Exploring climate change politics with Hannah Arendt

From neoliberal 'solutions' to radically democratic deliberation

Ken Krimstein (2018). *The Three Escapes of Hannah Arendt*

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ABSTRACT

There is increasing consensus about the human influence on climate change and the need to address the issue. The responses range from newly arising activist movements world-wide to the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and from the European Green Deal (European Commission 2019) to Prince Charles' (2020) Sustainable Markets Initiative. I argue that these responses largely fall within or interact with the neoliberal market rationale that has come to dominate politics in the West in the last decades. To understand how this rationale undermines democracy and dominates the response to climate change, I consider the political theory of Hannah Arendt. Specifically I revisit her analysis of the modern age, in which scientific development and liberalism led to the alienation of man from the world, in light of current developments.

Arendt's response to the problems she identifies is radical rethinking of politics. To consider the relevance of this account nowadays, her theory of political action is introduced and critically discussed in light of the questions that climate change poses. The way in which morality and socio-economic questions would be located in an Arendtian form of climate change politics are introduced as well as the role of climate sciences in contributing to the common world that brings men together politically. Finally, it is considered how this radical and demanding theory of the political can be incorporated into existing democratic institutions as a way to continuously and critically engage with proposed solutions and political communities around the world. This way, the complexity of the web of human relations and its connection with nature is acknowledged rather than reduced to a problem that can be 'solved' by the market.

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INTRODUCTION

Ice caps are melting, sea levels are rising and concentrations of greenhouse gases are increasing. These and related developments have come to indicate more and more that the global climate system is warming to an unprecedented degree, especially since the start of the Industrial Revolution in the late eighteenth century. There is scientific consensus about the human influence on these developments as the CO_2 concentration in the atmosphere resulting from e.g. agriculture, forestry and the burning of fossil fuels is an important cause of global warming (IPCC 2013; Bernauer 2013).

THE POLITICAL RESPONSE TO CLIMATE CHANGE

The responses to this have been manifold. Global activist movements are growing, with the most significant movements being Extinction Rebellion originated in the UK (BBC News 2017) and the Fridays for Future movement following the Swedish teenager Greta Thunberg who started striking from school to demand attention for climate change in 2018. Although there are some political leaders who consider climate change "a Marxist plot" (Watts 2018) or a "hoax" and deny that it is man-made or has any lasting impact (Holden 2018), acknowledgement of the problem and attempts at international collaboration are growing. This was kicked-off by the United Nations (UN) with the Climate Summit in Copenhagen in 2009 (UNFCCC 2009) and from 2015 on with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in which the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were formulated (United Nations n.d.). These goals in turn inspired the European Green Deal which aims to be "the first climate-neutral continent by 2050" through stronger emission markets and the circular economy among other things (European Commission 2019).

These initiatives have a strong relation to economic actors. The European Union (EU) considers "market-based governance and regulation" essential for "sustainable development" (EEA 2018, 89), while the UN emphasises their collaboration with stakeholders in the private sector essential to the implementation of sustainable development (United Nations n.d.). Businesses are increasingly taking on a social role (Dyllink and Hockerts 2002, Wu 2020) while they consider the SDGs "a gift to business" with significant economic rewards (Pedersen 2018). Besides this, companies have been closely connected to

the formulation of European climate policy, in which trade associations make sure that "the voice of business" is represented strongly (Fagan-Watson, Elliott, and Watson 2015, 47).

This suggests that efforts of sustainable development have to be considered in their wider political context where "[n]eoliberal initiatives and policies still carry the day" also regarding climate change (Mirowski 2013, 36). As I will elaborate below, the focus on international collaboration and market competition to address climate change entails the risks of neglecting crucial characteristics of the problem: its collective as well as its conflictual nature. When climate change is posited as an opportunity for the market to find 'solutions,' there is no need to question the underlying structures of the problem (Swyngedouw 2011, 2013; Kenis and Lievens 2014). Leaving the problem up to the private sector would be risky due to a lack of accountability and transparency (Wu, 2020a). Or, as Parr (2014, 146), puts it:

> Voluntarily offsetting a bit of carbon here and there, eating vegan, or recycling our waste, although well intended, are not solutions to the problem, but a symptom of the free market's ineffectiveness.

Only if the underlying problems are addressed, there is hope that humanity can care for the planet it calls home. This suggests that divergent trajectories to different futures should be discussed and contested. The discourse of international collaboration and competition should be considered against the background of economic measures that surrounds it.

INSIGHTS FROM A RADICAL POLITICAL THINKER

To better understand the relation between politics and the economy as well as the ways in which different futures can be discussed politically it is insightful to turn to Hannah Arendt, one of the most influential thinkers of 'non-normal' politics (Canovan 1978; Kateb 1984; Honig 1993b; Kalyvas 2008; Villa 1996). In *The Human Condition* (1998 [1958]), Arendt is intrigued by the newly acquired ability of global destruction stemming from the launch of the first atomic weapons as well as the launch of the first human-produced satellite into space. These events transformed the relation of humans to the Earth enabling them to eventually destroy or leave it. For Arendt (2007), these developments are intimately connected with the universal gaze upon the Earth characteristic for the modern sciences. This gaze reduces everything that makes human life meaningful – everyday language and

speech – to mere forms of behaviour to be studied. Arendt (1998) argues that the universal gaze of the modern sciences alienated man[1] from the Earth.

At the same time, she argues, the rise of liberalism led to the appraisal of labour and foregrounding of private interests and a private notion that is detached from the political sphere. This caused the political to erode and men to become alienated from their commonly shared world. With a reduction of politics to questions of life necessities and private interests, true political action and human freedom were hampered. The political potential of everyday language and human speech implies that not private interests or mere administrative efforts should drive the political, but discussions among engaged political actors.

There are striking similarities between the problems that Arendt diagnoses and the current situation. It seems that not only the destructive effects of humanity on Earth have intensified, as shown by climate change, but also that the commercial attempts to save humanity have increased.[2] Economic thinking still seems to play a large role in the political, also in the considerations of climate change. This raises the question as to what we can learn from the thought of an influential political theorist of extraordinary politics in these unprecedented and extraordinary political times. Therefore, the research question that I address is the following:

How can Arendt's political theory inform current climate change politics in the West, such that the proposed solutions do not stem from neoliberal reasoning but address the roots of climate change and foster democracy?

After discussing some methodological questions in the following section, I aim to answer this question as follows. In chapter 2, I introduce the phenomenon of climate change in its wider context of environmental change. Subsequently I discuss the different responses to climate change and aim to show that these are largely stemming from or in accordance with a neoliberal market rationality. To further understand the relation between man and nature

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[1] In her writings, Arendt distinguishes between *man* in his singularity and *men* in plurality. Generally, she does not speak of *woman* or *women*. "Arendt for the most part evaded the woman question, steadfastly refused to identify herself with the women's liberation movement, and relegated any discussion of women and their position in the *vita activa* to the footnotes of her monumental work, *The Human Condition*" (Allen 1999, 98) For consistency and brevity I adopt the terms *man* and *men* to refer to mankind with the explicit note that these terms include women as much as men.

[2] The endeavour to leave the Earth has become increasingly commercialised with e.g. Elon Musk, the CEO of SpaceX, who aims to establish a human colony on Mars as a response to the "eventual extinction event" that will inevitably take place. Elon Musk wants to save humanity from threats such as climate change by providing it with a new world (Patel, 2018).

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and the role of politics in addressing this relation, I connect Arendt's diagnosis of the problem in the modern age to current times of neoliberalism. To then explore the possible learnings from Arendt's theory, I lay out her theory of political action in chapter 3. In chapter 4, I discuss how this theory can be insightful in light of climate change politics. First by looking at the main points of critique of Arendt's theory that indicate a moral lack and the inability to include socio-economic problems in the political – both of which are important for climate change politics. Then, I discuss the implications of Arendt's theory for the relation between politics, truth and climate science as well as the way in which we can consider Arendtian politics in the context of existing (trans-)national institutions. This way, I aim to critically assess the different responses to climate change that are currently prevailing as well as understand the way in which a more political consideration of the problem would look.

1   METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The rise of global temperatures has different material consequences for our human world.[3] The role of philosophy in responding to the situation may not immediately become clear, especially when compared with e.g. climate scientists who provide knowledge about the phenomenon itself or with engineers who provide the tools and solutions. Although I do not wish to pretend that philosophy is in any way more important than other discipline involved, I think it is crucial that efforts of sustainable development, or in fact any transformation of the economy or society, is provided with philosophical reflection. As Parr (2014, 4) notes, climate change and environmental problems more broadly raise a wide variety of questions related to socio-economy, culture and politics. The role of political philosophy in this is to reflect on the assumptions underlying these questions and on how proposed solutions affect existing structures in society.

These philosophical reflections should not be detached from events in the world, since, as Arendt (1998, 273) puts it, "not ideas but events change the world". Thinking should thus always relate to the events in the world. Arendt herself does explicitly not identify as a political philosopher (Arendt 1964, 0:59). Arendt aims to depart from the Western philosophical tradition, which, with its focus on transcendental values and ideas since Plato, has neglected the dimension of praxis in human life. But her turn to the *vita activa,* and her conception of politics as an activity does not mean denying the importance of thinking altogether. In fact, she considers thinking the mental capacity that enables us to take a step back from the activities we are doing. This enables us to reflect on *why* we do the things we do and allows for moral reasoning (Kelz 2016, 284–85). Especially in a fast-paced world where human activities may turn out to have destructive effects, this is a valuable endeavour.

To avoid that this endeavour becomes a hasty 'application' of a philosopher outside of her own times, I do not aim for an empirical application of Arendt's ideas. Rather, I critically engage with her thought to understand current politics and possible changes to it. As Yar (2000) points out, Arendt is a systematic thinker, whose ideas on particular themes should always be understood in relation to the rest of her thought. Therefore, I take *The Human Condition*, one of her most influential works, as a starting point, and I strive to discuss her

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[3] The phenomenon of climate change, its connection to broader environmental change and some of the consequences for humanity are elaborated in section 2.1. 1..

thought in context also of some of her other works as well as critics to consider the applicability of her theory to the current situation.

1.1   CONCEPTUAL CONSIDERATIONS

When trying to connect climate change politics with neoliberalism and democracy, I engage with two concepts that are endowed with "ambiguities and multiple significations" (Brown 2015, 18). Hence, these concepts need to be specified – also when using them, like Arendt, in relation to exemplary cases to "draw us away from traditional concepts which block us from seeing new experiences clearly" (Jacobitti 1991, 286).

1.1.1   DEMOCRACY, POLITICS AND THE POLITICAL

As Brown (2015) states, democracy may be considered one of the most contested notions in modern political theory. Whereas it means free elections, majority vote or free markets to some, others refer to law, order and citizen rights. Even the Greek etymological roots of democracy do not clarify the numerous different understandings of democracy nowadays. "Demos/kratia" translates to "people rule", but does not specify who the people are (ibid., 19). However, this conceptual ambiguity fits Arendt's understanding of politics as an activity. Rather than understanding democracy as a certain set of institutions, procedures or policies, a notion of democracy that is open to contestation fits the open character of politics as an activity. This implies an understanding of democracy as the ideal of civic participation that informs political practices, rather than a certain institutional context rooted in liberalism.

This open notion of democracy does not immediately justify it as the preferred political form. However, the famous assertion of Winston Churchill that "[i]ndeed it has been said that democracy is the worst form of Government except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time" seems, just like to concept of democracy itself, to hold value after all this time.[4] In line with this, Arendt is convinced that any form of non-democratic rule will always fail to do justice to the plurality of men that is inherent to the political sphere. Forms of monarchy are inherently unpolitical, as they aim to ban citizens from the public sphere to

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[4] Although it is unclear from whom the statement originates, Churchill made the following statement in 1947: "No one pretends that democracy is perfect or all-wise. Indeed, it has been said that democracy is the worst form of Government except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time". (Also see: https://richardlangworth.com/worst-form-of-government)

the private realm where they are supposed to mind their private interests. Although forms of tyranny may bring stability and security in the short-run, they will lead to an inevitable loss of power of citizens which in turn causes the system to collapse in the long run (Arendt 1998, 221–22). Democracy can thus be understood as the only form of government that does justice to the tendencies that are inherent in a society where many people live together. Climate change is a problem that concerns the long-run sustainability and continued existence of human societies. It is a problem that affects different people in different ways, dependent on their geographical location and political, cultural and economic context. Hence, there is a plurality of people involved for which the politics of climate change needs to account. This is only possible by including the voice of 'the people', which implies that – thus far – democracy is the most fruitful way to think about politics both on a local and a more global scale.

1.1.2 POLITICS, THE POLITICAL AND THE SOCIAL

Another conceptual difference is that between politics and the political. In a more conventional understanding, the former usually refers to a set of institutions and practices that are associated with the ordering of society (Mouffe 2005, 8). According to some, however, a procedural understanding of politics does not capture the "initiatory or expressive modes of political action" that is inherent to politics (Villa 1999, 108). Radical agonistic political theorists such as Mouffe counter this by employing a notion of the political to emphasise that the political is the fundamental dimension of conflict of any human society. Arendt also considers the political – or the public sphere, as she tends to call it – a fundamental dimension for understanding human life. Her conception of politics is existential in nature, it is the activity through which human beings "can establish a reality of their own (Kateb 1984, 7). However, her understanding of the political can be understood more as a certain sphere in society as she is inspired by the Greek conception of the city-state and the "fiercely agonal spirit" that inspires it (Arendt 1998, 41). This sphere arises whenever political action takes place. Hence, for Arendt, both the political and politics are dependent on the activity of political action, which makes the conceptual distinction between politics and the political less strict and less relevant (Kelz 2016, 138). This implies that the political "embodies an ideal politics aspires to but can never fully embody. The political is restricted to the role of a constitutive dynamic or a normative ideal against which the current state of political institutions is measured and must always come up lacking" (ibid., 13). In

what follows, I also adopt an understanding of politics as an ideal activity. Hence, with the term 'climate change politics', I refer not to a specific set of institutions or policies, but rather to an approach to the questions around climate change that include the citizens affected and involved in such a way that sustainable solutions can be formulated. Hence, I rely on Arendt's thinking "in search of guidance not in *what* to think but *how* to think about politics" today (Owens 2007, 7; italics added).

The political sphere needs to be separated strictly from the social sphere, both according to neoliberal thinking and Arendt. In a neoliberal understanding markets need to be saved from the social as well as the political (Brown 2019). Hayek, one of the most influential neoliberal thinkers, regards the modern notion of society or the social as "inappropriately used to denote impersonal, unintentional, and undesigned human cooperation on a mass scale" (ibid., 31). While in fact this "complex interdependency [arises] from individuals following rules of conduct that emanate from markets and moral traditions" (ibid., 31). Therefore, society must be carefully constructed by the state while simultaneously avoiding that the state becomes so strong that it endangers the freedom of the market (Mirowski 2013).

Arendt also rejects the social which she similarly identifies with mass society. She strictly distinguishes between the social and the political as well as the private and the public. For her, the social is the "monistic[5]" mass society that neglects the dualism between the public and the private (Kelz 2016, 24). This dualism is necessary for the possibility of political action as this can only take place when the political is strictly separated from the sphere of work and labour. According to Arendt (1998, 38) the rise of the social – the sphere "of housekeeping, its activities, problems and organizational devices" – from the private sphere of the household into the public sphere, causing the boundary between the public and the private to blur. Arendt thereby considers the economy as a part of the social and aims to save the political from both the economy and the social.

1.1.3   LIBERALISM AND NEOLIBERALISM

When revisiting a philosopher and considering the relevance of her ideas more than sixty years later, it should not merely be assumed that philosophical notions are stable and mean the same. This implies that Arendt writings on liberalism cannot merely be assumed to be

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[5] Monism is the metaphysical stance that there is one fundamental substance or principle of reality. This is opposed to notions of dualism and pluralism (https://www.dictionary.com/browse/monistic).

applicable to the forms of neoliberalism that we observe now, even though, as Brown (2015, 32) points out, they do both consider the economisation of politics and society.

In the following chapters I understand liberalism through readings of Arendt and various theorists of neoliberalism who consider the deviations between liberalism and neoliberalism. Through selective reading of liberal thinkers such as Adam Smith and John Locke, Arendt (1961, 1998) mainly understands liberalism as a political and economic ideology that is closely related to the rise of the social discussed in the previous section. Liberalism emphasises private interests and brings them from the private sphere into the public, which induces the rise of the social. Besides this, liberalism brings forth a private notion of freedom which undermines politics and the potential for human freedom grounded in the political.

This understanding of liberalism as ideology makes it difficult to observe the connection between classical liberalism and current neoliberalism. Therefore, I turn to the accounts of both Foucault (2008) and Mirowski (2013) whose accounts of liberalism and neoliberalism have a more empirical character. Both understand liberalism as the laissez-faire art of government that establishes the market as the mechanism through which to verify or falsify government practice, and which considers labour as the justification for private property and the basis for society. The accounts of Foucault and Mirowski allow for an analysis of how Arendt's concerns about liberalism are still applicable in current neoliberal times. This way I aim to avoid using the term neoliberalism exclusively to describe a wide range of negative developments in society (Flew 2012) and instead approach and describe the phenomenon carefully (Dean 2014).

1.2   EMPIRICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Approaching a topic theoretically inevitably means that parts of the phenomenon studied escapes the analysis. In the case of political theory Kelz (2016, 144) states that "it is important to keep in mind that political practice always exceeds theorisation and, in turn, that theories of the political can never be fully embodied by any form of actual politics". This also goes for climate change politics understood as a form of activity, of which no unitary account can be given. Instead, it takes place in different ways, in various constellations and on various levels in society. Inspired by Arendt, who did not want to "propose a blueprint for the future or to tell anyone what to do" (Canovan 1998, viii), I do not aim to employ Arendt's political

theory to dictate how climate change politics should take place. Instead, her theory can be insightful to parts of these politics. The way Honig (1993a, 115) describes Arendt's political theory as "never a fait accompli" which operates on the presumption of the "perpetuity of political contest and to the view that in politics [...] and institutions, it is not possible to get it right". This is applicable to climate change politics as well.

Despite the global nature of climate change, the focus of this thesis is, in line with Arendt's focus on Europe and the US, on modern western democracies. The political and societal developments in Europe and Northern America – although they differ in various respects – are to a large extent subject to similar tendencies. Moreover, the philosophers and political thinkers discussed can all be considered part of the western tradition of thought. This is not to say that non-western approaches to philosophy and political thought could not be relevant. On the contrary, given that climate change is a global matter it is of utmost importance that a wide variety of voices is heard in the debate. However, employing non-western theories and studying non-western contexts asks for specific forms of cultural and historical awareness that I do not have. Thus, by emphasising the need to acknowledge the plurality of people that is affected by climate change politics, I hope to invite other perspectives into the discussion of climate change politics in the West.

2 THE PROBLEM: CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE PREVAILING RESPONSE TO IT

The effects of the environmental changes are becoming increasingly visible, turning the twenty-first century into "the era of climate change" and positioning humanity "in the middle of an earth-shattering moment" (Parr 2014, 3). There is increasing scientific consensus about the human influence on the changing natural environment (IPCC 2018). In the following section, I discuss environmental challenges and climate change as well as the various responses to it. I argue that the main share of the responses is rooted in or associated with neoliberal market logics that neglect the collective character of the problem as well as the underlying structures that caused it. To further understand this I turn to Hannah Arendt, whose writings on earth and world alienation and liberalism in the modern age seem to resonate with current developments (section 2.2). To understand how her diagnosis of the problems in the modern age can inform current questions about climate change, I situate the various elements of her critique in current neoliberal politics in the West (section 2.3).

2.1 CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE RESPONSES TO IT

2.1.1 CLIMATE CHANGE AND QUESTIONS ARISING FROM IT

Although 'climate change' is the term often used, this is part of a complex constellation of interconnected environmental phenomena and developments. This is captured by e.g. the framework of Planetary Boundaries, which assesses human development within a "resilient and accommodating" Earth system (Steffen et al. 2015). Steffen et al. (ibid.) define the safe space for humanity to operate in by the level of climate change, ozone depletion, ocean acidification, freshwater use, and biodiversity among others. Transgressing these boundaries may lead to irreversible damage to modern society. Therefore, a safe space in which further human development can take place must be defined. This safe space must consider possibilities for systemic change that takes into account the system's various natural boundaries and the interlinkages between them.

Several recent assessments show that some of these boundaries have already been or run the risk to soon be reached, due to human interference. Global biodiversity, for example, has

significantly decreased as a result of intensified agricultural production, bioenergy production, and harvesting of natural materials (Díaz et al. 2019). Agriculture also impacts the use of freshwater and land, while unsustainable fishery possibly leads to irreversible alterations in the marine environment. The latter is also severely affected by increased plastic pollution, fertilisers that end up into the coastal ecosystems, and the annual dumping of 300-400 million tons of industrial waste into the world's waters (Martin 2019).

Besides that, there is the rise of the global mean temperature which according to the IPCC (2013, 4) "is unequivocal, and since the 1950s, many of the observed changes are unprecedented over decades to millennia. The atmosphere and ocean have warmed, the amounts of snow and ice have diminished, sea level has risen, and the concentrations of greenhouse gases have increased". Concentrations of greenhouse gasses in the atmosphere rise because of e.g. agriculture, forestry and the burning of fossil fuels. This, in turn, leads to higher surface temperatures which may have severe effects for the natural environment and humanity, for example through more extreme weather events, droughts and floods, and rising sea-levels. These will have unequal effects across and within countries and populations (Smith et al. 2009; Bernauer 2013).

Climate change is thus one aspect of a changing environmental system with various aspects, interconnections and reinforcing tendencies. At the same time, climate change is the aspect that is obtaining increasing awareness. This may be due to the relative ease with which climate change can be observed. In general, modern environmental problems are invisible to the immediate perception, because of the separation between cause and effect in terms of both space and time (Naustdalslid 2011). Consequences of actions become clear in different geographical areas and/or points in time.[6] But as changing temperatures are perceptible to at least a certain degree, climate change may speak more to people's imagination than other environmental problems. Therefore, I use the term "climate change politics" not in the narrow sense of rising global temperatures, but to indicate the part of politics that is

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[6] The temporal gap between action and consequence brings about questions of intergenerational injustice that revolves around the philosophical problem that it is "unclear how exactly future persons can be harmed, or disadvantaged, by acts or social policies which are necessary conditions of their coming into existence" (Page 1999, 56). Although of utmost importance in justice debates about climate change, intergenerational injustice is considered beyond the scope of this thesis which aims to conceptualise a form of climate change politics that does justice to the current inhabitants of the planet.

concerned with the unusual changes in the environment in a broad sense and the questions and challenges stemming from this.

These environmental challenges are not necessarily new phenomena in themselves. As Terry (2009) emphasises, neither natural disasters such as droughts or floods nor the effects of human-induced climate change are new. But the scale and speed of the change are. This means that there is limited time to understand the uncertain effects on health, food and water supply and ecosystems, and raises questions around environmental and climate justice. These questions concern the inequities on the individual, community or political level that stem from or are intensified by climate change. They demand attention to the relationship between human communities and the environments around them (Schlosberg and Collins 2014), as well as the different roles and relations within communities that determine people's vulnerability to climate change (Terry 2009). Rosewarne, Goodman and Pearse (2013) consider the question of climate agency *the* political question of our times. Bringing this question and the related questions about justice into the political is the only way to enable action that can fundamentally change the direction in which the developments go, and thereby ensure a collective future.

These questions of justice are becoming even more complex in the face of the expected increase in refugees as a result of environmental change. The World Bank estimates that, if no collective action is taken, there could be up to 140 million of internal climate migrants[7] in Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and Latin America by 2050 (World Bank 2019). Although this number is perhaps uncertain, it is likely that socio-economic factors such as population growth, wealth concentration and urbanisation in vulnerable areas will reinforce the increased number of weather related losses – in terms of e.g. food and housing (Pachauri 2006). Also in the international migration debate will climate change and natural disasters remain key areas of interest for research and policy development (IOM UN 2020).

Especially international (climate) migrants pose a challenge to existing democratic structures, as these refugees are stateless people who have lost their citizen rights and whose "abstract nakedness of being nothing but human [is] their greatest danger" (Arendt, cited in Parekh 2013, 772). Current international law frameworks are not equipped to protect climate

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[7] Internal migrants are those people that move within the borders of their own country. This implies that these numbers would add to the number of the number of people moving within their country for socio-economic or political reasons (World Bank 2019).

migrants, as they are not legally binding and do not allow for climate migrants to obtain the status of refugee (Podesta 2019). Thus, including these human beings in climate change politics is difficult within a conventional conception of democratic politics that relies on national citizenship. A political discussion that addresses these questions of justice, inequality and vulnerability needs to go beyond the boundaries of nation states and existing political communities to account for the global threats that climate change poses. This discussion must include different political actors that are affected by climate change in different ways and to different degrees. What seems to stand in the way of such a politics, however, are the lack of a "common horizon" and the ruling classes that have started to "shelter themselves from the world", to speak with Latour (2018, 2). Latour argues that climate change and the denial thereof are crucial to an understanding of the recent political developments which I consider more closely in the following section.

2.1.2 THE RESPONSES TO CLIMATE CHANGE

The aforementioned environmental and climatic changes have not remained unnoticed. On various levels of societies there have been different responses. In August 2018, the Swedish teenager Greta Thunberg reached the global news when she started to strike from school to demand attention for climate change. Since then her actions have sparked a global movement and numerous climate strikes. She has addressed the UN, spoke with the Pope and the president of the US, and was chosen as person of the year by Time in 2019 (Alter, Haynes and Worland 2019).

On an institutional level, the responses by the United Nations and the European Union are notable. There has been increasing international collaboration especially since the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen in 2009 (UNFCCC 2009) and the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015, in which the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were formulated (United Nations n.d.). These goals are considered "innovative tools" that provide "a novel, goal-based approach to global governance" (Saito et al. 2017). As a response to the 2030 Agenda, the European Commission recently presented the "European Green Deal" which aims to implement the SDGs and transform Europe into "the first climate-neutral continent by 2050" (European Commission 2019). An important part of the new EU strategy is the *circular economy* as a core tool to address the unsustainable levels of global consumption. The circular economy aims

to "make products fit for a climate-neutral, resource-efficient and circular economy, reduce waste and ensure that the performance of the front-runners in sustainability progressively becomes the norm" (European Commission 2020, 3).

On the national level policies have been developed to respond to global challenges including climate change. According to the UN, more than 70 countries have over 300 policies that support sustainable production and consumption (UN 2019). Sustainable consumption and production are an increasingly important lever to promote sustainable development in both developing and developed countries (Wang et al. 2019). In line with this, the UN considers collaboration with all stakeholders a key aspect of its 2030 Agenda. An important part of these stakeholders are businesses – especially large multinationals with a revenue higher than the GDP of several countries must play a role in the transition (Pedersen 2018). As Pedersen (ibid., 23) emphasises, the SDGs are not a burden but "a gift to business because the economic rewards for delivering to the needs defined in the SDGs are very significant".

The EU also emphasises the need for public-private collaborations that is due to the complexity of environmental problems. Specifically, it envisions new forms of "networked governance" that go beyond central authority and bring together government and market actors (EEA 2017, 88). This resonates with the increasing number of businesses that take social and environmental sustainability into account through "corporate sustainability" which "most managers have accepted […] as the precondition for doing business" (Dyllick and Hockerts 2002, 130). Some companies go a step further by considering themselves as activists. One of the first companies to take an activist role was Patagonia, an American outdoor clothing company that puts environmental values at the core of its business (Erickson 2011). Also in Davos this year, at the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum, it became clear that the private sector is considering its role in addressing climate change. Not only was activism embraced through inviting Greta Thunberg, who entered the stage to urge the CEOs and world leaders to act (Time 2019). Also large parts of the conference showed that the private sector is taking a leading role in redirecting the economic system to a more sustainable future through "woke" or "anti-capitalist" capitalism (Wu, 2020b). A specific example of this can be found in the Sustainable Markets Initiative of Prince Charles, who wants to "ensure that the private sector leads the world out of the approaching catastrophe into which we have engineered ourselves" (Prince Charles, 2020). He envisions a wide range of markets, ranging from e.g. the financial sector to aviation, and

from shipping to forestry, embarking on "a higher purpose mission" in which "sustainable" becomes "our default setting" (ibid.).

This suggests that activism is increasingly associated with or situated within the economy. Economic actors seem to consider their role to be increasingly activist and anti-capitalist and Greta Thunberg, a striking school kid who could be considered to have little or no economic interests, attends the conference in Davos to interact with the initiator of the Sustainable Markets Initiative, among others.[8] This suggests that the economy has an important role in the climate change debate and that there is a close relation between the public and the private sector when engaging with efforts of sustainable development. These efforts thus have to be considered in their wider context of neoliberal market capitalism, which is by the EU itself considered "the dominant system of socio-economic organisation worldwide" (EEA 2017, 74). Privatisation, trade liberalisation and reduced governments spending are policies that often surround sustainable development (Kumi, Arhin, and Yeboah 2014).

The role of neoliberal market capitalism becomes clear also when looking at current climate policies. In the EU this is through the strong focus on emission trading and circular economy. The EU has, with its European Emission Trading System, a longstanding history of being considered leading actor in market-based climate policies (Löschel et al. 2010). With the new Green Deal, the EU now seems to aim to become the same for the circular economy. In the US a similar focus on the market becomes clear. MacNeil and Paterson (2012; 2020) argue that climate policy development in the US has been dominated by the neoliberal logic of advancing technologies in domestic markets. Climate change has been addressed in a policy context of stimulating demand and international competitive advantage in high-tech sectors, framing climate change mainly as a problem of lacking technology.

However, there are two risks involved with framing climate change as a problem to be solved by the market. Firstly, it reduces the collective character of the problem to private questions of individual behaviour and does not consider the reformation of political institutions to improve participation and collective deliberation (Hargis 2016). Secondly, it leads to a superficial consensus that obscures underlying questions. The latter happens when the debate about climate change becomes what Swyngedouw (2011, 77) calls a "post-political environmental consensus". In this conception, climate change is portrayed as a humanitarian

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[8] Greta Thunberg was introduced to Prince Charles at the Forum (BBC News 2020).

cause in which the trajectory is clear and no internal tensions or conflicts arise. With such a consensus there is no need to ask fundamental questions that consider the underlying structures of the problem. For example, as Hobson and Lynch (2016) show, the circular economy fails to address the underlying structures and accompanying challenges of the mechanism of production and consumption. By positing individuals as consumers rather than as citizens, sociological and ontological questions about the nature or absolute levels of consumption are excluded from the debate. As will be elaborated in section 2.3.3, approaching climate change as a problem that can be solved by the markets runs the risk of merely dealing with the symptoms rather than the underlying structures of the problem. When failing to ask the more structural questions, climate policies become an attempt to "sustain the unsustainable characteristics of current society" (Kenis and Lievens 2014, 532).

2.2 UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM WITH HANNAH ARENDT

An understanding of the phenomenon of climate change as well as the predominantly economically motivated responses to it may be helped by the thought of Hannah Arendt. *The Human Condition* is a reaction to the modern age and the earth and world alienation this brought about. Man started to "act into nature" by means of technology that enabled destruction on an unprecedented scale with the first atomic weapons as the clearest example (Arendt 1998, 231). These indicated the "enormously increased human power of destruction, [which enabled man] to destroy all organic life on earth" and eventually probably also "to destroy even the earth itself" (ibid., 268-69). This caused an increasingly global orientation of man towards the world around him that resonates with the current realisation that the Earth and its climatic system is one closed, interconnected entity. In the following section I discuss Arendt's diagnosis of the modern age and the different forms of alienation to then connect it to the current situation.

2.2.1 THE MODERN AGE, WORLD AND EARTH ALIENATION

With the launch of the first man-made satellite in 1957, the first step of rebellion against humanity's imprisonment on Earth was taken. Arendt (1998) considers this the ultimate outcome of the scientific and technological developments which she traces back to the modern scientific age, starting in the seventeenth century. Arendt considers a couple of historical scientific events that changed the relation of man with the world around him. These

historical events set in motion the developments in the modern age which ultimately led to the first atomic explosions that in turn marked the modern world. This modern world is characterised by two forms of alienation: earth alienation, the distancing from men to the Earth, stemming from the developments in science, and world alienation, the loss of a common world caused by property expropriation and wealth accumulation (Arendt 1998, 264).

As Macauley (1992) emphasises, Arendt's distinction between earth and world alienation is not straightforwardly defined which makes an absolute distinction between the two difficult. But upon close reading it can be said that earth alienation is rooted in the developments of modern science, while world alienation is mainly connected to the rise of liberalism. Arendt discusses three historical events that fuelled the forms of alienation. These events are the exploration of America, the invention of the telescope and the Reformation. The exploration of America expanded human knowledge of (geographical) space and simultaneously led to the shrinking of the world as man became familiar with it and distances became smaller. This paradoxical development is characteristic for earth alienation. A second event that reduced distance was the invention of the telescope, which provided humanity with observable facts rather than speculations. This, Arendt (1998, 264) argues, also led to a loss of the curiosity and "love for the earth and the world" that had been driving the sciences up until that point. This change is illustrated by three other developments: the mathematisation of the sciences, experimentation, and the rise of Cartesian doubt. The mathematisation of the sciences enabled the expression of natural sense data into mathematical symbols, while the experiment enabled the study of nature as a process instead of an object, implying that man could take a position external to nature and subject nature to the conditions of his mind. Besides this, the rise of the Cartesian doubt marked the focus on reason instead of the senses as the source of human knowledge. It also indicated the loss of faith and the need to doubt everything. Hence, rational structures of the mind are what men have in common instead of the empirically observable world that they share with one another. "Cartesian doubt removed man from the earth" and made philosophy and contemplation essential (ibid., 285). The third event that Arendt discusses is the Reformation, during which the expropriation of possessions of the church marked the beginning of private property as a function of wealth accumulation. This third event is connected to world alienation and the rise of the social at the expense of both the private and the public realm.

Arendt describes how the developments in the natural sciences led to "both despair and triumph" as the scientific progress came with a form of nihilism (ibid., 262). This shows Arendt's connection to Nietzsche, who she considers the first thinker who tried to overcome the nihilism inherent to modern life that followed from the lost belief in transcendental values. In the 1880s Nietzsche wrote that nihilism was "standing at the door", ready to shape "the history of the next two centuries" (Nietzsche 2017). His insistence – contra Plato – on the world of appearances instead of transcendental values, marked the turning upside-down of the western philosophical tradition for Arendt (1961, 29). Although Arendt provides a more political account than Nietzsche (1989), she is highly inspired by his rejection of a world order in terms of absolute values. Like Nietzsche, she emphasises the fundamental relativity of the interhuman realm (Villa 1996, 79). The alienated modern man has lost his sense of being at home in the world and ultimately also his capacity for judgment and spontaneous action – the activities of existential importance. Hence, the modern man is unable to experience the activities that are constitutive for his identity.

2.2.2   LIBERALISM

Connected to the modern age is the rise of liberalism, which Arendt considers one of the main causes for the degradation of politics. Her critique revolves around the liberal emphasis on private interests which indicate the invasion of the political by the social, and its private notion of freedom. Arendt (1998) discusses these points of critique through a reading of John Locke and Adam Smith. Lock was the first to base society on private property as founded on the private body and as the product of one's labour. His way of prioritising the private over the common is problematic according to Arendt (ibid., 70), as the emphasis on the private body and labour neglects the worldly character of property and thereby "the sense of a tangible, worldly place of one's own". Locke's focus on the body contributed to the world alienation of man and marked the beginning of the rise of labour as the most esteemed human activity. The latter development was intensified by Smith – and later Karl Marx – who considered labour as the source of all wealth and all productivity respectively. This transformed labour into a public activity, thereby allowing for unhampered wealth appropriation and self-interest obtaining a central place in the public realm. The latter implied that formerly private economic matters of the household were brought into the public realm

and marked the rise of the social realm, which caused the boundary between the public and the private to fade.[9]

Moreover, the focus on the products of labour and profits marked the decay of action, speech and politics. Arendt underlines the hostility of the liberals to the sphere of government which is merely there for "the defence of the rich against the poor, or of those who have some property against those who have none at all" (Smith, quoted in Arendt 1998, 220). This is the beginning of the definition of freedom as a private freedom from politics, which she considers the other main flaw in liberalism. This private notion of freedom which stems from inner willpower is located in the subject itself and has dominated the modern western philosophical tradition. It renders freedom and politics incompatible and identifies freedom with security and activities outside the political realm. Hence liberal politics is concerned with "the maintenance of life and the safeguarding of its interests" (Arendt 1961, 155). This implies that there is an emphasis on negative rights and freedom.[10] According to Arendt, this leads to a removal of power and antipolitical orientation that less politics implies more freedom which enables a dangerous connection between totalitarianism and liberalism. Liberalism, "the bourgeoisie's political philosophy was always 'totalitarian'; it always assumed an identity of politics, economics and society, in which political institutions served only as the façade for private interests" (Arendt 1973, 336). This hampers the formation of a political community, which is the only way for Arendt in which violence, domination, and hence totalitarianism, can be countered (Kalyvas 2008, 272).

When dealing with Arendt's writings on liberalism, several concerns arise. The first is that her writings on liberalism can be considered "highly selective" (Villa 1999, 199). Villa argues that this is due to both ignorance, as Arendt is limited in her reading of liberal theorists, and prejudice, as she equates liberalism with the bourgeoisie, without properly engaging with it in detail. In *On Totalitarianism*, Arendt (1973, 146) asserts that liberal concepts merely "express the bourgeoisie's instinctive distrust of and its innate hostility to public affairs" and combine old standards of wealth accumulation with a new conception of private property. The second

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[9] The distinction between the political and the social is further discussed in section 3.2.1.

[10] Although Arendt, at least to my knowledge, does not explicitly defines negative freedom, her conception is a rather conventional understanding of freedom as "the absence of obstacles, barriers or constraints" (Carter 2019). This means that actions are possible in a negative sense, while positive freedom entails action "in such a way as to take control of one's life and realize one's fundamental purpose" (ibid.). Usually, negative notions of freedom are concerned with the individual, while positive freedom considers collectives or individuals as inherently connected to a collective.

is the seeming discrepancy between Arendt's rejection of liberalism on the one hand and her emphasis on human rights, freedom and the legal constitution on the other (Gines 2009). Moreover, Arendt seems unsusceptible to how the rights-based individualism of liberal theorists such as Locke in fact also contributed to the protection of the plurality of men against "the limitless instrumentalization of politics and the tendency to treat human beings as material in need of publicly imposed form" (Villa 1999, 199). However, Villa argues, Arendt realised through her studies of historical events and totalitarianism that the negative rights of liberalism were not enough to protect men from being transformed into passive masses, lead her to reject this philosophy of de-politicisation. Hence, Arendt does not dismiss the notion of human rights in a moral, pre-political sense but disputes the liberal conception of citizens as the "*substance*" instead of the "*necessary precondition* of political freedom" (Wellmer 1999, 211).

Arendt's limited, non-systematic discussion of and her lack of interested engagement with liberalism may be explained by her assertion that liberalism fails "the moment we try to apply [its] theories to factually existing political forms and institutions" (Arendt 1961, 100). Rather than considering liberalism in a structured empirical way, she is interested in its assertions as a theory or philosophy prevalent in the modern age. This implies that Arendt's observations do not concern empirical phenomena that can be linked causally to certain events in history. Nor can they be compared one-to-one with contemporary phenomena. Rather, they should be considered as underlying rationales that have indirectly contributed to the development of the world as we know it now.

2.3   FROM LIBERALISM TO NEOLIBERALISM

Given the empirical lack in Arendt's description of liberalism, it would be unsatisfactory to make a direct connection between Arendt's critique of liberalism and the current neoliberal domination of the climate change debate. Therefore, in the following sections I consider neoliberalism and its effects on democracy and its response to climate change to see if Arendt's concerns about liberalism are applicable to current neoliberal politics.

2.3.1   NEOLIBERALISM

The western world is, according to many, dominated by neoliberal thinking (Mouffe 2005; Brown 2015, 2019; Mirowski 2013; EEA 2017; Latour 2018). It is the "unchallenged hegemony of neo-liberalism" (Mouffe 2005, 31) that has withstood a variety of crises, securing that it is neoliberal "initiatives and policies that still carry the day" (Mirowski 2013, 36). But, as Dean (2014) argues, for the term to have any significance, it should not be used to describe all sorts of state governing in contemporary liberal democracies and beyond. Instead, it should be specified as a school of thought that promotes certain practices and policies.

Therefore, it is useful to distinguish between various approaches to neoliberalism. These can be roughly divided into three categories: 1) those who consider neoliberalism as a political philosophy or ideology with certain inherent dynamics; 2) those who, following Foucault's analysis in *The Birth of Biopolitics*, consider neoliberalism as an art of government; and 3) those who observe neoliberalism as a complex thought collective with a variety of forms and elements that contradict the notion of neoliberalism as a unitary ideology (Dean 2014). Authors of the first category usually follow a Marxist path of reasoning, rendering neoliberalism as a political ideology that aims to set the individual free through competition on the free market. This implies a global project that aims to empower and enrich the elites by privatising public assets and removing regulations related to the public interest (Flew 2012; Mirowski 2013, 51). This approach resonates with Arendt's considerations of liberalism, as it considers neoliberalism as an ideology – both economic and political – with an inherent logic that affects the way freedom, private property and our common world are conceived.

However, as Dean (2014) stresses, conceiving neoliberalism as an ideology implies overlooking the complex relation between an ideology and a political programme. To this end, the second and third understanding of neoliberalism are more fruitful. The second understanding of neoliberalism as an art of government has been put forward by Foucault, who analyses the rise of liberalism and neoliberalism in the institutional context of the nineteenth and twentieth century. Instead of the Marxist logic of capital accumulation, which implies of a single form of capitalism, Foucault (2008, 165) understands capital as a process which "can only have historical reality within an economic-institutional capitalism". The rise of liberalism implied a move away from the state as a strong, autonomous actor to a form of *frugal government* with the least state interventions possible. Foucault understands liberalism as

a "new type of rationality in the art of government" that establishes the market as the new site of truth (ibid., 20). Hence, "the natural market mechanisms" provide a standard to judge "which governmental practices are correct and which are erroneous" (ibid., 32).

In the twentieth century, liberalism developed into neoliberalism, which Foucault studies by means of the ordoliberals in Germany and the Chicago School in the US. The central question in neoliberalism is "how the overall exercise of political power can be modelled on the principles of a market economy", which implies a more active form of government than liberalism does (ibid., 131). Hence, the economic form of the market is generalised. Society becomes ordered by the market and the mechanisms of competition, instead of the mechanisms of exchange that were prominent under liberalism. This competition is not a natural phenomenon, but an artefact produced by the government. Society hereby becomes "an enterprise society" in which the individual is conceived as a *homo oeconomicus*, the entrepreneur of the self, that can be studied through the theory of human capital (ibid., 147). This implies that economic analysis and interpretation are extended to domains that were previously considered non-economic. By being considered a *homo oeconomicus*, the individual becomes governmentalisable through the "grid of intelligibility" of economic behaviour that is adopted on his behaviour (ibid., 252). This implies that to the extent that the individual responds rationally and systematically to changes in his environment, he is governmentalisable through the modifications made in the variables of his environment. Neoliberalism thus entails a more active form of governing that takes place in more domains of society, compared to liberalism.

The third conception of neoliberalism, as a thought collective, is put forward by Mirowski (2013), who traces back neoliberalism to the establishment of the Mont Pèlerin Society, established by Hayek in 1947. This thought collective put forward a "multilevel, multiphase, multisector approach to the building of political capacity to incubate, critique, and promulgate ideas" (ibid., 51). By conceiving neoliberalism as a thought collective, Mirowski arrives at a characterisation that can be divided roughly into four themes: society, the market, freedom and the individual. Society, the first theme, is conceived as something that must be constructed by the state but treated as natural while restricting the state to become so strong that it endangers the neoliberal project. Second, the market, of which the ontology remains unclear, needs to be organised by the state and forms the most efficient processor of information. Following Hayek, the market "is posited to be an information processor more

powerful than any human brain, but essentially patterned upon brain/computation metaphors" (ibid., 62). Therefore, the market is always considered to be able to provide solutions to problems that were seemingly caused on the market itself. Another characteristic of the market is its need for inequality. Rather than a negative externality, inequality is a natural phenomenon that is essential for progress in society. Third, neoliberalism regards freedom as the most important virtue in society. Although there are different definitions, freedom is ultimately conceived as a form of negative freedom, while positive freedom is neutralised through the fragmentation of the self. This fragmentation is the fourth theme that can be identified in Mirowski's characterisation. Neoliberals conceive of the individual as an entrepreneur of the self, as also stressed by Foucault. This implies that the individual is not an entity in itself, but a discontinuous collection of decisions and investments. With the self as an entrepreneur, and not as a labourer, neoliberalism departs from Locke's classical liberal conception of labour as the justification of private property and the constitution of society.

Like Foucault, Mirowski emphasises the divergence between classical liberalism and neoliberalism. That this divergence is not always clear is due to what Mirowski calls the doctrine of *double truth* that neoliberalism entails. This double truth follows from the belief that for the longevity of the doctrine and hence the benefit of society neoliberalism needs to maintain both an "exoteric version of its doctrine for the masses" and a "esoteric doctrine for a small closed elite" (ibid., 76). Part of the exoteric version is neoliberalism as a continuation of liberalism, that promotes a tolerant, open society of contestation and empirical falsification. The esoteric doctrine on the other hand emphasises that this liberalism can only be continued by an illiberal organisation which does not actually engage in an open dialogue with the public, and which, in fact, is hard to enter for the public. Hence, Mirowski conceives of neoliberalism as an array of conceptions, practices and organisational forms that are described differently depending on the context in which it is described.

2.3.2 NEOLIBERALISM AND DEMOCRACY

When considering neoliberalism as a thought collective, it becomes clear that it is politically oriented, and that in its aim to control the power of the state it controls a broad range of political organisations and neutralises democracy (Dean 2014). Central to neoliberalism is the

impotency of citizens who are reduced to consumers. Democracy is only allowed to the extent that it supports the development of the neoliberal economic system (Mirowski 2013, 93–94). The relation between neoliberalism and democracy is further explored by Wendy Brown (2015), who combines Foucault's account of neoliberalism as an art of government with Marxist dynamics of capitalist accumulation – despite Foucault's own explicit divergence from Marx. According to Brown, the Marxist dimension is necessary for an understanding of how neoliberalism affects democracy by bringing forward the *homo oeconomicus* that overthrows the *homo politicus*. By conceptualising individuals and the state as enterprises, neoliberal reason submits the practices and principles of democracy to economisation. It undermines the essential conditions of democratic existence, which Browns considers to be the following: limited wealth inequality, an orientation towards citizenship and the public good, and deliberation between citizens about concepts of power and justice. She argues that under neoliberalism democratic citizenship is replaced by investments in human capital of the self, while the political is economised and becomes the realm of administration and management. Public life becomes the realm of problem solving and 'benchmarking' rather than that of politics, conflicts and deliberation about values or ends. This reduces democracy to a marketplace where speech is the capital that generates goods, and where it is increasingly difficult to discuss or advocate for public goods. Rather than liberating the citizen from the state, politics and social concern, "it integrates both state and citizenship into serving the economy and morally fuses hyperbolic self-reliance with readiness to be sacrificed" (Brown 2015, 212).

Her account of neoliberalism is considered overly critical and failing to do justice to Foucault's ambivalence towards neoliberalism (Flew 2012), while her approach of working with ideas of neoliberalism neglects how actual forms of neoliberalism have come into being (Barron 2017). Brown acknowledges that her narrow engagement with neoliberalism as a form of reason fails to consider the subtle effects of neoliberalism on democracy. Therefore, Brown (2019) further develops her argument through a reading of mainly Hayek, Friedman and the ordoliberals. Although this reading seems rather unsystematic, her method in this project could be considered an attempt to reconstruct neoliberalism as a thought collective rather than purely as an art of government. She combines this more empirical approach with news anecdotes to show the anti-democratic effects of neoliberalism in the West. Her main

argument is that neoliberalism undermines the social realm[11] and attacks the legitimacy of democratic practices in the political. According to Brown, Hayek considers society – understood as the sphere of justice, as the "impersonal, unintentional, and undersigned human cooperation on a mass scale" – to be dangerous as it conceals the totalitarian tendencies of the notions of the good that are inherent to it (ibid., 31). Humans should be organically brought together in the spontaneously arising markets. Hayek therefore wants to protect markets from society; "society must be dismantled" (ibid., 36). This happens epistemologically, by denying its existence altogether in a similar fashion as Thatcher did[12]; politically, by privatising the social state; legally, through legal claims that challenge equality and social protection; and culturally, through a focus on the atomistic individual human being or household.

This dismantling of the social is problematic according to Brown as it is only in the social that notions of social power and inequality can be discussed. The social is vital for social justice, as it reproduces the histories and hierarchies around it. It is vital for democracy, as it comprises the possibility to moderate social and economic inequalities that relate to political equality. It is in the social that "we are more than private individuals or families, more than economic producers, consumers, or investors, and more than mere members of the nation" (ibid., 27-28). By attacking the social, neoliberalism creates an undemocratic and antidemocratic citizenry, which is increasingly willing to accept an antidemocratic state. Furthermore, attacking the social means separating freedom from its societal context. This sets it loose from social consciousness and political equality and turns it into "a pure instrument of power, shorn of concern for others, the world, or the future" (ibid., 44-45).

Besides their attack on the social, neoliberal thinkers have also been hostile to the political. Brown (ibid., 56) conceptualises the political as the arena of "deliberations, powers, actions, and values where common existence is thought, shaped, and governed" and as the only realm that enables rule by the people. She discusses how Friedman rejects any form of political power, as this would induce conformity rather than diversity and freedom – which can be

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[11] Brown seems to use the terms 'social', 'society' and 'social sphere' or 'realm' interchangeably and fails to specify where she borrows these from. Although Brown explicitly diverts from Arendt's rejection of the social, her discussions of the society in terms of the political, the economic and the social as well as the extended personal sphere at the expense of the public resonate with Arendt's writings (Leshem 2019).

[12] In an interview in 1987, Thatcher asserted that "there's no such thing as society. There are individual men and women and there are families. And no government can do anything except through people, and people must look after themselves first. It is our duty to look after ourselves and then, also, to look after our neighbours" (https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2013/apr/08/margaret-thatcher-quotes).

delivered by the markets. Also Hayek rejects any form of sovereignty – including popular sovereignty – as it threatens individual freedom. Furthermore, the aim for a certain public good implies representation and thus, inevitably, governing by special interest and corruption. The ordoliberals are as wary of the political as Friedman and Hayek, but do not reject the state altogether. For them, the state plays an important role in their idea of an "economic constitution" (ibid., 77). In this constitution the state is autonomous of but dedicated to the economy and should be shielded off of democracy and economy. This implies a form of authoritarian-technocratic liberalism. From this, Brown concludes that the three schools of neoliberalism reject democracy and "the expansive notion of the political on which democracy rests" (ibid., 81).

Brown finds this problematic because the devaluation of the social and the political has not created a state that is able to steer the economy. Rather, she argues, the state has become instrumentalised by big capital, and limited state sovereignty has come to facilitate competition and capital accumulation on a global scale. This has been accompanied by antidemocratic political powers which explicitly demonise democracy and deprive it of its "modulation by deliberation, compromise, accountability, and legitimation by the will of the people" (ibid., 87). These antidemocratic political powers have put forward what Brown (ibid., 116) calls the "twin model of privatization," in which economic privatisation is combined with an extended personal, protected sphere that captures the nation as a familial and privately-owned unit. This is accompanied by the foregrounding and politicisation of conservative, traditional values rooted in Christian morality. These values become incontestable and symbolically true, while the value of truth in the political diminishes. Equality, pluralism and diversity are exchanged for a private, homogenous familial order.

When combining Brown's second book with her first, it provides an account of how neoliberalism affects democracy, both as a specific form of reason and as an intellectual project that sought to devalue the social and the political sphere. Despite her somewhat unsystematic approach, she does provide insights into the tendencies in the multiple neoliberal practices and policies present in modern democracies that are important to understand the current response to climate change and the lack of political climate action addressing this.

2.3.3 NEOLIBERALISM AND CLIMATE CHANGE

While neoliberalism is affecting the potentials for democratic action in modern society, it is also impacting the ways in which answers to environmental questions are formulated. According to Mirowski (2013, 344), these neoliberal answers all start from the neoliberal assumption that the market is a special aspect of nature, which is "evolving, adaptive, non-linear, chaotic". It is the intrinsic complexity of nature and society that causes problems in the natural environment that cannot be fully grasped by human sciences. The market, as the sum of all human interaction, is smarter than any single human being and therefore offers the best chance of providing a suitable solution to any challenge.

Mirowski identifies three types of solutions that, despite their seeming differences, are all steps in the overall neoliberal answer to climate change: science denialism, emissions trading and geoengineering. These three types of solutions all originate from neoliberal think tanks and academic units, and, when employed together, imply that the solution is completely market based. The first immediate step, Mirowski argues, is science denialism. This merely serves to deter wider responses to the perceived crisis to buy time for the commercial parties to step in with solutions in the second and third step. The second step in the medium-long term is the instalment of carbon emission markets. These, Mirowski argues, are bound to fail due to lobbying and financial innovation that neutralise the nominal caps that are put in place and thus leave the actual emission level unaffected. Moreover, emission markets reinforce oligopoly power and steer investments from energy infrastructure innovation towards financial instruments – thereby in fact hampering the development of sustainable solutions. The third step in the long-run is geoengineering, which is centred around the idea that entrepreneurs will address the problem of climate change through large scale manipulations of the climate. Examples of this are weather modification, management of solar radiation and CO_2 sequestration. The problem with geoengineering however is that it does not deal with the root cause of the problem but reinforces the market mechanisms that have caused the problem in the first place. According to Mirowski, the combination of these three solutions summarises the core of neoliberalism: it hampers political action and leaves the market as the only place to find solutions. Thanks to some "interim solutions", people come to trust that the problem is being dealt with even when this is not the case (ibid., 352).

In line with this, Parr (Parr 2014, 2–6) emphasises that emission trading and a wide array of other accepted measures – ranging from changing personal eating habits to contraceptives

to poor women in developing countries and installing green roofs – are merely a distraction from the root causes of the problem that should be taken care of. Meanwhile, the crisis is privatised by viewing it as a market opportunity. As the collective is fragmented into single individuals that make their own choices and compete with one another for the best solution, the possibility of collective action is inhibited and sustainable production and consumption are marketed as the only viable way out. The focus on private interests and technological development makes it impossible to question underlying structures of the problem, as also emphasised by Hargis (2016). The same is true for taking carbon as the measure of all things which, according to Beck (2010), leads to technocratic questions that revolve around comparisons of various activities in terms of carbon emissions. This, in Swyngedouw's (2011, 4) words, reduces "multiple, complex and often contingent relations through which environmental changes unfold" into a "singular socio-chemical component".

Both Swyngedouw (ibid.) as well as Kenis and Lievens (2014) emphasise that relying on the consensus that purely techno-managerial market solutions will solve the crisis masks the underlying tensions that stem from the plurality of voices that should be included in the debate. Consensual discourse that reduces the environmental problems to a number of CO_2 emission that is then portrayed as the enemy that needs to be fought overlooks the fact that these emissions are inherent to the system rather than an odd excess of it (Swyngedouw 2011). The consensual market-focused approach renders collective deliberation redundant, which de-politicises the problem of climate change and impedes questions about the underlying structures that in fact led to the human domination over nature and the unbridled accumulation of greenhouse gases – which is at the core of the current climatic challenges.

2.4   THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE PROBLEM THEN AND NOW

In the last decades, neoliberalism has been undermining equality, citizenship and public deliberation. As discussed above, citizens are depicted as entrepreneurs that strive for human capital, democracy is transformed into a marketplace and the political has become the economised sphere of administration and management. With the foregrounding of a negative definition of freedom, neoliberalism takes freedom out of the societal context that it needs to not become an instrument of power. In the political, this is combined with the replacement of truth by incontestable traditional values that undermine plurality and instead promote a

privatised homogenous order. Meanwhile, neoliberal policies are dominating the response to climate change, which leads to the formulation of solutions that at best slow down and at worst intensify the problematic course of events. Hence, the debate around climate change needs to be re-politicised and a radically different way of conceiving of politics is needed to provided answers that are independent of neoliberal reasoning.

This resonates with Arendt's diagnosis of the problem of the modern world, in which man is alienated from the earth and the world and liberalism degrades politics. Arendt's main points of critique of liberalism are 1) the centrality of private, economic interests in the public sphere that led to the invasion of the political by the social, and 2) the private, negative notion of freedom. Although there are divergences between liberalism and neoliberalism, these two aspects of liberalism can – in an altered version – be found in neoliberalism too. Firstly, neoliberalism promotes the domination of the economy in other spheres of society, but in a different way than liberalism. With the neoliberal conception of the individual as entrepreneur instead of labourer, neither private property nor society is based on labour such as in liberalism. In fact, the neoliberal conception of property rights alters substantially. Whereas for the liberals, property rights were considered a necessary protection from the state, neoliberals think that property rights can be "reengineered and changed to achieve specific political objectives" (Mirowski 2013, 68).[13] This implies that, insofar as these political objectives are centred around the promotion of the market, property rights are used to further develop the economy. This new conception of private property also entails that labour is no longer celebrated as the basic foundation of society or as the way to sustain one's life. Instead, individuals sustain, but also define, their lives through entrepreneurship of the self. This, despite the differences, does not dismiss the fundamental problem for Arendt. This is that the increasingly public manifestation of the mode of sustaining one's life allowed for the unhampered wealth creation and a general domination of economic, private interests in the public sphere. Given that neoliberalism exports the model of the entrepreneur of the self to other spheres of society, the economic mode of sustaining and defining one's life becomes pervasive throughout society. Moreover, with its reliance on inequality, neoliberalism promotes rather than counters unhampered wealth accumulation.

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[13] Mirowski (2013, 68) names intellectual property or the ownership of financial trading algorithms which transform the market infrastructure in a commodity as examples.

The second main problem that Arendt sees in liberalism is its private, negative notion of freedom. Although there is no unitary neoliberal account of freedom, the neoliberal conception of society as a collection of fragmented selves, that make decisions and investments, means that there can be no positive notion of freedom that springs from the plurality in the political like Arendt describes. On the contrary, neoliberalism is hostile to a political sphere in which citizens speak and deliberate with one another. Politics should not, as in liberalism, be directly safeguarding private interests, but rather do this through its promotion and accommodation of the market. Thus, neoliberalism contributes to the fragmentation and decay of the political at least to a similar extent as – but possibly even to a larger extent than – liberalism.

This means that Arendt's critique of liberalism is relevant in light of the current situation. Her theory of the political can provide a radically different approach to politics that may provide answers to climate change that are independent of neoliberal reasoning. In the following sections, I consider Arendt's theory of political action as a response to the developments in the modern age and under liberalism, to see what we can learn from her today.

3 THE POLITICAL THEORY OF HANNAH ARENDT

In *The Human Condition* Arendt sets out a political theory with which she aims to "think what we are doing" and situates human freedom in the actualisation of natality and new beginnings inherent in political action (Arendt 1998, 5). As mentioned before, Arendt is a systematic thinker whose concepts need to be understood in relation to the rest of her thinking. This implies that before considering how Arendt might provide insights to climate change politics (in chapter 4), I first outline Arendt's theory of political action in the following chapter. I discuss her distinction between the different human activities in section 3.1. This allows me to discuss Arendt's understanding of what the political is and should not be in section 3.2, as well as her ambiguous relation with democracy.

3.1 THE THEORY OF LABOUR, WORK AND ACTION

Arendt proposes "a reconsideration of the human condition from the vantage point of our newest experiences and our most recent fears" (Canovan 1998, x). With these experiences and fears, Arendt refers to humanity's newly acquired ability to leave planet Earth, but also the mathematisation of the sciences and the effects of automation on the status of labour. For Arendt, the human condition lies in the activities that every human being can be expected to perform: labour, work and action. These are the three fundamental activities within the *vita activa* that are related to the basic conditions of human life on Earth.

3.1.1 LABOUR

Labour is the activity of the *animal laborans* that is connected to the biological cycles of necessity in life. It considers those bodily activities that are needed to sustain one's life that are the "most natural and least worldly of man's activities" (Arendt 1998, 101). Arendt proposes an unusual distinction between labour and work, with which she explicitly criticises Marx. Due to the striving for freedom from necessity, labour has been scorned since ancient Greece, where freedom could only be achieved through the domination of others, such as slaves, who were subjected to necessity instead. This changed in the modern age, where theorists like Smith and Marx glorify labour as the source of productivity and value. Arendt states however, that this notion of labour rests on a false identification of labour with work. She argues instead that, while the productivity of work adds new objects to the human

artifice, the productivity of labour power is primarily focused on the reproduction of life. The durability of the human world arises out of the presence of products of work while the products of labour are cyclical rather than abundant and cannot be stored as property.

Labour and consumption are two sides of the same coin, both connected to the necessity of life. But in the modern age, where the limits of abundance are still not reached, the sphere of labour is expanded to encompass that of work – which is originally not concerned with necessity. Work is being transformed into labour, by "treating all use goods as if they were consumer goods", and by the industrial revolution that "has replaced all workmanship with labor" (ibid., 124). This has resulted in the objects of the modern age being considered as labour products, goods to be consumed, rather than products to be used. This is reinforced by instruments and tools, which have not fundamentally changed the nature of the necessities underlying the activity of labour. Rather, through an obscuring of pain and effort, "the outward manifestations of necessity," the urges of necessity that underly life in a consumer society become unnoticeable (ibid., 135). Resulting from this is a life that is centred around the consumption of non-durable goods and a lack of recognition of the futility of this.

3.1.2 Work

Work is the activity of the *homo faber* in the realm of the fabrication of use products, the objects that stabilise and provide durability to human life. Everything in the built environment is the work of the *homo faber* centred around utility that is instrumental at its core and has a defined beginning and end. Whereas the labour performed by the *animal laborans* revolves around biological cycles, the relationship of *homo faber* with nature is characterised by means and ends. Nature is seen as a source of materials, that can be used as means, as long as this is justified by the ends. This instrumentalisation eventually leads to the loss of intrinsic value not only of objects of fabrication, that all serve a further purpose, but the Earth and nature itself. Fabrication is inherently violent, as it imposes ends onto the otherwise cyclical nature. Through work "man becomes the measure not only of things whose existence depends upon him but of literally everything there is" (ibid., 158).

In the modern world, work has become a process aimed at producing for consumption. This transforms work into a form of labour in which the categories of means and ends no longer

make sense.[14] As Arendt states, in the cycle of necessity, "it is idle to ask questions […] such as whether men live and consume in order to have strength to labor or whether they labor in order to have the means of consumption" (ibid., 145). Hence, humans lose their capacity to distinguish between means and ends and the work processes become dominated by the motion and rhythm of the process itself:

> Within the category of means and end, and among the experiences of instrumentality which rules over the whole world of use objects and utility, there is no way to end the chain of means and ends and prevent all ends from eventually being used again as means, except to declare that one thing or another is "an end in itself." In the world of *homo faber*, where everything must be of some use, that is, must lend itself as an instrument to achieve something else, meaning itself can appear only as an end, as an "end in itself" which actually is either a tautology applying to all ends or a contradiction in terms. (ibid., 154)

As soon as an end is reached, this can be perceived as a means to another end. Hence, meaningfulness is unreachable for the *homo faber*.

3.1.3 ACTION

Whereas labour and work are activities that are performed in isolation, action is grounded in the plurality of men – in their simultaneous equality and distinction. It is speech and action that make up the human activity *par excellence*, since "a life without speech and without action […] is literally dead to the world; it has ceased to be a human life because it is no longer lived among men" (ibid., 176). Central to action is the principle of a new beginning, of taking initiative. There is something unpredictable, unexpected and miraculous to action. Action is the "actualization of the human condition of plurality, that is, of living as a distinct and unique being among equals" (ibid., 178). It is closely intertwined with speech, as the actor only arises through speech. It is speech which makes action relevant. Action and speech generally have two characteristics: they disclose the agent and they concern the worldly reality that binds men together.

Firstly, the disclosing aspect of speech identifies the agent that acts and speaks. An action is disclosed through speech, and it is only through speech that a relevant action can be distinguished from a deed that "can be perceived in its brute physical appearance without

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[14] An example of this can be found in the apparel industry nowadays in which 'fast fashion' has transformed durable objects with a specific use purpose into disposable objects of which more and more need to be consumed.

verbal communication" (ibid., 179). Through acting and speaking, we reveal who we are to others. Without the disclosure of the agent within the act, action would lose its specific character and become a means to an end, which true action can never be. The disclosure of the speaker does not merely take place explicitly when answering the question of who someone is. Rather, disclosure also takes place when action and speech are concerned with the objective physical world in between men. In those cases, action and speech are concerned with those things that exist between men – the things that "*inter-est*" – and that connect them with one another (ibid., 182).

This is the second characteristic of most action: it concerns those things that lie between men and make up their common world. When speaking about this common world, a new, intangible form of "in-between" arises that connects human beings – in all their uniqueness and distinctness – with one another: the "web of human relationships" (ibid., 183). This web exists of the wills and intentions inherent in the plurality of men and implies that action never unequivocally reaches its purpose. It implies that every agent is always necessarily related to other agents, who are in turn able to act themselves. Every act thus necessarily invokes a reaction, which is a new action in itself. Hence, the relatedness of agents implies the boundedness and unpredictability of action. The agent that begins an action is both its actor and the sufferer of its consequences but can never be appointed as the author of the ultimate outcome of that action. Only retrospectively can a third party make sense of the meaning of an action: "Even though stories are the inevitable results of action, it is not the actor but the storyteller who perceives and 'makes' the story" (ibid., 192).

This implies that there is a certain riskiness in acting as the consequences are unpredictable and uncontrollable. This is the reason, according to Arendt, that in the modern world there is less space for action. Working has been transformed into labouring and acting has been transformed into working, so the risks inherent in a plurality of agents can be avoided. This has put instrumentality at the centre of political thought and theory, invoking the "degradation of politics into a means to obtain an allegedly "higher" end", which is "the productivity and progress of society" in the modern age (ibid., 229).

The attempt to eliminate action from men's world has not succeeded though. It has merely led to the redirection of man's capacity to "act into nature", as they have increasingly begun

to condition and influence natural processes (ibid., 231).[15] This goes hand in hand with the transformation of the natural sciences into the sciences of processes, as well as man's capacity to destroy non-human made objects beyond his own control. In short, the decay of political action is closely connected to the earth and world alienation as discussed in section 2.2.2.

3.2   HANNAH ARENDT'S CONCEPTION OF THE POLITICAL

With the strict separation between the different human activities, Arendt aims to define the sphere in which political action can take place. In the following sections, I discuss how this sphere is to be strictly delineated from the social, the kind of political action it enables, and Arendt's ambiguous stance on democracy.

3.2.1   THE POLITICAL AS DISTINGUISHED FROM THE SOCIAL

As discussed in section 1.1.2, Arendt strictly delineates between the political and the social and between the public and the private. She aims to protect the political from the invasion of the social which neglects the dualism between the public and the private.[16] Only political action is a public action that considers the plurality of men and the common world between them. Work and labour belong to the realm of private activities. Work is an unpolitical activity according to Arendt (1998, 212) because, in spite of its relation to the sensible world of appearances that is between men, it does not allow for plurality in men. Labour is an antipolitical activity because it is concerned with a man and his body which detaches him not only from other men but also from the world of appearances. In the modern world however, labour and work have increasingly become public activities, while the capacity for speech and action is banned to the private sphere and has lost its value. This means that the political has been invaded by the social and its two main characters: the *animal laborans*, who invaded the political when the social expanded in the public sphere, and the *homo faber*, whose principles

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[15] An example of this would be the way in which the Netherlands engages in water management in for example the Delta area where in 1987 a storm-surge barrier was built that controls the tidal characteristics of the area. These engineering works have had an impact on the ecosystem with e.g. changing habitats and decreased numbers of birds and mussels (Smaal 1991).

[16] As noted in section 1.1.1, Arendt usually indicates the political with "public sphere". Here, I use "public" as an adjective that indicates the opposite of "private," while I consider "the political" as the sphere that needs to be saved from the invasion of "the social".

accommodated the invasion of the *animal laborans* and turned politics into a form of mere administration.

The first aspect of the invasion of the political by the social is by the domination of the *animal laborans*. In the modern age the division of labour transformed labour from a private activity within the realm of the household into a public activity for which men are mutually dependent on one another for sustaining their life. With the life process becoming a public matter, an "unnatural growth […] of the natural" is triggered: the social is growing constantly, thereby increasingly undermining the political and the possibility for political action (ibid., 47). This implies that more activities became of a public nature and the distinction between the private and public sphere blurred. Characteristic of the social are the expectations that it puts on citizens: to behave in a certain manner, to conform to the rules and avoid unexpected deviations from these. These expectations used to apply to the household but are exported to the public sphere in the modern age. Modern society absorbs and controls social groups in a similar way as it used to do with households (ibid., 41). This has also led to a different conception of equality. While equality used to be a matter among political peers, it now came to rely on conformation not to the head of the household but to the unanimous opinion and interest of the majority. With that, distinction and difference became private matters of the individual rather than public matters related to plurality. Hence, the conception of equality derived from the ancient Greek polis where individuality and courage were central is lost. The result is a society that is conceived as a large household, in which labour, accompanied by questions of necessity and continuity of the individual and the species, has found its way to the public realm. This constitutes a society of labourers where "all members consider whatever they do primarily as a way to sustain their lives and those of their families" (ibid., 46).

The rise of the social coincides with and is reinforced by the rise of economics as a science and statistics as its main tool. Economics can only be 'scientific' when humans are regarded conforming beings that follow certain behavioural patterns. Hence, human life is about the patterns and the rules, rather than the exceptions or deviations. Action is replaced by behaviour. This is problematic, stresses Arendt, as "the meaningfulness of everyday relationships is disclosed not in everyday life but in rare deeds" (ibid., 42). More specifically, the triumph of the social implies the substitution of the individual ability to act within the

political agora for bureaucracy, which Arendt considers the ultimate form of rule by nobody based on conformism. Politics is reduced to household administration on a larger scale.

This resonates with the second aspect of the invasion of the political that is the way in which principles of *homo faber* and work have come to dominate the political. *Homo faber* has, with his thinking in terms of means, ends and utility created "the conditions under which the pressing needs of life are channeled into the public sphere" (Villa 1996, 146). By conceiving of everything in terms of suitability and utility for a certain end, an endless chain of instrumentality is triggered. The result is a utilitarian world in which it is impossible to differentiate between utility and meaningfulness. Usefulness becomes a matter of meaning instead of utility and there is no principle to justify the category of utility itself, which Arendt (1998, 154) considers the "perplexity of utilitarianism".

With the influence of *homo faber* and his thinking in terms of means and ends, action is substituted for making. This can be observed by the terminology used in politics, where the statement that "he who wants an end must also want the means" has become pervasive (ibid., 229). The result is that politics itself becomes a means to some end, which with the dominance of the social in the modern age evolves around productivity and progress. This is aggravated by the rise of technology – in the form of mechanisation and automation – with its tendency to blur the distinction between ends and means. This blurring takes place when "the distinction between operation and product, as well as the product's precedence over the operation (which is only the means to produce the end), no longer make sense and have become obsolete" (ibid., 151).

Technology promotes mass behaviour that feeds into the image of a national household where humans are considered as raw material for the production process. This implies the destruction of our common world and the emergence of existential resentment, which can only be redeemed through true political action and a non-alienated existence that it brings about (Villa 1996, 200–202). Hence, the dominance of the principles of labour and work in the public sphere in the modern age has led to deterioration of politics. To counter this, Arendt sees a strict separation between the political on the one hand and private and economic matters that belong to the social on the other. Only then can the political produce the conditions and values that enable political action, which in turn contains the ability to counter world alienation.

Arendt's strict separations between different spheres imply that she conceives of the political a s an unnatural, artificially constructed sphere where action can take place and freedom can exist. It is unnatural in the sense that it does not arise organically but through the man-made objects between men that simultaneously relate and separate them and thereby enable political action (Villa 1996, 34). Arendt regards the world and the public realm as one and the same space of appearances which "comes into being wherever men are together in manner of speech and action" (Arendt 1998, 199). Both the world and the public indicate "that realm of phenomena that lies *between* men, and which, as such, is common to them" (Villa 1996, 92). For the political to enable action, it should preclude coercion and violence and has to fulfil certain conditions of plurality, equality, community and ability (Villa 1996, 32–34). In the following sections I discuss these conditions in more detail.

Plurality and equality

The basic condition of the political for Arendt is plurality: "[T]he fact that men, not Man, live on the earth and inhabit the world […] is specifically *the* condition of all political life" (Arendt 1998, 7). It is when speech and action are perceived by others that the political is constituted; through plurality, the space of appearances arises. Hence, it is not about a physical location, but "the organization of the people as it arises out of acting and speaking together. […] 'Wherever you go, there will be a polis'" (ibid., 198).

However, she does not mean that the political is always possible everywhere and that everyone always lives in the political – equality also needs to be accommodated. Inherent to her notion of plurality are distinction, without which there would be no need for speech or action, and equality, which is needed for common understanding and communication. For Arendt, equality in the political is not based on some aspect of human nature. It is rather, about equalising unequal human beings with regards to specific aspects and for specific purposes only (Arendt 1998, 215). Hence, Arendt does not rely on equality of condition, but on a condition of the political that equalises men. It is through the potential talent for political life that is inherent in *all* men that equality in the political is established (Kateb 1984, 15).

Community

This equal potentiality of talent is connected to the precondition of community, which stems from the shared interests, norms, purposes and harmony in basic judgments between men. These shared interests arise from that which is between men, that which *inter-est*, the common space of appearances. This is the external common cause that brings people together in the public sphere (Kelz 2016, 26). As Villa (1996, 7) indicates, Arendt considers community constitutive for "selfhood" and a "sense of the world", which both rely on interaction with others. This interaction is inspired by a "love of the world" (Arendt 1998, 264) and should go beyond the search for mutual benefit.

There is a close connection between the worldliness of the political, common sense, political action, and the disclosure of other men and the world. By restoring the value inherent in political action and the sensible world of appearances, Arendt aims to overcome existential resentment following from the loss of transcendental values. The plurality of innumerable irreducible perspectives on and opinions about the world is what humanises the world and makes up the common world. Hence, instead of striving for absolute values, Arendt embraces "fundamental relativity" (Villa 1996, 79). Through its grounding in the material, common world the political enables a common sense with which the common world can be perceived. For Arendt, common sense is "a special sense that makes the five senses coincide around an object in common, and endows members of the same species with a common context in which every object has a specific meaning" (Burdman 2018, 487). This sense is enabled when political action takes place and other men and the world are disclosed. This implies that the world enables political action, and political action makes the world sensible to men. It is in this process that human freedom can be attained. As Villa (1992, 275) puts it, in Arendt's model of non-strategic, non-instrumental and non-sovereign action the subject is decentred and can be disclosed through political action only. Freedom does not exist within the autonomous subject but arises in the action as "virtuosity" (ibid., 280).

Ability

The last condition that needs to be fostered to enable a public sphere in which political action can take place is ability. This is connected to the courage that is needed to leave the private realm and expose oneself through speaking and acting (Arendt 1998, 186). Thus, there is a risk inherent to acting in the polis similar to the Greek conception. Arendt (ibid., 206) quotes

Democritus who states that "as long as the polis is there to inspire men to dare the extraordinary, all things are safe; if it perishes, everything is lost". This risk cannot be solved through any other human faculty or realm. Hence, action is the only activity that cannot be redeemed through another activity. The *animal laborans* can be saved from the continuous cycle of life through the producing capacity of the *homo faber*, who in turn can be saved from the meaningless of his world through speech and action. But the inherent risks in the political stemming from "the irreversibility and unpredictability of the process started by acting" cannot be solved through another human faculty or realm (ibid., 236).

The redemption for these risks lies in the plurality of the political itself. The irreversibility of action can be redeemed through forgiving, as it is because of the faculty to forgive that we are not held hostage in the consequences of every single act we do. The unpredictability of action, on the other hand, can be redeemed through promising, the faculty that ensures that we are not subjected to absolute uncertainty but are able to have stable identities. It follows that these two dispositions stemming from the plurality of men guide the political internally where needed. This way, when violence and coercion are precluded, and plurality, equality, community and ability are fostered, action is possible.

When looking more specifically at what this implies for political action, two characteristics are important. The first characteristic is that it cannot have a predefined goal – it cannot be a means to an end or a certain desired state of the world. Whereas existential resentment often results in violent undertakings of reshaping the world to a desired state, this is at odds with plurality and political action (Villa 1996, 79). Arendt rejects the ancient Greek teleological model of action and states instead that action can never have a predefined goal, because this would undermine plurality. Action is always an end in itself. As soon as all the involved actors agree on the end, there can still be debate, but only a non-political one – it becomes a question of administration and management. This implies that the primary concern of the political is its structure and the ways in which it enables men to be together and act. The actual content of political action – the specific worldly objects it refers to – is then of secondary concern. As long as the world between men is able to "gather them together, to relate and to separate them", society should be bearable (Arendt 1998, 53).

The second characteristic is 'disinterestedness', which is connected to the rejection of a moral interpretation of action. In Arendt's account, the value of action is located within the action itself, and freedom arises in praxis. Therefore, categories of means and ends as well as

categories of motive become irrelevant for the assessment of political actions. Judging political action by material or moral interests would transform action into a medium of power. This would in fact be impossible as action explores new beginnings and the extraordinary, whereby it tends to go beyond existing categories of morality (Villa 1992; Kelz 2016; Cane 2015). Therefore, Arendt's model of political action requires what Villa (1992, 276) calls "disinterestedness," which raises men above mere necessities and interest pursuit. There is a certain distance between the love of the world and the personal interests and necessities.

With this notion of disinterestedness, Arendt (1990) rejects guidance of political action by sentiments. In particular, she analyses the French Revolution for which compassion and pity were the main drivers. She stresses that pity, a sentiment that derives from compassion cannot guide action, as it is a "mere pretext for lust for power" (ibid., 89). Sentiments become "boundless" as soon as they are brought into the public, where they do not consider individual persons, but the multitude (ibid., 90). Pitying the suffering multitude implies a surrender to emotions within oneself and a loss of the ability to regard others "in their singularity" (ibid., 90). Regarding others as pitiful beings renders them irrelevant for political action. Likewise, Arendt rejects the idea of a general will steering the revolution. With this idea, private interests and bodily needs are grouped together in one single homogenous multitude. Since the French revolution this idea has dominated politics and driven out any notion of plurality.

Concludingly, political action for Arendt stems from a love of the world and revolves around a common sense of the world. It is characterised by a degree of disinterestedness – private interests and sentiments have no place in the political – but it is significant to human existence as it defines political actors and their common world. This implies that true political action for Arendt considers the fundamentals of a form of government – its constitution and its conditions of possibility. Political speech concerns the frame in which a debate that is motivated by a concern for the common world can take place. Diverse individuals come together to deliberate public matters in a sphere that is separated from the state and the economy (Villa 1996, 35). Or, as Kateb (1984, 17) puts it, "political action is talk about politics". As Markell (2010) points out, this raises the question as to whether action is not extremely rare, as it is restricted to those actions that are undertaken for the sake of themselves, or unspecific, as action could be anything that is undertaken in the right way, or

with the right spirit. However, Kateb (1984) stresses that reducing political action to a matter of 'the right spirit' neglects Arendt's emphasis on the seriousness of political action and the complete absence of private interests and necessities.

3.2.3 HANNAH ARENDT'S AMBIGUOUS RELATION WITH DEMOCRACY

The question of rareness and 'the right spirit' touches upon the debate around the elitist dimension of Arendt's political thought, the debate about whether Arendt should be understood as a radically democratic, or an elitist, thinker. Some render her account elitist and based on inequality (e.g. Canovan 1978; Wolin 1983), while others emphasise the centrality of equality in her account of politics (Waldron 2010) or consider her "the champion of democracy" (Villa 1996, 13). Those of the first category refer to Arendt's rejection of liberalism on the ground that it bases politics on necessities and private interest pursuit. According to Wolin (1983) this means that she renounces democracy. Wolin argues that democracy is the form of government that tries to transform social power into political power, to thereby increase social power. Hence, the distinction between the social and the political – which is of crucial importance to Arendt – is abolished. Arendt rejects the rise of mass society and the weight it puts on necessities, labour and the cycle of production and consumption. This impedes action and freedom, as political action can only take place when freedom of necessities is in place. Some conclude from this that there is an inherent need for inequality in Arendt's elitist account of politics. Only through the enslavement of others to do the labour for them can a few heroes be enabled to participate in political action (Canovan 1978; Wolin 1983). According to Villa (1996), Arendt also dismisses the demand that everyone should participate in politics, because the lack of ability or interest to act in the public sphere of some will inevitably corrupt the political by introducing non-political concerns.

Those that consider Arendt as a strong advocate for democracy, refer to the aspects of liberalism that Arendt does seem to embrace. Despite her rejection of private interests as the fundament of politics, she considers the deliberation of a constitution as the highest political activity and she advocates for human rights and the rule of law (Volk 2010; d'Entreves 2019). Besides this ambiguous stance on liberalism, there is a "radically egalitarian" element in her political theory as well, as Arendt considers every man as a new beginning, potentially with the ability to act politically (Canovan 1978, 10). Political action is about the desire to act

among equals, with an appeal to moderation, the virtue of "keeping within the bounds" (Arendt 1998, 191).

A way out of this incompatibility is offered by Markell (2010), who connects Arendt's ambiguity towards democracy to the paradox of openness and closure within the notion of democratic politics itself. Democratic politics oscillates between inclusiveness and openness to debate and disagreement on the one hand, and regulation and stabilisation of the collective life within through some form of closure on the other. Arendt does not want to reduce politics to either of these. Rendering democratic politics as a continuous destabilising activity reduces freedom to a form of resistance, while considering democratic politics as rule by a coherent collective – the *demos* – merely implies another form of monarchy in which the *demos* substitutes the king as monarch. Instead, Arendt highlights the dimension of democratic politics that both of these conceptions conceal: the dimension of action which involves new beginnings and responses to events. With this interpretation in terms of new beginnings and openness Arendt shows that democratic politics "is not a closed system but permanently exposed to the possibilities of critique, contestation, expansion, transformation and reinvention" (ibid., 62).

Because of her emphasis on openness Arendt rejects the notion of representative democracy. She renders representative democracy as inherently instrumental, as it aims to enable citizens to outsource their political presence to a representative so that they can continue pursuing their private interests. "The public [becomes] an instrumentality of the private, and politics becomes a means to life," transforming government into a form of mere administration (Villa 1996, 31). Private, economic concerns take over politics and the ones in office will inevitably aim to reduce suffering of the less fortunate, which instils politics with an inherent end and thereby takes away its essential open-endedness. Kateb (1984, 122) describes this as the politics of selfishness and self-regardingness, which deprives people of becoming politically active and makes them passive. A life dedicated to private interest pursuit implies the willingness to be governed, which in turn means giving up active citizenship and the possibility to attain freedom. Selfishness and self-regardingness usually generate speech that is too technical or concerned with the necessities of life such that they cannot be of political value. Furthermore, the institutions in representative democracies do not sufficiently allow for the Arendtian moments of action. Due to the hierarchical and bureaucratic structures, the political power lies entirely with the political parties and their leaders. As Volk (2016)

argues, the political leaders need to reinforce their power by structurally de-politicising the public, which is limited to give their tacit agreement to political developments and eventually become apathic towards politics.

With her focus on openness, participation, and the moments for political action, Arendt seems to defend a form of democratic politics in which institutions enable the right kinds of activity. The ideal of the unexpected and creative elements inherent in political action should guide the debates about the framework of politics itself; the ideal of participatory democracy should be inherent in democratic institutions. According to Canovan (1978), this can be done by accommodating civil rights – freedom of speech, publication and assembly – in these institutions to enable civic engagement parallel to the existing national politics of the housekeeping sort. This civic engagement is in principle open to everyone. However, given Arendt's fear of mass society in which cycles of necessity and labour occupy the citizens' minds, Arendt renders it unlikely that those citizens facing poverty have the capacity for political action (Waldron 2010). Although she advocates inclusion and the abolition of political hierarchies, it is likely that an Arendtian model of the political brings about political elites.

Perhaps, as Canovan (1978, 21) suggests, Arendt's framework of political action is especially relevant for "*extraordinary* politics", as distinguished from the "*normal* politics" of managing the national household. In cases where a small group of people care about public matters, courageously put the effort of taking action, a public space is created and a political elite arises. Although it is unlikely or even undesirable that this kind of events replaces the existing institutions of normal politics, it is important to highlight its political potential of allowing the new and unexpected – *besides* existing institutionalised politics. This suggests that Arendt's conception of politics is highly relevant in the case of climate change which is an unprecedented situation that demands extraordinary politics.

4 EXPLORING CLIMATE CHANGE POLITICS WITH HANNAH ARENDT

In an Arendtian form of climate change politics it would be the love of the world that brings together a plurality of political actors in the public sphere. Climate change could be considered one of the external events to which the political needs to reply. This way, solutions going beyond neoliberalism could be formulated. These solutions would not reduce human beings to politically passive beings who merely pursue their own interest, nor would they be based on mere assumptions of technological development. Instead of solutions that reinforce the image of what Villa (1996, 201) calls the "technologized 'national household'" in which political action is neither possible nor necessary, truly political solutions can be formulated. Perhaps, the climate crisis is exactly the type of crisis that Arendt considers the supreme political moment, where previously unquestioned bonds of human interconnectedness are put at stake and threatened. Perhaps this crisis should be as "a synonym for disaster, but [as naming] the moment in which we are forced to become political beings" (Norberg 2011, 132).

However, there are two main questions that arise when considering the suitability of Arendtian political theory for climate change politics that require a deeper understanding of Arendt's conception of the political. These questions resonate with the two main points of critique that Arendt's political theory has received. Firstly, Arendt's conception of the political is strictly separated from morality, which raises the question as to how issues of climate justice can be dealt with politically. In section 5.1, I consider this critique as well as her conception of political judgment as a response to it.

The second question that arises is that of the place of socio-economic questions with a global character in the political. Due to the strict separation with the social it is insufficiently clear who is comprised by the political and how questions of struggle are addressed in Arendt's account of the political. When considering climate change this is problematic given that – although it will likely have different local effects – the Earth is one interconnected eco-system in which consequences of actions may be felt far beyond the boundaries of political communities as we know them. It is unclear how an account of the political mainly focussed on local, direct participation deals with this. It is questionable whether Arendtian climate action is able to account for all the different actors involved in and affected by climate change

and the questions of global justice that arise with that. Moreover, the strict distinction with the social seems to make it impossible to include socio-economic questions in the political as these relate to questions of private and bodily needs that are central to the climate change debate. As a response to Arendt's pure conception of the political, her theory has been 'radicalised' by several agonistic thinkers. In section 5.2, I consider Mouffe's conception of the political as well as Arendt's concept of solidarity to explore the place of socio-economic questions and struggle in the political.

Besides these main points of critique there is another aspect that is specific to climate change that needs to be addressed: the role of epistemology and science. If climate change is an external event that impacts the political, the way that we perceive climate change is relevant for politics. Therefore, in section 5.3 I discuss the relation between truth and politics as well as the role of climate science as fundamental for the constitution of a common world that is essential for Arendtian politics.

Lastly, in a response to the critique that Arendt is too radical and idealistic I discuss how Arendtian climate action can be situated within the existing institutional context of national and transnational climate efforts in section 5.4. Her political theory is often considered radical, idealistic and therefore relevant mostly to 'extraordinary politics'. This, however, does not mean that it could not inform current democratic institutions in the West, to 'infuse' the latter with more radically democratic elements.

4.1 MORALITY IN THE POLITICAL

Various authors have argued that Arendt's conception of the political is too pure and too abstract to account for its moral boundaries as well as any cultural, historical or social differences between political actors (Kateb 1984; Benhabib 2003). Critics hold that Arendt's political lacks a purpose and a moral delimitation, which implies that it fails to preclude immoral action. The difficulty for Arendt to rely on some transcendental conception of the good is that it opposes plurality, as this would seemingly justify the rule of those who claim to know this notion over others (Jacobitti 1991). Moreover, the moral evaluation of action would deprive political action as a world-shaping activity. Villa (1992) stresses that action by definition aims to break expectations and move into the extraordinary, which implies that existing categories of morality do not apply. The moral interpretation of action necessarily

puts an emphasis on the consequences of action and thus brings about the type of means-ends reasoning that Arendt eschews when considering political action (Villa 1996). The stakes in the political are existential for Arendt, and action needs to be assessed in terms of its *greatness*, its ability to break with the ordinary. However, both Kateb (1984) and Cane (2015) raise that this criterion does not rule out actions that are 'great' yet immoral. Because of Arendt's reluctance to found the political on any external foundations, there cannot be any absolute standard of morality to guide political action.

As outlined in section 2.1.1, questions of climate change are inherently connected to questions of morality and justice. They regard the ways in which humanity should respond to the imminent threat of climate change and how it should deal with the distribution of the burdens. This implies that human beings on the other side of the planet as well as questions about the relation of human beings with nature should play a role in the debate. With a rejection of absolute standards of justice or morality it seems unclear whether these matters are captured by Arendt's conception of the political. There are two possible responses in Arendt's theory: the centrality of the will to act that is connected to certain virtues and dispositions as well as political friendship; and political judgment that stems from the highest human faculty of thinking.

Firstly, Arendt considers certain moral virtues that are inherent in the political and that stem from the will to act. The fundamental political virtue is courage, which is needed for the will to act with others. From this follows the respect for one's equals which constitutes a form of political friendship. A friendship that involves a certain regard for the other, but without the intimacy or closeness. This allows us to extend our sympathy and affection to a larger scope (Benhabib 1988; Kelz 2016). Besides mutual respect and political friendship, the will to act also implies the two dispositions of promising and forgiving, that were discussed in section 3.2.2. These implicit principles tame the unpredictability of political action and form the internal moral guidance of the political.

> In so far as morality is more than the sum total of *mores*, of customs and standards of behavior solidified through tradition and valid on the ground of agreements, both of which change with time, it has, at least politically, no more to support itself than the good will to counter the enormous risks of action by readiness to forgive and to be forgiven, to make promises and to keep them. (Arendt 1998, 245)

Hence, to the extent that morality is something that arises within the political and is reliant on the will to act of those involved, it guides the political. This is similar to the faculties of promising and forgiving, which are the faculties that arise within the political and guide it.

These internal guidance mechanisms are reliant on what Arendt considers the highest human faculty: the faculty of thinking, which enables political judgment. With her focus on thinking and judgment, Arendt makes a surprising move away from the *vita activa* towards the *vita contemplativa*, as thinking means a disruption in doing. When considering the political, not just any kind of thinking is relevant. While thinking is "something that can be done by anybody" (Jacobitti 1991, 285), judging "is perfectly at home in the world of political action as speech" as it is concerned with others and what they might be thinking (Kateb 1984, 38). Arendt considers judgment the crucial faculty that can re-establish the distinction between the public and the private sphere and save both from the invasion of the social. Both a private and public life are needed for an authentic life, and the private self plays an important role in both (Jacobitti 1991; Kelz 2016). It is through political judgment that existing moral principles can be called into question.

Political judgment, although coloured by one's personal identity, is characterised by the objectivity that stems from the structure of the shared world and the sameness of every human being's capacity to judge. This judgment happens through an inner dialogue, in which the different perspectives of different people are considered and weighed:

> Political thought is representative. I form an opinion by considering a given issue from different viewpoints, by making present to my mind the standpoints of those who are absent; that is, I represent them. (Arendt 1967, 9)

This implies what Kelz (2016, 35) calls "the 'plural' thinking self" that establishes an "inner democracy" and is comparable with the notion of plurality in the public sphere. This weighing of different points of view is inspired by Kant's notion of the *sensus communis* that he connects to taste judgments. These judgments have a seemingly subjective character, but necessarily imply a degree of objectivity and independence of subjective conditions. For Kant, taste judgments implicitly presume a shared perception of and reaction to the object under scrutiny – there is a degree of universality implied that is enabled by a "broadened way of thinking" or an "enlarged mentality" (Yar 2000, 16–17). The moral quality of enlarged mentality obliges us to think from the perspectives of others. Hence, morality as a matter of the private self is only enabled to flourish through the constant challenge by the plurality of

perspectives that constitute the public life. Morality therefore depends on a public culture, in which judging individuals constitute the "perspectival quality of the public world in which action unfolds" (Benhabib 1988, 48).

Concludingly, Arendt's conceives the common world as made up of different opinions and judgment as an inner dialogue. This means that she does not need to presume that every political actor is a moral agent, nor rely on transcendental moral standards that would hinder plurality. Instead, Arendt's notion of judgment enables the assessment of particulars without referring to general rules so that judging, like action, is able to depart from the expected and reach into the extraordinary (Kateb 1984, 38). This is in line with "the unruliness of action, its excess, its resistance to being captured – tamed – by any perspective, interpretation, or story" (Honig 1993b, 529). Instead of overruling this unruliness with transcendental moral standards, Arendt embraces this risk. The moral principles that implicitly guide political action arise in our capacity to think from the position of others. They are assessed independently of the consequences and ends of action. As Cane (2015) stresses, these moral principles are created and contested in the political as an integral part of politics.

What follows from this for climate change politics is that we enter the political courageously and out of a love of the world and an interest in the continued existence of the shared world. When we act politically there is a mutual respect between political peers whom we include in our judgment by trying to think from their perspective. This means that, when considering questions around climate change, we include others and the risks and consequences they face when we engage with them in the political. There is mutual respect between political peers. But there is also a degree of distance, since the notion of *sensus communis* implies that political actors engage with others and their points of view, while keeping a certain distance that allows them to judge. By considering a variety of perspectives and outlooks on the common world and by trying to envision the consequences of climate change for others we judge what is happening in the public sphere around us. In the case of climate change however, these 'others' are often very distant, either geographically or temporally. It may therefore hard – not to say impossible – to envision how others perceive the world and are affected by external events. Hence, a way to include distant others, whose perception and judgment of the world is harder to imagine, is needed. This is where Arendt's notion of solidarity comes in, which is discussed in the following section.

4.2   STRUGGLE AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC QUESTIONS IN THE POLITICAL

Another critique that Arendt's 'pure' notion of the political has received is that it lacks an affective dimension, which makes it inattentive to power structures, inequality and struggles for emancipation (e.g. Allen 1999). This lack of an affective dimension is considered to follow from Arendt's reliance on moderation and disinterestedness as political values, as discussed in section 3.2. This disinterestedness is reflected in Arendt's account of judgment, but also arises generally in her notion of political action. Only with a certain distance, when people are not acting for nor against one another – when the political reflects a "sheer human togetherness" – political action obtains its revelatory capacity (Arendt 1998, 180). This disinterestedness is needed to avoid that political action is dependent on any material or moral interests that could turn it into a mere medium of power. Furthermore, Arendt's focus on moderation as a political value excludes the possibility of acting for others, as this would reduce these others to passive masses that are not considered political actors.

The strict separation between the social with its unequal socio-economic relations and the political raises the question as to how those with unfavourable conditions can attain political freedom. Kelz (2016, 27–32) argues that Arendt fails to show how one can move from the unfree social to the free political. Since there is nothing essential in human beings that transforms them into political actors, they can only act politically if they freely and courageously choose to do so. However, Arendt's conception of freedom is one that only arises in the political – through action. This means that those that are not free are unlikely to find their way to the political. Besides that, Arendt does not make explicit how political equality between actors actually arises and her strict separations between freedom and necessity and the public and the private do not allow for emancipation (Fraser 1989; Benhabib 1993; Allen 1999).

Questions of social and distributive justice are central to any consideration of climate change politics. As Green, Hale and Colgan (2019) stress, the stakes in the debate around climate change are becoming existential: the consequences have a direct effect on peoples' livelihoods and lead them to defend their way of living in the political debate. Although climate change itself may not distinguish between levels of income, the way in which the consequences have an impact on livelihoods differs across different socio-economic groups – climate change politics are thus a form of distributional politics. This close connection between livelihoods, socio-economic conditions and the natural environment has led Parr

(2014) to highlight the intricacy of the different spheres, which demands an approach that considers politics in connection to society and nature. This would imply that Arendt's reliance on disinterestedness and moderation make it difficult to include the consequences of climate change in the political debate, because it is in the interconnection between one's livelihood, economy, politics and the natural environment that the consequences of climate change manifest themselves.

4.2.1 AN AGONISTIC CONCEPTION OF THE POLITICAL

As a response to Arendt's pure conception of the political, several authors have developed radically agonistic accounts of the political. They share with Arendt the agonal notion of the political that is not grounded in any extra-political foundation and in which a form of positive freedom can be attained (Villa 1999, 114–16). However, they regard the connection to one's background conditions such as gender, passions and socio-economic status as a necessary constituent for the political, the sphere which is constituted by struggle. One of the most prominent contemporary agonistic thinkers is Chantal Mouffe, whose account of the agonistic political is a reaction to the Arendtian and liberal notions of the political, both of which she considers inattentive to the irreducible antagonisms in the political. She rejects Arendt's idea of the political as a sphere of freedom, disagreement and deliberation between a plurality of equal actors, where political action is a game worth playing for its own sake. For Mouffe, this neglects the aspect of conflict in the political as much as the liberal conception that is centred around competition between pre-defined private interests. Currently under neoliberalism, the antagonistic, conflictual aspect of politics has been replaced by a "win-win politics" without frontiers, beneficial to everyone (Mouffe 2005, 31–32). This opened up the way for technocratic politics in the form of "neutral management of public affairs" (Mouffe 2018, 2). This resonates with the worry that climate change politics has merely been referred to the markets where it becomes a question of neoliberal solutions. Therefore, Mouffe's attempt to bring back the affective and conflictual dimension inherent in democratic politics may be relevant for an account of climate change politics that seeks to go beyond mere market solutions and include socio-economic struggles in the debate.

Including this affective dimension in the political is crucial for Mouffe (2005) as antagonism and hegemony are the central notions through which to view the political. The first refers to the way in which every political identity is relational and thus conditioned on the difference

it affirms. This implies a distinction between *we* and *they* that always contains the possibility of an antagonism. It is thus an illusion that the political can be freed from antagonism and always yield harmonic outcomes. Accepting this implies the lack of a final ground and the "dimension of undecidability" that is present in every social order (ibid., 17). Therefore, hegemony is the second concept through which to understand politics, as any social order that pervades society is hegemonic in nature. This implies that society is always the result of the practices that aim at establishing order in the contingent reality. Besides contingent a hegemony is also constitutive, as it establishes primary social relations, independent of any underlying rationality.

The conception of the political that follows from this, is inherently different from Arendt's. For Arendt the political is constituted internally out of a disinterested love of the world, without any reliance on a reference to the outside world. For Mouffe, however, this reference to the outside world is necessary: it is in its distinction from the *they* that the political *we* is created. Furthermore, Mouffe conceptualises the distinction between the political and the social in a different manner than Arendt. While Arendt draws this distinction with respect to the activities that are performed – labour and work in the social, action in the political – Mouffe considers this distinction inherently contingent. The political is the antagonistic dimension in human society, which results from the hegemonic institution of social relations. Rather than being confined to a specific sphere, the political is a dimension that is present in all practices in society. It "determines our very ontological condition" (Mouffe 1993, 3). The social is the realm of "sedimented practices" that "are taken for granted" as it is impossible to question everything in a certain order at once (ibid., 17). The social is always political, as it is organised by the power relations that decide on the seemingly natural order and the common sense associated with that. The social is always contingent and never reflects any deeper objective truth outside itself. Thus, the distinction between the political and the social is dependent on the specific context, and is constantly reconsidered and renegotiated by the social actors involved. Social relations of *we* versus *they* contain a potential of antagonism, which is dealt with in the political. According to Mouffe, it is impossible and undesirable to go beyond this distinction between *we* and *they*. Instead, this distinction should be reconstructed so that it enables radical, plural democracy. Therefore, democracy needs to transform antagonisms, in which two parties that are in conflict lack a common ground, into agonisms, where both parties acknowledge each other's legitimacy as well as the impossibility

of an objective, rational solution. The agonistic element in society should be contained, since it is impossible to overcome.

Although political actors share certain ethico-political values and reach consensus about the democratic procedures that enable political practice, there will inevitably be dissent about their meaning and implementation. This leads to an inevitably paradoxical form of politics, according to Mouffe (1993, 8):

> Central to this approach is the awareness that a pluralist democracy contains a paradox, since the very moment of its realization would see its disintegration. It should be conceived as a good that only exists as good so long as it cannot be reached. Such a democracy will therefore always be a democracy 'to come', as conflict and antagonism are at the same time its condition of possibility and the condition of impossibility of its full realization.

It follows that radical democratic politics is an ideal that is continuously strived for, in order to accommodate the antagonistic aspect of society in a sustainable way. This resonates with Arendt's conception of the political that is constituted as soon as political actors come together in speech and action. Its location can never be fixed nor can its existence be presumed. The core of Mouffe's account is thus not that different from Arendt's account – which is also considered agonistic. However, Arendt introduces a form of artificial equality that overrules the conflicts which would otherwise rule the political. She stresses that, although human beings are not naturally equal, they can achieve equality through organisation, and the creation of a common world (Arendt 1973, 301). Or, as Kateb (1984, 23) puts it: "The beauty of equality is in knowing and being known by others". Mouffe radicalises Arendt's agonistic conception by allowing struggle, passions and morality a central role in defining the roles and the stakes in the political and by rejecting the strict separation between the public and the private.

There are two main problems with a radically agonistic account such as Mouffe's. Firstly, it runs the risk that, when everything is political, nothing is. Fraser (1989, 76) describes this as the risk that politics loses its meaning when the political is insufficiently delineated. This then opens the way for forms of administration of private interests and public housekeeping that have little to do with politics, as Arendt diagnosed. Secondly, radically agonistic accounts of the political all rely to some degree on *we/they* relations as constitutive for the political. It is not the creation of common worlds, but negative definitions of identity that are at the core of the political. This makes negativity decisive for the shaping of political identities, which,

once formed, enter the political for a continuous clash with other identities (Dikeç 2013). As Villa (1999, 109) stresses, a radically democratic notion of politics does not avoid an "incessantly contestory" politics of ideological conflict. Moreover, the mere fact that citizens express themselves in the political does not exclude their proneness to normalisation or their docility to rules in the social. The real problem is not to encourage expression but the lack of independent thought and action that is disinterested to such a degree that it addresses the public and acknowledges morality. A connection to and care for the common world are central to political action. This demands the transcendence of the diverging interests of various groups in society and a degree of freedom from the absolute necessities in life. When winning the political game is crucial for one's survival and when absolute necessities overrule other considerations, the activity of politics loses its value.

When considering climate change politics specifically, there are two problems with a radically agonistic account. The first considers the constitutive outside of the political in such an account where the *they* defines the *we*. Climate change, however, is a systemic problem that has no constitutive outside. In the end, it concerns everyone on this planet – albeit in different ways and different degrees – and the politics addressing climate change should strive for the creation of a common world instead of irreconcilable oppositions between identities.

Therefore, Arendt's emphasis on a common world that is central to the political is more fruitful than one that radicalises this. This indicates the second problem of radically agonistic accounts in which matters of existence and necessity directly enter the political. The different ways and degrees in which people are affected by climate change should have a place in the political but not drive its existence as this possibly leads to endless ideological conflict. Thus, matters of existence and necessity cannot enter the political directly but "justice and 'moral motives' may inspire political action" (Arendt, cited in Kateb 1984, 44). To further understand this, Fraser's (1989, 169–71) concept of *runaway needs* is insightful. These are needs that clash with the existing domestic and economic institutions and therefore break out of their confined space into the social arena. In agreement with Arendt's conception of the social, Fraser understands this as the sphere of contestation about these *runaway needs* and the conflicting interpretations of these. Hence, different actors with different needs and different degrees of power fight for their needs to be taken up politically. However, once

included in the political these matters are discussed and judged on the basis of principles and interests from disinterested positions.

4.2.2   HANNAH ARENDT'S CONCEPT OF SOLIDARITY

The way in which others and their socio-economic status are introduced in the political is further exemplified by Arendt's concept of solidarity (Cane 2015). This form of solidarity goes along with her notion of disinterestedness as it is driven not by sentiments, but by facts.[17] Solidarity includes both the ones that are suffering and the ones that notice this and unite with them, despite the different actual circumstances they are facing (Reshaur 1992). As discussed in section 3.2.2, Arendt (1990) rejects pity in the political, as this is the perversion of compassion. Solidarity, however, is the counterpart of pity. It also derives from compassion but is not driven but merely inspired by it. Pity leads to the acting for others, it presumes that the actor knows the outcome of his actions and reduces others to a superfluous mass rather than equal political actors. In fact, it exits on the premise of the misfortune of the poor – it is the perversion of compassion. On the other hand, solidarity does not derive from sentiments, but relies on abstract ideas of the greatness and honour of humanity in its totality. It is a reasonable comprehension of a large multitude in which the fortune and misfortune, the rich and the poor are considered "with an equal eye" (Arendt 1990, 89). The problem with pity is that it celebrates suffering and can turn into a will to power with an interest in the existence of the suffering. It does not the preclude of cruelty and can therefore not be the driver of political action.

Consequently, Arendt does not rely on group identities for the constitution of the political, as is the case in radically agonistic conceptions, nor does she base her conception of solidarity on these. As Allen (1999, 98–99) emphasises, sameness undermines plurality and is inherently antipolitical while solidarity is based on the shared commitment of distinct individuals that come together to attain a common goal. This is in line with a notion of plurality that simultaneously entails equality and distinctness. It is through solidarity that a "community of action" is formed, which for Arendt is the ultimate modality of power (ibid., 112).

For climate change politics this implies that, although the scope on which the consequences of climate change are felt is large and dispersed, people from different countries and cultures

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[17] Arendt's understanding of factual knowledge is further explained in section 4.3.

that face different circumstances can act in concert through solidarity. This stands in contrast with acting out of pity and reducing citizens to an indistinctive mass. This is what is currently happening to the global poor, Hayden (2007) argues, as they are denied their socio-economic rights and do not have a place in the common world. This is also done by environmental economists who devalue politics to a question about meeting needs and argue that neither 'poor' nor 'rich' countries will reduce their emissions as long as this reduces economic growth. Hargis (2016) argues that this line of argumentation resonates with the pity-induced politics that Arendt rejects, whereby citizens are devalued to will-less beings that are dictated by necessities, depriving them of their ability to act politically. Presenting climate change as a "global humanitarian cause" implies a de-politicisation that has reconciled the different possible trajectories that should be debated (Swyngedouw 2013, 2). Hence, rather than reducing the debate to a techno-managerial question that reduces part of the population to a superfluous mass of indistinctive beings that merely seek to satisfy their needs, citizens should act in concert to consider the framework of politics, and the ways in which it is interrelated with the economy and the environment. Reinstating the value inherent in the political enables a consideration of the separate spheres and their meaning and importance to the common world we share.

4.3   EPISTEMOLOGY IN CLIMATE CHANGE POLITICS

An essential characteristic of democratic politics is that it is able to respond to external events. Arendt shows that action is always a response to happenings or other actions – resulting from the natality inherent in human life – in the web of human relations and the world. This implies that democratic politics needs to interpret and represent the external events that we are facing (Markell 2010). With the crippling belief in transcendental values and absolute truth in the modern age, Arendt (1967, 4) concludes that language and discourse rather than the ultimate truth are of interest to politics:

> [F]or men, living in company, the inexhaustible richness of human discourse is infinitely more significant and meaningful than any One Truth could ever be.

In the same essay, Arendt observes that despite increased diversity in religious and philosophical opinions, factual truth has become increasingly endangered by power. If the facts do not match the interests of those in power, facts are transformed into opinions.

Arendt's writings on truth, opinion and politics seem more relevant than ever in light of current climate denialism and the general devaluation of truth in politics, as seen in section 2.3.2.

The phenomenon of climate change further complicates the already complex relation between truth and politics since, as an empirical phenomenon, it is complex, diverse and in its totality ungraspable for the human eye. This makes it hard to establish what is in fact 'truth' about climate change. Through climate science we are able to observe increasingly large parts of the phenomenon itself and its interconnections with human activity. Hence, science plays a crucial role in our conception of the relation between men and nature. As Naustdalslid (2011, 247) points out, this divergence between scientific knowledge and the experience and tacit knowledge of society creates a wider gap between experts and other people, leading to the "knowledge-action paradox". Another complexity arises from its scope. While the problem is global, it comes about through innumerable individual choices and deeds. This makes knowledge about the climate relevant for various actors – not only individuals, but also companies, (local) governments and other organisations.

Thus, the difficulty lies in the abstractness of the knowledge is created and its connection to a broad non-scientific community. Climate change can only be an 'external event' to which political actors react if scientific knowledge about it is created and brought into the political. The political actors then need to make sense of the – increasing – amount of scientific knowledge to be able to respond to these. When considering the interconnections between climate change politics, truth and science in an Arendtian understanding, it is relevant that Arendt's notion of the political does not rely on a constitutive outside, and her conception of power is centred around a form of "acting in concert" (Arendt 1998, 244). This means that the common world that is central to political action and speech is constituted from within. Science plays an important role in providing the facts that inform the constitution of this common world. But rather than the detached form of science that has characterised the modern age, climate science should reconnect man and nature, by addressing what kinds of epistemology and ontology are involved in climate change knowledge. This then constitutes the perception of the common world and contributes to the common world that is between men.

Arendt (1967) distinguishes between rational truth and factual truth. The former is connected to the western philosophical tradition of contemplation where the thinker, in his singularity comes to rational truths in the fields of mathematics, science and philosophy. This is in contrast with factual truth, which considers men in plurality and is therefore politically relevant:

> [I]t concerns events and circumstances in which many are involved; it is established by witnesses and depends upon testimony; it exists only to the extent that it is spoken about, even if it occurs in the domain of the privacy. (ibid., 7)

It is through the common facts that common sense and the common world arise in which political action can take place. However, Arendt states that factual truth, because of its contingency and arbitrariness, is increasingly in danger of being reduced to opinion by those whose interests are in conflict with the facts. Power can never be as stable as facts, and the former poses a threat to the latter, and thereby for the common world. Lies seem more attractive than truth, according to Arendt, thanks to their ability to abolish the unexpected elements inherent in events and instead sound more plausible and logical. To enable a common world, facts should not be denied, nor should they be considered necessary, unpreventable outcomes of history on the one hand. Only when we respect that which we cannot change as the boundary of the political can the sphere in which we act freely be preserved.

Arendt envisions a clear distinction between politics and science as they have different aims. Whereas politics tries to change the world, science aims to stabilise it by describing it through objective truths. Thus, in order to foster its inherent possibility of freedom, politics should not be subordinated to science. Nor should science be subordinated to politics, as political action could start to intervene in reality by suppressing truth, thereby in conflict with the common world and itself. "The Academe" functions as on the "refuges of truth" that are independent of, but inform the political (ibid., 17). Burdman (2018) thinks that this notion should be expanded in times where the factual truths of science – such as global warming – are put aside as mere matters of opinion on a continuous basis. To the extent that science has not detached itself from the world of appearances, and still depends on verifiable empirical facts, it produces factual truths that are relevant for the common world and politics. Therefore, science should play a role in building the frame for political action. Likewise,

climate science should play a role in building the frame that enables democratic climate change politics, by producing factual truths about the changing natural environment.

4.3.2 THE ROLE OF SCIENCE IN CLIMATE CHANGE POLITICS

When looking at the role of climate science in an Arendtian understanding, it becomes clear that sciences can play a crucial role in reconnecting men with nature and reinstating the common world between men. Philosophy of science played a crucial role in Arendt's understanding of the modern age and earth alienation. Her critique aims to show how certain moments in the history of science implied radical changes in the relation between man and nature. With this, she hoped to counter the instrumental approaches to both nature and politics (Yaqoob 2014). The relation between man and nature is central in Arendt's thinking and is twofold. On the one hand, man and nature are separated, by the artificially created world between them, while on the other, man and nature remain connected through biological necessities:

> The human artifice of the world separates human existence from all mere animal environment, but life itself is outside this artificial world, and through life man remains related to all other living organisms. (Arendt 1998, 2)

Simultaneously, however, the artificial world holds the potential to connect man to the Earth. The artefacts that hold up the common world provide for the stability that is needed for meaningful relations, actions and speech. Hence, the artificial world enables political action through which man is reconnected to the Earth (Burdman 2018).

Arendt aims to bring back the value of action and appearances to reinstate the common sense, which is the sense through which men with a common context can perceive the objects between them in a common way. This common sense has been lost in the modern age, where earth alienation and 'action into nature' have made the natural sciences hostile to common sense (Muilu 2019). According to Arendt (1998, 4), scientists have come to move in a space where "speech has lost its power" to mathematisation while it is through talking that man can make sense of experiences. Instead of experiencing meaningfulness, scientists engage in the subjection of patterns of nature to the models of the mind through experiments. The different approach to reality that this presumes implies that "[m]odern epistemology is ontology carried on by other means" (Villa 1996, 196). Science can only know that which it itself created. The increased use of technology also implies that a commonsensical

understanding of scientific theories is inferior to its technological applicability. This has led to a situation in which men can transform reality from a universal standpoint, without truly understanding it, due to our inability to think in terms that transcend our "sensuous, world-bound condition" (Burdman 2018, 488).

Climate change can be understood as an example of Arendt's 'acting into nature' with consequences beyond human control. If we want to deal with these consequences, the relation between man and nature should be taken seriously. Various authors advocate for reconnecting man and nature, in line with Arendt. Naustdalslid (2011) for example urges that the relationships between science, society and policy is revisited, so that it can be understood how climate change is integrated into society. Along these lines, Beck (2010) stresses that climate change shows how nature and society are increasingly intertwined – nature is increasingly given shape by human intervention. Goldman, Turner and Daly (2018, 8) consider climate change "a quintessential case" for showing that a strict separation of nature and humanity is problematic. Instead, humanity needs to be integrated back into its environment, to enable the formulation of real solutions.

Therefore, climate sciences are needed for the political to be able to respond to climate change. Moreover, by reinstating the relation between men and nature climate science can contribute to a common world that is observable to political actors through their common sense. This should not be done merely by expressing everything in tons of CO_2, as this would – again – reduce the intricacies of nature to the structures of the human mind. Rather, climate science should be understood in a broader sense in which it encompasses social as well as natural science. Following the tradition of critical political ecology climate change should be understood as practices of both knowledge and world creation (Swyngedouw 2011). According to Goldman, Turner and Daly (2018), climate sciences should connect climate change knowledge with its material implications and language. Hence, there is a simultaneous engagement with both epistemology and ontology. It does not only address questions about how climate change is known and measured, but also about how it is experienced, and reacted to. This resonates with the way in which Arendt describes how political action is a world-creating activity. However, essential for Arendt is that this activity contributes to a common world that can be observed with common sense. This implies that rather than speaking of a plurality of irreconcilable ontologies, an Arendtian form of climate politics would aim for the constitution of a common ontology, through the notions of judgment and enlarged mentality

as discussed in section 4.1. This is especially complicated in the context of a global problem, where agonisms are inevitable. Without the presumption of a possible common world however, climate change politics would either become a form of unsolvable and anti-political perspectivism, or a form of agonistic politics that tries to fight a non-existing outside enemy.

Climate scientists have an important role to play here. Since they are the ones working with the data and defining the measures that define and characterise climate change, they shape climate change knowledge and thereby the political debate. To avoid a knowledge-action paradox as described by Naustdalslid (2011), a balance needs to be struck between generalising models that employ a large temporal or geographical outlook on the one hand, and localised interactions with climate change and climate science on the other. If we engage critically with these models and technologies in the way that Arendt did with science and technology, we understand the fundamental impacts that they may have on our common world. With help of Arendt, we are able "to define the planet earth as an environment for common sense which affords and conditions not only our biological survival but also our life together" (Muilu 2019, 5).

Concludingly, the way in which Arendt contributes an essential role to science for countering alienation is applicable to climate sciences and climate change politics. Given the complexity of the object of research a 'plurality' of climate scientists that engages critically with the relation between man and nature is able to contribute to the creation of knowledge about the common world. Climate sciences in this sense are connected with its material implications and language. Arendt's notions of judgment and enlarged mentality encourage the reconciliation of different conceptions into a common world, or a "common horizon" in the words of Latour (see section 2.1.2).

4.4   INCORPORATING ARENDTIAN CLIMATE CHANGE POLITICS IN EXISTING

POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

Given the scope of the problem of climate change, it will not suffice to consider it merely through local and small-scale versions of participatory democracy. As Giddens (2008, 7) emphasises, states need to set the frameworks in which various sustainable initiatives on different levels of society are accommodated. Arendt does not engage with the figure of the state much in her theory due to her stance that a government claiming sovereignty over its people hampers plurality and thereby inhibits freedom. She does not, however, reject an institutional embodiment of authority (Kateb 1984, 125). Due to her conception of politics as an activity, Arendt rules out a whole range of routines, associations and arrangements that are usually considered aspects of politics. This does not mean however, that she completely denies them (Dikeç 2013). Nor does it mean that political action can only be a radical form of spontaneous action. On the contrary, Arendt emphasises institutions as enablers of equality in the political. The question is thus how the political arrangements and institutions allow for the activity of politics to take place through the formation and exchange of opinions. Modern liberal democracy did not succeed in doing this in a way that true political action could be fostered (Hargis 2016). Kalyvas (2008, 275) argues that, although Arendt failed to develop an alternative form of government, her theory should be read as an attempt to embed 'the extraordinary' into established forms of politics, to enrich the latter with the possibility for political action on various levels.

In light of a global problem such as climate change, this does not imply a unitary world state. For Arendt, this would be only reinforcing world alienation by rejecting any differentiation between groups. However, being in the world implies being in only a part of it, as this allows for the formation of individual identity. Not, as with radically agonistic thinkers, as a constant struggle in which the other is constitutive for one's identity, but because of the need to be perceived by others, because of the political need for plurality. For Arendt, "[t]he world as a whole is not a world for any person" (Kateb 1984, 159). This means that we should not strive for some cosmopolitan world order, such as Beck (2010) and Giddens (2008) envision. Nor should liberal democracy be imposed as the ideal form of government world-wide as also emphasised by Mouffe (2005). Following Mouffe, the plurality in the world should not be tempered, but fostered, also in global politics.

Therefore, to counter the tendency of economisation of the climate change debate, Arendt's account of small-scale politics should be seen as the spirit of civic engagement that can take place on all levels of society. Rather than taking Arendt's account as a blueprint for a utopian society in which completely new institutions need to be established, it can be used to explore the possibilities of democratisation within existing institutions. As Dean (2017, 267) proposes, the institutions of liberal democracy offer a possible starting point for countering the de-democratisation that is brought about by neoliberalism, when taking the "positive achievements of the institutions of public service and public office" of liberal democracies as a starting point. These institutions can then be supplemented by the forms of civic engagement that take place on various levels of society and at various levels of governance to instil them with an Arendtian political potential (Kateb 1984; Tally 1999). This implies, as Tally (ibid.) emphasises, a widening of the term 'democratic' to the way of negotiating about how and by whom power is exercised. This is not merely reactionary, but bears the possibility of affecting governance structures – there is political agency on different levels of society, also in terms of geography.

Arendt has difficulties to formally locate these various forms of agency and civil disobedience. Since incorporating them in the constitution would destroy their extraordinary character, she situates them alongside 'normal politics'. This way, the constitution is protected from law-making that goes against the constitution and can be challenged and subsequently modified by means of spontaneous political action (Kalyvas 2008, 285–86). As Kalyvas stresses, a distinction should be made between interest groups and civil movements. Where the former act out of self-interest, the latter make sure that their demands, even when based on the concerns of a minority, are formulated in general terms so they can be debated politically. Only with the right amount of distance to sentiments and particular interests can civil movements be part of the political, where a plurality of actors, institutions and organisations come together to discuss the common world and its future.

Although Arendt did not advocate a form of representational politics, the scale of the questions around climate change is too large for purely local and direct democracy. Taking this into account, Wellmer's (1999) interpretation of Arendt's theory in terms of a network is useful. In this interpretation, the institutional context exists of various institutions and organisations that are autonomous, yet connected to one another. Within each of these institutions, political action between equal and free participants takes place. Through the

complex totality of connected bodies, these localised forms of political action are part of the whole. How this would look in reality, in different parts of the world and in different parts of the political, is a matter of empirics that engage with local communities and their relation with climate change knowledge, language and consequences. A more democratic climate change politics in the West implies a proper engagement with the numerous communities all around the world.

With this in mind we can go back to the World Economic Forum which, although it is not an official democratic institution, brought together a variety of political leaders, activists and even activist economic leaders. Given the predominantly economic character of the interests at the forum, Arendt's strict separation between the social and the political would render the forum as such not of political value in a strictly Arendtian understanding. Parts of the forum however, do bear the potential for political action: a plurality of actors to comes together and discusses the status and future of the world from a rather disinterested position. Similarly, the efforts around sustainable development – such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals – are perhaps not automatically 'truly political' in an Arendtian sense to the extent that they are tied up with economic interests. But they still encompass an opportunity for political action. As long as these efforts are not applaudingly adopted for economic purposes only but engaged with critically by a wide variety of political actors they bring about a sphere in which concerns about the world and climate change can be discussed.

5   CONCLUDING REMARKS

With the twenty-first century being considered the "the era of climate change" (Parr 2014, 3) and increasing scientific consensus about the human influence on the phenomenon (IPCC 2018) humanity faces crucial questions about the way forward. In chapter 2 I argued that many of the responses to climate change on different levels of society fall within or stem from a neoliberal market rationale. The latter has come to neutralise democracy through its undermining of equality, citizenship and public deliberation while it dominates the debate about climate change through its various solutions that at best slow down but at worst intensify the problems of climate change. Parallels were drawn with Arendt's diagnosis of the modern age, the corresponding earth and world alienation, and the way in which liberalism promotes a private notion of freedom as well as a politics on the basis of private interests.

To consider how Arendt's answer to this could still be relevant, her theory of political action was elaborated in chapter 3. Arendt strictly separates between labour, work, and action, of which only the latter is a public activity that takes place in the political. The political is an artificial sphere that fosters men's plurality, equality, community and ability. To act means to speak, to take initiative and to do the unpredictable. It is an existential human activity that defines the person who takes the action and stems from a love of the world. This love of the world is what motivates human beings to take the risk of leaving the private sphere and entering the political.

Chapter 4 aimed to explore the ways in which Arendt's theory is applicable to the debate about climate change politics. In light of climate change and the questions of existence and justice that arise from this, two main points of critique of Arendt's theory that could problematise an Arendtian conception of climate change politics were discussed. The first point, the lack of a purpose and moral delimitation of the political, was countered through an introduction of Arendt's notion of judgment and enlarged mentality. This is the mental capacity to judge, which enables political actors to take the perspective of others and represent these others in the political, so that weighed conclusions can be reached.

The second point of critique results from Arendt's strict separation between the social and the political which makes it unclear who exactly is comprised in the political and how socio-economic questions enter the political. This is of crucial importance when climate change

enters the political, since the problem is of a global nature and affects different people in different ways. The more radically agonistic conception of the political by Mouffe was explored as a possible enrichment. But due to the emphasis on a constitutive outside of the political and the prominent place of passions and necessity, such a conception was considered less fitting than Arendt's more demanding account of politics. Climate change is a problem that considers the planet in its entirety, so considerations of politics in terms of *we* and *they* are emphasising the divergence between men too much. Instead of irreconcilable identities, climate change politics should strive for the consideration of a common world in which the problem can be considered. In such a conception of politics, socio-economic matters enter the political indirectly – they motivate the political but can only enter the political debate as long as they are discussed and judged from disinterested positions. Arendt's notion of solidarity was introduced to further explain how distant others enter the political. This notion does not derive from sentiment which would reduce these distant others to unpolitical, will-less masses. Rather, it comprises both the fortunate and the unfortunate in equal ways and enables both to act in concert and thereby exert political power.

Besides the position of morality and socio-economic matters, the role of climate science was considered. Arendt's emphasis on a common world implies an important role in the political for climate science in a broad sense. Given the complexity of climate change as well as the different perceptions of it, scientists from different disciplines should engage critically with the relation between man and nature to contribute to the creation of knowledge and common worlds. Through the notions of judgment and enlarged mentality different perceptions can be reconciled in into a common world that is at the centre of climate change politics.

Given that Arendt's theory is radical and implies a stark divergence from existing institutions, the last section of chapter 4 explored the how existing political structures could be 'infused' with Arendt's conception of political action. To this end, the existing institutions of liberal democracy would not be abolished but serve as a starting point for forms of civic engagement that takes place in different ways and on different levels of society. This implies a constant dialogue and negotiations about the ways in which power is exercised on the basis of a love of the common world and a certain degree of disinterestedness. The political is made up of a plurality of actors, institutions, organisations and civil movements that are motivated but not steered by considerations from the social. Within the political there are different

networks of different organisations and actors that are simultaneously autonomous and connected with one another. These networks make up the web of human relations in which political action takes place.

To conclude this investigation into how Arendt's political theory can inform current climate change politics in the West, such that the proposed solutions do not stem from neoliberal reasoning but address the roots of climate change and foster democracy, I would like to stress the following. Arendt's analysis of the relation between man and nature and the social and political are as radical and thorough as they are demanding. For climate change politics in the West it implies the demand for institutions that foster political action as well as active engagement with the numerous political communities around the world. The world economy must be considered in this too. To the extent that climate change concerns the levels of economic parameters such as production and consumption, climate change can be addressed through economic measures. However, I have aimed to show that Arendt's analysis suggests that reducing all questions around climate change to economic considerations neglects an important dimension of human life. Therefore, responses to climate change that originate within or involve the economy, should always be critically assessed and placed within a larger context. This will not yield any absolute 'measure' of climate change that can direct the political but a plurality of experiences, knowledge and directions of change. This plurality reflects the complexity of the human world and its connections to the changing natural environment which should be acknowledged rather than hidden behind neoliberal 'solutions'.

This is not an easy fix. It is unclear where democratic climate change politics will bring the world. Because of the risky nature of political action, it is unpredictable what the effects of such a conception of politics on the climate will be. Love of the world is at the core of the political, but specific ends or objectives cannot be defined. This is a risk that reemphasises the humbleness that is necessary in light of a problem with the magnitude of climate change. In the intricacy of a web of relations, agents are non-sovereign and action is always open-ended. This humbleness could also drive further research into the complex human and natural world, to the ways in which political potential can be practically fostered, while critically engaging with the models and theories that various sciences bring into the political.

This implies that there are no guarantees that the problems around climate change will be 'solved'. 'Solving it' would in fact imply that there is a straightforward solution to a

multifaceted and complex problem. Such a response is perfectly in line with the human pride and inclination to 'act into nature' that has arguably played a role in creating the problem in the first place. Therefore, we should situate ourselves in the environment that we call our home and ensure the durability of this home as well as the existence of humanity. Or, as Latour (2018, 13) puts it:

> Each of us thus faces the following question: Do we continue to nourish dreams of escaping, or do we start seeking a territory that we and our children can inhabit? Either we deny the existence of the problem, or else *we look for a place to land*. From now on, this is what divides us all, much more than our positions on the right or the left side of the political spectrum.

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