures and hierarchies are still reproduced to the detriment of both women and nature, which goes to show that it is far too early to write off ecofeminism as old-fashioned or redundant and move on to projects that transcend its aims.

In addition, I want to connect the topic of ecofeminism's relevance to the case of Fridays For Future and the insights of the previous chapter.

Sturgeon, in *Ecofeminist Natures*, describes ecofeminism's attempt to overcome the contradiction of 'the continued orientation of ecofeminism toward radical politics while experiencing a growing separation from localized, issue-oriented direct action.'⁸¹ What is visible in F4F is nothing less than a strong combination of radical politics (if this is assumed to mean the pursuit of global, revolutionary, structural reform, not 'radical' as a denominator of a distinct sub-movement as it relativizes 'radical ecofeminism'), and localized direct action in the form of strikes and protestations.

Turning this embodiment of ecofeminist thought around, there are other possibilities of a combination of ecofeminism and F4F's societal impact. Now that there is a global, current and astounding amount of attention for the environment, ecofeminist thought can take up the challenge of prolonging the line of reasoning and using these scientific results (generally revered) that show that the world is literally on fire as a method of bringing topics of anthropocentrism as well as androcentrism to the table. Of course, it seems like a backward or opportunistic method, but since it is more of a structural approach towards change than a mere combat of symptoms, this addressing of topics is relevant as ever and should definitely make the most of the environmentalist, global wave of activism and awareness.

Another topic I believe ecofeminism has yet to address (or, if I'm unknowing about existing texts, perhaps it should be readdressed) is the apt and universal moral ground that underlies ecofeminist thought. In a lot of cases, ecofeminism relies on universalistic, seemingly obvious statements (backed by scientific results) that fittingly match anyone equipped with a standard, general, 'Western' perspective and no outstandingly peculiar convictions. The 'natural' (or perhaps less confusingly 'self-evident') appeal of the arguments for preservation mostly stem from demonstrations that particular heritages have led to damage to the environment (a classic example of this is Lynn White's article in which he points to the Christian roots of anthropocentric behaviour that destroys natural environments, after which many similar critiques followed⁸²). At the same time, ecofeminists have already been accused of appropriating indigenous cultures or practices. While it is clear what and whom ecofeminism rejects in the process of battling age-old cultural, philosophical and ontological systems, it remains unclear whereupon exactly then its own premises and core morality is built, and if its strength lies in ubiquitous appeal or far-reaching impacts by its own devotees alone.

Finally, in a time where many problematic historical figures and practices are no longer celebrated (see, for example, the iconoclasm that over the past few years has taken place all over the world, in which many statues of imperialistic despots have been taken down), ecofeminism has some rectification to do as well. As I have tried to show before, ecofeminism extends the naturalization of women that has been used as a method of oppression to include indigenous, non-white, and non-heteronormative male people,⁸³ but without an acknowledgement of current difference and integrated perspectives, this historical account does less in the field of constructive solutions and more of the 'othering' of it diagnoses. A rectification would bring many involved theories and fields closer together and is, arguably, the only way of an ecofeminism in which the importance of intersectionality and queer perspectives can be believed as authentic and thorough.

⁸¹ Sturgeon, *Ecofeminist Natures*, 115.

⁸² Lynn White Jr., 'The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis', *Science* 155 (1967) 1203-1207.

⁸³ A couple examples are named in Gaard, 'Toward a Queer Ecofeminism', 126.

As a concluding remark, this chapter has tried to place in line where ecofeminism came from, the contexts in which it is mostly discussed or finds some expression or another, several examples for which further ecofeminist critique are (or so I argue) strongly required, and consequentially some of the challenges ecofeminism must work with in order to be fully grounded in the 21st century. This revisitation of ecofeminism, guided by insights of the previous chapters, will function as the version of ecofeminism that is further used in the final chapter and the conclusion.

Chapter 6: Gen Z environmentalism and dark green religion

Because I have already described F4F's self-definition of a youth-led and -organized movement, I feel comfortable in branding its expressions 'Gen Z environmentalism' – not to pose this as a uniform category which this movement fills exclusively, however. Not only did I describe the simple fact that most of its members and the most prominent representatives belong to this particular generation, I also chose to study how this generational dimension is particularly formative for F4F's identification, worldviews, and framings (which it is to a considerable extent, or so I have argued in the previous chapter, an argument which will be further reflected upon in the context of this chapter).

Firstly, I will discuss several characteristics often ascribed to Gen Z in order to better understand why the kind of environmentalism displayed by F4F can be reviewed as inherently Gen Z. Then, I discuss further characterizing aspects of F4F with the use of Taylor's work on dark green religion, followed by a short subchapter on mythmaking in science to better understand scientific tendencies. After this I will use insights from both of these discussions to analyze aspects of spirituality in Gen Z environmentalism as well as its accompanying 'belief' in the victory march of the value-free, objective, and absolute knowledge of the natural sciences that is often portrayed by F4F in its statements.

'Gen Z' (environmentalism)

I have named on a few instances that characterizations of Gen Z seem to be especially popular amongst marketing researchers, who depict common or distinct characteristics displayed by Gen Z that distinguishes this generation from previous ones by their everyday life and practices, political persuasions, and worldviews. In this chapter, I use abstractions and generalizations made by the Pew Research Center, a 'nonpartisan fact tank' that 'conducts public opinion polling, demographic research, media content analysis and other empirical social science research'⁸⁴, and McKinsey, an organization that aims to 'help leaders in the commercial, public, and social sectors develop a deeper understanding of the evolution of the global economy and to provide a fact base to help decision making on critical issues'.⁸⁵ Both studies define Gen Z as a part of the population being born after at least 1995 with no clear end date of birth years, although 2010 or 2012 are sometimes mentioned. It would be both tedious and unnecessary to discuss every characteristic 'trend' in Gen Z identifications, but a few of these results are of particular interest when read together with the upsurge of environmentalist activism in this age group.

The study performed by Pew Research found that Gen Z is a generation that, more than any of the other generations, wants an activist government.⁸⁶ McKinsey, also researching how Gen Z felt about the organizational systems of their country, found that of all generations, Gen Z was the one that was the least convinced that in order to change the world, subjects should break with the system they found themselves in. This led the McKinsey report to draw the conclusion of Gen Z values being centered around dialogue, with 'a high value for individual identity, the rejection of stereotypes, and a considerable degree of pragmatism'.⁸⁷ Gen Z, and consequently, Gen Z activism, can indeed be described as distinctly less radical than its predecessors; less utopian, perhaps, and certainly more focused on cooperation and working out solutions with the established order. Instead of doing away with the government and plunging into unknown territory, Gen Z activists instead focus on holding their governments accountable, urging them to effectuate change.

⁸⁴ <https://www.pewresearch.org/>, 26-08-2021, 19:56.

⁸⁵ <https://www.mckinsey.com/about-us/overview>, 26-08-2021, 19:56.

⁸⁶ <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2020/05/14/on-the-cusp-of-adulthood-and-facing-an-uncertain-future-what-we-know-about-gen-z-so-far-2/>, 16-06-2021, 11:58. Surveys taken in the United States and performed by the Pew Research Centre in 2018.

⁸⁷ <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/consumer-packaged-goods/our-insights/true-gen-generation-z-and-its-implications-for-companies>, 21-06-2021, 10:26. McKinsey's research took place in Brazil. The outcomes are fairly similar in their assessment on Gen Z values and beliefs, which is why I chose to use them both, their different locality and similar outcomes only fortifying their credibility.

It is also worth noting that this practice of asking the government to undertake action in general is already essentially a generational expression, a generational differentiation; students distinguish themselves from the prior generations who have remained silent for too long or haven't spoken out enough, and even though this generation may not be as embedded in the actual circumstances and have not as much personal (political) power to do something about what troubles them, they do have the power and potential to speak up and make their voice heard. F4F's focus on civil disobedience as a strategy⁸⁸ is thus logical and inherent.

Furthermore, the aforementioned studies have questioned how Gen Z generally feels about two other topics that have a prominent place in this thesis: religiosity on the one hand, gender understanding and expression on the other. Interestingly, McKinsey notes that 'Seventy-six percent of Gen Zers say they are religious. At the same time, they are also the generation most open to a variety of themes not necessarily aligned with the broader beliefs of their declared religions', and that 'Gen Zers feel comfortable interacting with traditional religious institutions without abandoning personal beliefs that might not be broadly accepted by these institutions'.⁸⁹ This will be interesting to keep in mind during the discussion of Taylor's views on the revival of dark green religion.

The Pew Research Center, in turn, found that Gen Z is by far the generation most familiar with non-traditional gender views and pronouns; in the survey taken in 2018, 35% of the Gen Z respondents personally knew someone who identified with gender-neutral pronouns, and 59% wanted forms (official documents) to have more gender options than only 'man' and 'woman'.⁹⁰ Since familiarity with and openness about non-binary constructions in identities are growing and being represented more and more on (social) media, it could be speculated that in the last three years these numbers have only grown. In comparison, 50% of Millennials agree with the latter of the statements with Gen Z, only 40% of Gen X, 37% of the Baby Boomers and 32% of the Silent Generation. I purposely include in this case the notably smaller percentages of the other generations, for if one acknowledges gender nonconformity to be of all ages and not only present amongst Gen Z who has adopted a particular language for these expressions, there truly is an amazingly large difference considering preferred or used language.

In this way, it is interesting to think about Gen Z expressions embracing a new kind of 'queer'; Gen Z is the generation most typified by flexibility concerning pronouns, gender identity, and a general discontent with binary constructions. However, as also already noted, Gen Z does not aim to completely overthrow current systems. A lot of them, for example, think gay marriage betters the country (instead of abandoning the concept of marriage altogether, as is apparently a common subject in queer discussions).⁹¹

These notions that typify Gen Z are not only present in expressions of Gen Z environmentalism, but will also be used in the further discussion of spirituality and ecofeminism's contribution to its goals.

Dark green religion (dgr)

To understand the addition that work from academic environments on spirituality and religion could offer, it is important to dive into one of the subfields that combine environmentalism and religion. To this end, I use the work of Bron Taylor and Lisa Sideris in particular, although there are countless fields and scholars working on amazingly diverse intersections of these fields.

Dark green religion as an umbrella term has, since Taylor's publication in 2010, gained a lot of attention from different subfields of study, but I use it here in applying Taylor's own understanding of this broad, multifaceted concept that with its useful distinctions classifies

⁸⁸ Stated with a reference to Erica Chenoweth's research, <https://fridaysforfuture.org/take-action/how-to-strike/>, 10-11-2021, 14:05.

⁸⁹ Idem.

⁹⁰ See note 80.

⁹¹ This is discussed in Richard Thompson Ford, 'What's Queer about Race?', *South Atlantic Quarterly* 106 (2007) 477-484.

several sides of F4F's facets. Taylor developed and uses a certain classification system in order to distinguish between different kinds of dark green religion: he recognizes as one major category 'Animism', which has a supernaturalist variant (Spiritual Animism) and a naturalist one (Naturalistic Animism), and as the other 'Gaian Earth Religion', which is similarly subdivided into 'Gaian Spirituality' and 'Gaian Naturalism'.⁹² Taylor maintains that the boundaries between these divisions are not strict and exclusive, and in the course of his work he often ascribes more than one of these four characterizations to singular phenomena. This classification system also explicitly includes less traditional, less transcendental forms of religiosity or spirituality, embodying a category that often strongly dissociates with those last two terms. For example, in his description of Edward Abbey's work and thought, Taylor notes how he specifically and outspokenly rejects supernatural metaphysics, but classifies him as a Gaian Naturalist nevertheless, or at times an Naturalistic Animist, thereby assigning him a place on the dgr spectrum.⁹³ He also devotes an entire chapter to the dark green religion that can be found in Radical Environmentalism.

Among the countless influences that are central to Taylor's description of radical environmentalism (the list consists of philosophers, pagans, ecofeminists and more), Taylor discusses what he calls "*New Science*" theorists and religionists: Alternately referred to as "new physics", "systems theory," or "complexity" theorists, as well as "Gaia theorists", these people represent diverse schools of thought that nevertheless, in their own ways, promote kinship ethics and a metaphysics of interdependence'.⁹⁴

A comparison can easily be drawn between F4F and Taylor's radical environmentalism when it is characterized as having 'figures and forms that are both obviously religious and that only resemble religious characteristics without being self-consciously religious'⁹⁵ (see next paragraph). What's more, 'what separates radical environmentalism from many other forms of dark green religion is apocalypticism' is of particular interest here. Apocalyptic concerns can be very easily recognized in F4F's strongest arguments (see Thunberg's UN speech discussed in chapter 4, for example), as are the intrinsic 'inseparability of pessimism and optimism', and the fact that for radical environmentalism, 'the movement's hope (...) was forged in despair'.⁹⁶ On a sidenote, there are other terms that can be useful for describing or understanding F4F's expressions and displays of psychological consequences of environmental change as well, such as solastalgia, eco-anxiety, and eco-grief.⁹⁷ Diving deep into these concepts and F4F's (follower's) personal connection to these terms might however be more of a psychological endeavour, and goes too deep for a fuller discussion in this thesis. Taylor names as an example of radical environmentalism the movement EarthFirst! already shortly mentioned in chapter 4 (and extensively discussed in Sturgeon's *Ecofeminist Natures*), which he names as the first environmentalist organization to revolve primarily around civil disobedience. F4F has a notably similar structure, expressing beliefs and effectuating change through civil disobedience first and foremost (though decidedly less disruptively). Therefore, when placing F4F along the line that Taylor makes in describing radical environmentalisms, it can be questioned whether F4F can really be called 'radical'. However, it should also be remembered that Taylor uses his own system of definitions as fluid, allowing multiple identifications and several denominations in one single branch of thought, scholar, or movement. I think that there is enough overlap concerning the fundamental convictions or expression between F4F and, for example, EarthFirst! or Greenpeace to discuss them following the same lines of thought, even though there may be a difference of main adherents or radicality (of actions). Furthermore, there are other reasons

⁹² Bron Taylor, *Dark Green Religion: Nature Spirituality and the Planetary Future* (Berkeley 2010) 15.

⁹³ Taylor, *Dark Green Religion*, 82.

⁹⁴ *Ibidem*, 76.

⁹⁵ *Ibidem*, 77.

⁹⁶ *Ibidem*, 84-85.

⁹⁷ Apparently there is a widespread acknowledgement of anxieties such like these under 'young people': <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-58549373> 16-09-2021, 22:45.

as well for treating F4F's worldviews as religiously tinted expressions, disguised by strong, scientific language.

The idea that F4F can be automatically disassociated from religious interpretations because of its identification as a secular, political organization is simultaneously part of a longer tradition, as well as a rather deplorable assumption. In Eaton's words: 'Although both politics and religion have used the influence of the other when advantageous, the notion of a dissociation has kept many people from connecting their religions/spiritual commitments to their political and economic practices. Yet, spirituality is something deep, rich and genuinely life-giving which promotes an awareness of what is happening in our midst. It leads us to be more – rather than less – engaged with life, and to resist that which oppresses.'⁹⁸ This must remind the ecofeminist enthusiast of other definitions of ecofeminist spirituality, for example that of Warren's: 'Failure to acknowledge the potential of ecofeminist spiritualities to provide a genuinely feminist, life-affirming, and empowering response to patriarchy within patriarchy perpetuates the mistaken view that spirituality is not or cannot be a legitimate feminist political concern.'⁹⁹ Another important thing to remember is that acknowledgements of spirituality do not necessarily diminish adherence to scientific systems for natural phenomena at all: an example in this case is Spretnak's working definition of spirituality, which holds that "... it is the aspect of human existence that explores the subtle forces of energy in and around us and reveals to us profound interconnectedness.'¹⁰⁰ This definition is free from any specific denomination, and while perfectly applicable to many hegemonic ideas on the nature of spirituality, clearly displays her indebtedness in the natural sciences, especially when she continues that 'at the subatomic and astrophysical levels, however, Newtonian explanations are inadequate'. In this way, she almost seems to describe spirituality as a 'grounding' to scientific rationality, or alternatively as a supplement.

F4F's 'official demands support (...) a science- and technology-driven narrative'¹⁰¹ - something they are very outspoken about on their website, and which is clearly expressed in their policies, as some examples of chapter 4 have shown. For example, in the 'Fridays For Future Strike Culture', amongst classics such as 'no violence' and 'no hate', there is the rule of 'Always refer to science'.¹⁰²

Of course, this is not a negative phenomenon in itself – if anything, science-based conclusions are often preferred over unsubstantiated claims. However, as Evensen pointed out (chapter 4), too strong a belief in science's powers or a distorted idea of its scope may have confusing, if not dividing effects.

Considering the fact that F4F is often seen as leading some sort of 'crusade' for climate change and science (the choice of words here is both odd and intentional) that is so often placed in opposition with 'religion', the latter is a subject on which both Thunberg and F4F remain conspicuously silent. Many web searches do not provide any information on Thunberg's (potential, 'traditional') religious convictions, apart from those concerning the environment, and the only time that the word 'religion' (or its derivations) appears on the F4F website is when it is briefly mentioned in the already discussed MAPA article of the first newsletter. Insights into better-suited religious or spiritual dimensions of F4F thought can be

⁹⁸ Heather Eaton, 'Liaison or Liability: Weaving Spirituality into Ecofeminist Politics', *Atlantis* 21 (1996) 109-122, 111.

⁹⁹ Karen J. Warren, 'A Feminist Philosophical Perspective on Ecofeminist Spiritualities', in: Carol J. Adams ed. *Ecofeminism and the Sacred* (New York 1993) 119-132, 132.

¹⁰⁰ Charlene Spretnak, 'The Spiritual Dimension of Green Politics' in: Charlene Spretnak and Fritjof Capra, *Green Politics: The Global Promise* (London 1986) 230-258, 240.

¹⁰¹ Jens Marquardt, 'Fridays For Future's Disruptive Potential: An Inconvenient Youth Between Moderate and Racial Ideas', *Frontiers in Communication* 5 (2020) 1-18, 12.

¹⁰² <https://fridaysforfuture.org/take-action/how-to-strike/>, 9-11-2021 22:21, under the heading 'Fridays For Future Strike Culture'. On the same page, under the heading 'skipping school': 'We suggest you talk to your principal and teachers ahead of time and ask them to support you. Bring accurate scientific information to these meetings to let them know you are serious and well informed'. What defines scientific information as 'accurate' is, of course, another question entirely.

especially fruitful when other allegories are already being made that do not necessarily seem to fit either F4F or Thunberg in particular. For example, the sentiments involved and historical likenesses of groupings, gatherings, and ‘rituals’ often lead both followers and antagonists of F4F to adopt religious imagery or terminology, with Thunberg being depicted with a halo around her head¹⁰³ or being proclaimed a preacher, prophet, an ‘avenging angel’¹⁰⁴ or even ‘the successor of Christ’¹⁰⁵. F4F has even been likened to the Children’s Crusade, of which the historicity is questionable, while its religious meaning is not.¹⁰⁶ For a target group that does not affiliate with the traditional religions anymore despite frequently identifying as either religious or spiritual, a new framework of religious meaning could add a lot of significance to convictions and arguments. Evensen, in his constructive criticism of the rhetorical limitations of F4F, briefly describes to F4F’s practice of placing science on a pedestal, which he likens to ‘Durkheim’s ideas of the sacred’¹⁰⁷ – these kinds of comparisons, and especially the ideas of inspiring awe and wonder, could be useful in thinking about the use and nature of science in modern ‘myths’. Both the advantages and the risks of these possibilities will be discussed in the next subchapter.

Mythmaking in science

In the chapter mentioned above, Taylor quotes Paul Watson, the founder of Greenpeace, discussing his belief in the need for a complete departure of the traditional dominant religions: ‘What we need if we are to survive is a new story, a new myth, and a new religion. (...) With the laws of ecology as a foundation for a new biocentric, ecocentric worldview, we can then look at providing a sense of identity’.¹⁰⁸ This call for a completely new way of viewing the world (which, funnily enough, often makes use of rather traditional or indigenous concepts) is on the rise in many different scientific circles as well as environmental organizations, but often in a way that denies any affiliations with any form of religiosity. Theory on the mythmaking practices that are going on in certain circles could prove to be enlightening in understanding F4F’s dynamics with belief in science.

Lisa Sideris has recognized, in a context of religious environmentalism, a rapidly growing collective of scholars who are creating an all-encompassing story with the use of physics insights that has crowned itself the ‘ultimate narrative’ that explains almost anything (... that is noteworthy or ‘real’). Dubbed the ‘New Genesis’ by Sideris, it is centred around extracting environmental behaviours from a ‘science-based form of spirituality, positing science as the new sacred myth for our times’.¹⁰⁹ Even though adherents of movements that are part of this New Genesis have as their objective the restoration of awe and wonder for the natural world, it is hard not to see a parallel or continuation of the trend of the elevation of (natural) scientific results and abstractions in the role of ‘green’ conclusions in F4F’s reasoning. Sideris’ adaptation of Taylor’s thought on *dgr*, which she applies to parts of the New Genesis

¹⁰³ <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/environment/2019/09/28/greta-thunberg-first-saint-cruel-new-environmental-religion/> 26-09-2021, 20:14.

¹⁰⁴ <https://www.irishtimes.com/opinion/fintan-o-toole-greta-thunberg-is-a-prophet-preacher-rulebreaker-avenging-angel-1.4030064?mode=sample&auth-failed=1&pw-origin=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.irishtimes.com%2Fopinion%2Ffintan-o-toole-greta-thunberg-is-a-prophet-preacher-rulebreaker-avenging-angel-1.4030064> 26-09-2021, 20:15.

¹⁰⁵ This created some backlash, though, as it was done by a Swedish parish and did not represent the views of the entire Church of Sweden. An archbishop later responded, however, that ‘follower’ would be a more suitable term, which is also interesting since Thunberg’s conviction remains officially unclear. <https://www.svenskakyrkan.se/ga-till-kallan/no-church-of-sweden-has-not-proclaimed-greta-thunberg-as-one-of-jesus-christs-successors>, 26-09-2021, 20:15.

¹⁰⁶ An example is Sheila Jasanoff, ‘Imagined Worlds: the politics of future-making in the twenty-first century’, in: Andreas Wenger et al. eds. *The Politics and Science of Provision – Governing and Probing the Future* (Abingdon 2020) 27-44, 35.

¹⁰⁷ Evensen, ‘The rhetorical limitations’, 428.

¹⁰⁸ Taylor, *Dark Green Religion*, 99.

¹⁰⁹ Lisa H. Sideris, ‘Science as Sacred Myth? Ecospirituality in the Anthropocene Age’, *JSRNC* 9 (2015) 136-153, 137.

paraphrased as ‘nature- and science-oriented spirituality that eschews and often critiques the supernatural worldviews and values of traditional faiths, notably the Abrahamic traditions’¹¹⁰ also contributes to the common ground that parts of the New Genesis share with F4F.

Up to this point, the following reasoning could be set up. It has been argued that F4F relies too much on a false, idolized idea of science and its role in the revolutionary greening of the world. It needs to adopt certain theories, ethics, and other insights from social studies to be able to work towards a holistic, meaningful future. In F4F’s thought, however, there seems to be a resonating of the idea that science is the ultimate answer for everything. In a way, then, F4F is part of the larger collective of environmentalist movements that engage to different extents in scientism¹¹¹. In this discourse, there is a ‘myth’ of inherent value and prescription of existing, value-free science as some sort of sacred guide that appears both immanent and transcendental. The awe and wonder for the natural world appears heavily mediated by scientific results, or directed towards these scientific results alone instead of direct encounters with the world they describe. In its turn towards science as an apparent solution for amythia,¹¹² it provides only a base for the future to be based upon, not an approach. Iain Provan, who combines the fields of dark green religion and mythmaking in science, appropriately warns that ‘it is (...) possible to become so driven by these visions of the future that we cannot see clearly, either, what lies behind us, in the past. The past gets caught up in the future as we ask it to lend support to our *hopes* for the future’.¹¹³ How will F4F and other expressions of Gen Z environmentalism be able to ‘weave’ in the way Taylor describes when he questions whether ‘Will increasing proportions of the human population embrace scientific understandings of the origins and evolution of the universe and biosphere and weave them into new, spiritually fulfilling cosmovisions?’¹¹⁴. With regard to a framework that unites environmental awareness, intersectional approaches, scientific and interdisciplinary cooperation, philosophical content and hope for the future, I turn for one last time to ecofeminism, and ecofeminist spiritualities in particular.

Ecofeminist spiritualities

Spirituality is, of course, a very difficult concept to define on its own, let alone have it function in further theorems. Dictionary entries of the term are as diverse as scholarly use and opinion concerning the concept, and it is hard to understand exactly how scholars make use of the term if they do not explicitly discuss their precise understanding of the term. David Ray Griffin makes use of a general, working definition of ‘spirituality’ as referring to ‘the ultimate values and meanings in terms of which we live, whether they be otherworldly or very worldly ones, and whether or not we consciously try to increase our commitment to those values and meanings’.¹¹⁵ Other definitions may revolve around more transcendent notions or specifically religious images concerning an immortal spirit, but it should be clear that this is not always the case. He also notes that ‘spirituality in this broad sense is not an optional quality which we might elect not to have’¹¹⁶; similar sentiments are sometimes expressed in defining the ‘religious’ as well, which can be seen in Julia Kristeva’s philosophical concept of the ‘need to believe’. Even though it might come across as somewhat intrusive to bestow the label ‘spiritual’ on those who themselves do not identify as such, this way of dealing with the term and concept is fruitful in multiple ways, as the previous subchapter on F4F and dark green religion must have pointed out as well.

¹¹⁰ Sideris, ‘Science as Sacred Myth’, 139.

¹¹¹ Sideris uses this term to describe the tendencies in *The New Genesis*, in Lisa H. Sideris, *Consecrating Science – Wonder, Knowledge, and the Natural World* (Berkeley 2017) 7.

¹¹² Sideris, ‘Science as Sacred Myth’, 139.

¹¹³ Iain Provan, *Convenient Myths: The Axial Age, Dark Green Religion, and the World That Never Was* (Waco 2013) 2.

¹¹⁴ Bron Taylor, ‘Dark Green Religion: A Decade Later’, *JSRNC* 14 (2021) 496-510, 506.

¹¹⁵ David Ray Griffin, ‘Introduction: Postmodern Spirituality and Society’, in: David Ray Griffin ed. *Spirituality and Society: Postmodern Visions* (Albany 1988) 1-31, 1.

¹¹⁶ Griffin, ‘Introduction’, 1.

Whereas previous chapters were aimed at both the challenges and the possibilities that ecofeminism was to face in the context of Gen Z environmentalism, with a focus on age as a factor of intersectionality, a much debated subject within ecofeminism has not received much attention yet. I did discuss the fact that ecofeminist spiritualities were often problematized by those interested in *and* strongly against ecofeminism, and they have even been used to write off ecofeminism as a whole due to its supposed inherent spirituality.¹¹⁷ In the light of the previous discussion, this could now be argued to be understood as another expression of a toxic relation with between science and religion: as long as ecofeminism is rejected on ‘spiritual’ grounds whereas scientific claims are accepted merely because of their connectedness to ‘science’, while escaping any further scrutiny considering their historical building stones, ethics, or cultural meanings, there need to be new understandings of what makes something scientific, spiritual, both, or neither.

For, despite the reluctance for the use of religious terminology, ‘Even strident atheists, after all, have experiences of sublimity, wonder, and mystery that find expression in quasi-religious language or metaphors of the sacred’.¹¹⁸ Denials of religious elements in science-based claims and beliefs only further problematize the understanding of the relatedness between the two. Sideris notes that what she calls ‘proponents of knowledge based wonder’, i.e. the followers of The New Genesis, ‘often portray science and religion as occupying the same explanatory slot, as if religions were nothing but inferior propositional statements about the world.’¹¹⁹

F4F appears to be so strongly rooted in a manner of distress, a defiant overcoming of helplessness, and apocalypticism, that it makes no room to display or articulate the sense of wonder¹²⁰ or awe that has to be part of the drive towards a respectful relationship with nature and radical change.

Ecofeminism combines strong critiques and a path towards a new, radically reformed society with hope and reverence for non-human nature, which Gen Z environmentalism seems, at times, to forget in its focus on governmental issues and legislations (that are, indeed, thoroughly needed). Coincidentally, ecofeminist spiritualities understood as those previously described by Warren and Spretnak (page 36) perfectly combine the many facets of Gen Z thought, concerns, and stances as displayed in both its environmentalism and the market research performed on Gen Z’s interests and values. It has also already been noted that a substantial part of Gen Z identifies as spiritual (see page 34). What is interesting, then, is a connection of current spiritualities with the environmental concern that is also largely present in this generation, as they may not be as disconnected as, in a similar fashion, ‘science’ and ‘religion’ are often portrayed to be.

Whereas other radical environmentalists fall back to cultural (grand) narratives or religious heritages, or at least adapt these methodologies for meaning-making, Gen Z environmentalism seems to refer and retreat to scientific results alone, which provides a good basis for making conclusions, but in which the ontological, cultural, and philosophical embeddedness remains unclear and unknown. And, in return, ecofeminism needs to embrace and fortify F4F as an important player in its field, for the two have by far the best chance of effectuating change when change consists of activism aligned with ‘the arduous deconstruction and reconstruction of cultural ideologies’.¹²¹

Thus, in this chapter, I have described several fields and theories that provide insight on several dynamics within Gen Z as a generation, as a subfield of environmentalist movements,

¹¹⁷ Although it should be remembered that it was not only the ‘spiritual’ that was condemned; sometimes, arguments revolved around the cultural (indigenous) appropriation of some spiritualities.

¹¹⁸ Lisa H. Sideris, ‘Dark Green Religion: Nature, Spirituality, and the Planetary Future – By Bron Taylor’, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 78 (2010) 865-869, 866.

¹¹⁹ Sideris, *Consecrating Science*, 10.

¹²⁰ An important part of Sideris’ argument for a reevaluation of our relationship with the natural world around us.

¹²¹ Eaton, ‘Liaison or Liability’, 112.

and within Gen Z environmentalism as a movement that can, in part, be recognized as displaying spiritual tendencies. Not only can F4F in particular be classified as a form of radical environmentalism according to Taylor's work on dark green religion, ecofeminism spiritualities may be able to provide positive and formative ethics, thought, and spiritual meaning-making for Gen Z environmentalism to adopt for if it is to transcend its practice of mere protesting of what exists.

It is the least it can do for the generation which suffers tremendously from environmental decline that it itself is not responsible for – as in the letter offered on the F4F website discussed in chapter 4, anxiety and a sense of nihilism overwhelm the youngsters disillusioned by the enormity of the environmental crisis. Fighting the system, however, without further self-reflection or understanding will only solve the expressions of the problem, not its roots.

Strikingly, world-famous environmentalist activist Julia 'Butterfly' Hill believes that 'activists must come from a loving place if they are to be effective'.¹²²

¹²² Taylor, *Dark Green Religion*, 95.

Conclusion

This thesis has, as its outline made clear, discussed many theories, scholars, fields, and criticisms that ultimately were to aid in understanding how age as a factor of intersectionality functions in ecofeminist discourses, and how a theoretical and suggestive discussion can aid in understanding current environmentalist activism among adolescents. Now, after a short overview of the concluding thoughts of each chapter, this conclusion will present some abstractions that can be made when all of the aforementioned outcomes are synthesized into one overarching, coherent narrative.

Through the discussion of the historical trajectory of ecofeminism to the present day, it appears that many of the issues it set out to confront remain relevant and pressing, and although ecofeminism has in many instances lost favour and may have been substituted by evolved fields of thought, some of its key concepts and arguments have recently been 'revisited'. I have argued for the indispensability of intersectional approaches and concerns in ecofeminist theory, of which the importance has only rarely been acknowledged, and pointed out the similarities in their origins and lines of reasoning. Queer theory, another field that theorizes about marginalized groups who deal with identity-based injustice and oppression, has provided practical applications and insights in both fields, and insights in all three of these fields have aided in constructing a viewpoint on age as an intersectional concept on its own, as well as in conjunction with other factors of intersectionality. As ecofeminism's main concern is overcoming dualisms, it has particular relevance for a context in which not only environmental concern is paramount, but that also revolves around an 'old-young' dualism: Gen Z environmentalism.

Fridays For Future – as a youth movement protesting environmental decline that is simultaneously strongly coloured by other Gen Z values and characteristics – proved to be a most interesting 'environment' in which the theories dealt with above are (either consciously or inconspicuously) resonating, or influencing expressions, or where theoretical insights of these fields are in some way vital for developing ways of growth and informed inclusivity. This led me to conclude that ecofeminism's core, if carefully updated to fit certain standards of the 21st century, can find a powerful ally in Gen Z identities, and that ecofeminism in turn may provide a clear overarching framework that can form a solid foundation for, or stitch together, many societal moves toward growth; be they better understandings of gender fluidity, the relations of the human with its biosphere, or methods on unravelling and dismounting crooked power distributions. Finally, I have looked at Gen Z environmentalism while making use of (mostly Taylor's) thought on dark green religion and spirituality. Assessing how Gen Z environmentalism is specifically 'Gen Z' uses thoughts on both age and generation as these were discussed in the previous chapter, and pointed towards certain general and generational discontents and worldviews that, in turn, seem to lean on certain spiritual concerns and expressions. Apocalyptic sentiments in particular were shown to be prevalent in F4F's arguments as well as in radical environmentalism with spiritual frameworks, and F4F's use of and place in the discourse of myth-making through science appears to be intricate and, certainly, suitable for further investigation. Once again, I turned to ecofeminism: this time, to discuss its spiritual sensibilities, which in multiple respects seem to align with the values generally representational for Gen Z as described by marketing research (and, although that is not used as a source in this thesis, my own experience). So, with all the ideas presented, the theories connected, and the data analysed, what is there to say about the specific value of this thesis?

I suppose that it is clear that this thesis has tried to function as a re-evaluation of ecofeminism, and that it is explicit that a well-informed ecofeminism that has learned from its mistakes, adapts insights and methodologies from kindred disciplines and that is aimed at overcoming theoretical as well as 'practical' dualisms is still needed. A specific task for its abilities can be found in the case of discrimination that is used against the intersectional identities of Gen Z environmentalists. Another important use of ecofeminist thought and conceptuality is in its appliances for framing the dark green spiritualities that can be identified in Gen Z environmentalism, for ecofeminism combines much of Gen Z concerns and language, for example those of responsibility and care, the use of science for the making

of sensible, informed relationships between humans and non-human nature, and a rejection of (exclusively) binary structures and dualisms. Ecofeminism, as both an academic discipline backed by decades of interdisciplinary thought and as an activist framework, can function as a mutually informing 'intermediary' that bridges gaps and prevents further division based on ageist ways of thinking that stand in the way of constructive coalitions or intergenerational fundamental understanding.

All in all, it seems that both ecofeminism and environmentalist activism are in better, more widespread places now than they have been for years. The progress that both ecofeminism and environmentalism are striving towards may still be hard to materialize, and this thesis has described several challenges there are yet to overcome, but as their visions are growing in popularity and more voices are added to the debate on how to effectuate change, more diverse and universal approaches are able to give hope to the disillusioned and aid those who feel helpless. For that is, in the end, one of the most important characteristics of ecofeminism and its spiritualities: to transcend the mere theoretical recognition of a society at fault and to move towards the construction of a hopeful and awe-inspired paths towards a more equal, greener future.

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