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FACULTY OF HUMANITIES
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EUROPE 2020: TOWARDS A NEOLIBERAL GOVERNMENTALITY?

Neoliberal Dreams and Diffractive Awakenings

Georgios Eleftherios Vordos

Essay/Thesis:	30 hp
Program and/or course:	Master's Thesis in Gendering Practices
Level:	Second Cycle
Semester/year:	St/At/2020
Supervisor:	Juan Velásquez-Atehortúa
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Abstract

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Keyword:	Europe 2020, neoliberalism, biopolitics, diffraction, critical frame analysis, governmentality, European Union, inclusive growth

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Purpose: The purpose of this thesis is to examine whether the Europe 2020 strategy is of neoliberal nature and aims to adjust every aspect of life to be market-conforming. Furthermore, it examines if the target for an inclusive growth was achieved and who ended up benefitted from it.

Theory: Michel Foucault’s theory of Biopolitics is the main theory informing this thesis. Karen Barad’s Agential Realism is applied additionally to strengthen the argument for Foucault’s concept of neoliberal governmentality and biopolitics being present in Europe 2020.

Method: This thesis makes use of Critical Frame Analysis to prove the neoliberal framing of the issues addressed by Europe 2020. Diffraction, the second method, provides more context and insight to the findings of the first method.

Result: The analysis does make the case for the neoliberal nature of Europe 2020 and the adjustment of other life aspects in a manner that serves the market’s rationality. It also notes the existence of other issues, such as matter and context, that have played a role in the strategy not achieving its target of an inclusive growth.

Foreword

How does the European Union shape its vision and what are the values behind it? As a person considering themselves profoundly European, as a child of a German mother and a Greek father, the European Union has always fascinated me. In my Bachelor's I was able to examine its legal structure, its principles and all the benefits it has provided to the citizens of its member states. However, since joining the Gendering Practices Master's Programme at the University of Gothenburg, I have grown more critical of claims made towards the advantages that policies and other actions create for the people. I have learned to pay closer attention to who is benefitting from them, is it everyone or are certain societal groups left out? For this reason, choosing the study of Europe 2020, the strategy shaping all of the EU's policies after 2010 was of particular interest to me. Not only because a review of its outcomes could be provided, having reached the year 2020, but also because of its claims for an inclusive growth. Specifically, I wanted to examine if its neoliberal nature did have an effect on the way it perceived inclusion and shaped its policies to achieve this goal. I also wanted to go beyond politics and research whether matter shapes policy. Do technical innovations and pandemics have an effect on policymaking? And what about issues of context? My willingness to help the efforts of creating more equal, inclusive societies has motivated me throughout the writing of the thesis. Even though it has been stressful, this has been an insightful and constructive time.

At this point, I consider it important to thank my supervisor, Juan Velásquez-Atehortúa for his help, immense understanding, and positive attitude, as well as my examiners, Elin Lundsten and Selin Çağatay for their feedback and valuable comments. I would also like to extend my gratitude to the rest of the class for their feedback and the fun time, not only during the seminars of this course, but during the entirety of these two years.

Georgios Eleftherios Vordos,

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1. Introduction

In March 2000, the Lisbon Strategy (also referred to as the Lisbon Agenda) was adopted at the Portuguese capital as the new over-arching strategy setting the priorities of the EU (European Union) for the coming decade. Economic reforms, employment and social cohesion were touted as important parts of the equation that would evolve the European economy into a knowledge-based market (European Council, 2000). Globalisation, the growing importance of knowledge production and possession as advantage-defining characteristics and the ongoing accession processes of new states, were matters pressing for a rapid adaptation of the peripheral economy, so as to strengthen its competitiveness to other major players in the global market. Describing the past decade as a period market by multiple achievements of fiscal nature (2000), achievements supported by a well-educated workforce and social protection systems, the Strategy saw such a transformation as possible. Nonetheless, the overall low employment rate- especially that of women- and the regional grade variations of women's unemployment, together with the unripe telecommunication and services sector were seen as serious problems. Addressing them would not just improve the position of the EU within the global market but would also improve employability by tackling the widening skill gap created by the current maladaptation to the global changes. The Lisbon Agenda recognised the importance of the private sector and public-private partnerships, for it was private initiatives that could ensure the achievement of its vision.

It is made clear that the complementarity of an adapting economy and a social security system was the core idea on which the Strategy saw its potential stemming from. The goal for the next decade of becoming "the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion" (2000) required an overall strategy towards:

> "1. preparing the transition to a knowledge-based economy and society by better policies for the information society and R&D, as well as by stepping up the process of structural reform for competitiveness and innovation and by completing the internal market.
>
> 2. modernising the European social model, investing in people and combating social exclusion.
>
> 3. sustaining the healthy economic outlook and favourable growth prospects by applying an appropriate macro-economic policy mix." (2000).

Attention to regional cohesion, a higher employment rate and a better accounting of a society that increasingly valued the personal choices of men and women, all combined with sensible macroeconomic fiscal policies and a new method of open coordination made a growth rate of 3% seem feasible. To enable the transition to this new kind of digital, knowledge-driven economy, from which citizens and the environment could benefit from, big changes were required. Communication infrastructure had to be built, exclusion resulting from lack of access to knowledge, its production and utilisation, along with general illiteracy ought to be pre-emptively addressed, as should issues of people living with disabilities. Alas, necessary conditions had to be fulfilled in order to inspire this change: it was suggested that e-commerce-related regulations be passed and adapted, regulatory frameworks on the liberalisation of the telecommunication sector be concluded quickly in order facilitate greater competition, with the European Investment Bank assisting to the creation of trailblazing networks. These conditions would in turn allow for a better flow of communication between knowledge-producing entities and could attract private research & development (R&D) investment, when coupled with legal and economic measures (e.g. tax incentives, cooperation with academic institutions). To foster this business-friendly climate, attention was issued to member states on their relevant regulatory practices, advising them to enter in such discussions together with businesses (2000), given the co-dependency of various factors for the increase of R&D activity.

On structural proposals, the liberalisation of utility and transport services was to be sped up, much like the development of competition rules in the internal market for the creation of an even playing field. Public administration was advised to adapt their mode of operations to avoid the creation of hurdles for the private sector, with the former's support to individual companies and sectors to be shifted towards realising the above-mentioned goals. Lifting barriers on access to investment, such as the one for pension funds, was another change to be accommodated. To fulfil their duty of transitioning to a modern economy, economic measures ought to ease the communication among the various actors, alleviate lowly-skilled individuals through a decrease in taxation, which would further be reinforced by training opportunities and monetary incentives (e.g. taxation, benefits). Moreover, public expenditure should steer the population towards capital accumulation.

As for social inclusion, the list of proposed initiatives started by deeming the number of EU citizens living beneath the poverty line as "unacceptable" (2000) . The Agenda saw economic growth and an uptick in employment as remedies to poorness. Yet, all of them had to be implemented in a way that would serve the vision of a knowledge-driven society. According to the Lisbon Agenda, “the best safeguard against social exclusion is a job” (2000). Staying faithful to that vision, a new open method approach entailing benchmarks and timeframes, adoption of indicators, comparisons to other non-EU countries followed by monitoring and reviewing of the achieved results would help to spot weaknesses, shortcomings, and timely adaptations. NGOs, social partners and companies were to be amongst the bodies involved in the new approach.

In spite of all the efforts, the Lisbon Agenda can be considered as unsuccessful, or at least partially successful depending on your focus. In its evaluation after the passing of the 10-year-mark, the European Commission (EC) painted an interesting picture. In “what ultimately counts” (European Commission, 2010a, p.2), the effects on growth and jobs, the target in employment, GDP increase and R&D spending were not reached. 18 million jobs were created and deficiencies in flexibility were managed by reducing bureaucracy, but unemployment increased and poverty still persisted, especially plaguing a number of certain societal groups (2010a, p.3). Even though the EC seemed pleased with the outcome, it recognized that communication between the involved parties could have been better, as should have been the benchmarking process. It was admitted that not enough was done to benchmark the successes against that of big trading partners, a mishap that relativized the achievements (2010a, p.7). Researchers have also been critical of the Lisbon Agenda. Some saw the weak links in the vertex of knowledge (education, innovation, education) as the shortcomings to be blamed (Hervás Soriano and Mulatero, 2010), others “the ambiguities and contested dimensions of the competitiveness project” (Borrás and Radaelli, 2011, p.480) resulting from the contexts (e.g. societal, economical) in which the end goal is interpreted by the involved parties. In the following chapters I will try to make the case of how some of these criticisms have been addressed, while others remain in place and keep challenging the EU to this day.

The prime focus of this thesis is to find out whether Europe 2020, its provisions and its questionable outcomes can be explained by the main theory on which I have based my thesis around and if it has indeed managed to provide all the benefits it had promised to the people living within the EU borders. Firstly, one of the two theories, Foucault’s Biopolitics, along with the method used, will provide a view on the current neoliberal system. Its author believes that the neoliberal capitalist system has installed a distinct rationality, which guides the actions not just of the society, but the life of every individual too. Every single aspect of life must be fine-tuned in accordance to the needs of the market, thus the term biopolitics. The successor of the Lisbon Agenda, Europe 2020, with its main focus on boosting innovation by adjusting every aspect of life it can reach, seemed to follow the pattern that Foucault had identified. Neoliberal governmentality inescapably establishes biopolitics. Critical Frame Analysis (CFA) is the method with which the new strategy and the Flagship Initiatives that detailed the ways in which the Agenda sought to bring about change will be examined. After reaching a preliminary conclusion, Barad's theory of Agential Realism will be applied to contribute to the narrative established throughout the thesis. It shall provide examples proving how the points made in the previous chapters actually validate the objective truth. By providing a novel definition of the latter, I see myself confident enough to attempt two things: to start with, create a linkage between theory and matter, showing that matter does not simply exist in a unilateral relationship with theory; matter also influences the researcher and their theories. Moreover, I will use this theory to start a deeper discussion to strike a balance between my pessimism and cynicism in remission. Agential realism will create a truth that is of objective nature in the context in which it gets produced. It will allow me to exercise critique on the wrongs of the established system without necessarily entering naïve discussions about the moral superiority of other political systems. Yet, at the same time I can keep the cynic in me in check, as I would probably classify myself in the majority of people that "view cynicism as an intellectually superior attitude and … view ambition as youthful naiveté", as bluntly put by Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (2019).

I hope that this thesis will be as interesting for you to read, as it was interesting and -most importantly- eye-opening for me to write. I hope it will challenge your established views, spark your interest for political issues of and within the EU and inspire you to start your own research, whether formal or informal, so that you can provide your valuable contribution to the intersectional field of gender studies and the project of the European Union, which still has the potential for so much good.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction

Two theories, one from governmental studies and one originating from feminist studies, will be used to elucidate and develop the narrative unfolded in the analytical part of this thesis. Foucault's Biopolitics is considered a staple for researchers within social sciences that explore the art of government, an exploration to which this research will be a part of. However, its feminist perspective will be sought to be enhanced with Karen Barad's Agential Realism and Diffraction.

2.2 Neoliberal Governmentality and Biopolitics

Michel Foucault's Biopolitics is the primary theoretical underpinning of this thesis. In a series of lectures at the Collège de France in 1979 to 1979 (Foucault, 2012), he expands upon his idea of Biopolitics, a theory already presented in *The History of Sexuality Vol. I* (Foucault, 2011). By showcasing the transition from governmental practices that served a system sustaining state interests whose rationality was founded upon a mercantilist economy, the police state and the creation of balances between the multiple states to the liberal one, he explores the art of government. The latter is understood as the "study of the rationalization of the governmental practice in the exercise of political sovereignty" (2012, p.16). By tracing the rise of political economy in the 18th century, a means of restricting the governing from the inside -with law being the external restriction until the 17th century-, Foucault indicates to a change in the nature of the governing practice. This change brings with it a truth regime to which governmental practices abide, a regime aiming to adjust such practices to the nature of things, thus creating their foundation on the distinction between truth and lie, alas forming a knowledge-power mechanism. Foucault proceeds to indicate the market as the place this truth is dwelling on, resulting in its transformation from being a place regulated by law, to a locus determining the creation and adjustment of laws, or even the lack thereof (2012, p.46). Governing is thus preoccupied with staying true to the market's nature, the truth. The governmental reason's scope becomes then not intervention, but rather an involvement in the process of balancing the various interests manifesting themselves within the market, such as the individual and the social, making the calculation of utility and the truth of the market the "fundamental characteristics of the liberal art of government" (2012, p.63).

This new art of governing, based on the respect and embracement of the market's rationality, is subsequently promoting a sense of freedom, yet not in the commonly understood sense. With competition being recognized as the road towards an ever-increasing amelioration of the economy, its scale becomes global, as the success on a national level is dependent on the success of other units within the global system. More players equal a bigger field where competition can flourish and grow. As Foucault notes (2012, p.76), the success of the liberal art of government relies on the freedom provided to the actors present in the market, which in turn necessitates the provision of a certain amount of it, inevitably rendering this art as the producer, dispenser and regulator of it. It becomes the agent determining the proper amount needed to ensure a balance between freedom and safety. Safety is important as it allows the actors representing the interests to exercise their freedom, but at the same time the perception of a persistent threat to this freedom is created (monopolies, protectionism, pandemics etc.). Ergo, mechanisms for its propagation, as well as its limitation are put in place when deemed necessary. By drawing a comparison between three different cases of the implementation of the neoliberal art of government, Foucault aims to point towards the fact, that no matter the particularities that brought it to life, the market, in its neoliberal understanding serves as the legalizing base for the state and its exertion of power. In the case of Germany, the market and the economy served as the platform upon which the state could be built and have its existence defined, with the former providing its legitimization and propagation in return. Strict anti-monopoly, competition-protecting legislation found in the German law is an example of "frameworks" built by this governmentality, which he describes as the preservation of the market's conditions for existence (2012, p.140). Formalizing legal interference, in the spirit of this non-intervening art of governance, is of essence. Another example given is the economic growth-driven social policy that ensures the population's well-being by providing the ability to individuals to carry the cost of looking after themselves, yet at the same time avoids interference in the market's mechanisms. What these examples show is that state intervention is required not in the functioning of the market, but to prevent forces from messing with its natural order. Managing the society becomes of significance for the success of competition's ability to establish order and well-being. Consequently, the human is introduced as homo œconomicus, a being that is able to make rational choices based on its benefit, and an enterprise-like view of society comes forth (2012, p.147). Governmentality, "the way the conduct of men is conducted" (2012, p.174), simply aims to make society function like an enterprise. A different form of neoliberalism which established itself in the United States of America, anarcho-neoliberalism, as well as the implementation of neoliberal governmentality in France and the United Kingdom, are all characterized -although with varying ways of social policy implementation- by this specific acceptance of truth.

In exploring American neoliberalism, Foucault makes the case for no aspect of society and life being untouched by the neoliberal, economic thinking, as evidenced by human capital, an approach to work as an activity and not as a process, the becoming of the human in an enterprise. With work being considered as capital given its turnout in income for the individual, homo œconomicus manages themselves as a business (2012, p.210). The individual keeps thinking about what changes will lead to a greater accumulation of income, on how the capital, the person itself, can be constructed in a more profitable way. The question arising now is how it is constituted more profitable. The question is easily answered by looking at the innate and acquired elements of which this person is made of. A multitude of factors one could argue, amongst other genetic ones, which lead towards profitability and efficiency are the health of the overall population, issues of public hygiene, family conditions, the freedom of movement and even environmental issues. Variables such as land, working personnel and their labor time are not enough to fully comprehend and foster economic growth: constant innovation in terms of productivity and technology, thus investment in human capital, is required (2012, p.216). On the same note, governmentality is similarly influencing lawmaking and judicial processes. Decoding the individual and social behavior is again done in an enterprise-like understanding of the human, because should a legal understanding of the human be pursued, unfortunate effects for the nature of the market would be produced. Consequently, with the change in the definition of a crime - an action perpetrated by the individual that puts it at risk of punishment- the homo œconomicus is expected to adjust their behavior, measure the outcome of their actions according to their interest and then handle or refrain from handling accordingly. Self-government is a process they are expected to submit themselves to. Their success is conditional to their interests and to their wisdom to deliberate about the proper choices required to achieve it, in short, to their own rational thinking. "Homo œconomicus is the interface of government and the individual", they are what makes the population governmentalizable (2012, p.233). Respect towards the model of supply and demand, which Foucault seems to be considering as having developed into an axiom, and entrenching a business-like approach to behavior and relationships, aids in sustaining the underpinning of one's own prosperity and their society's road to success. In addition, the homo œconomicus is unable to grasp the wholeness in which they are situated in, according to the Invisible Hand theory. It is unperceivable, its intricacy unable to be understood in its entirety. For that reason, Foucault argues, the selfishness displayed in their choices is to be seemingly justified (2012, p. 255) given that everything seems to be making a sense, though in an obscure way. So, it is deductible that the government must refrain from any kind of intervention in the economy and admit its ignorance of the wholeness. However, the question of what the government shall now govern is raised. If everything functions, or rather is an enterprise, what is there to intervene into?

That is none other than the civil society, the solution to governing individuals both as economic and as legal subjects. Within it, its members form connections that are not merely economic, nor just legal. It is also a place where the exercising of power in its various forms has always been a part of. Having made this point, Foucault concludes: “This seems to me, characterizes liberal rationality: how to model government, the art of government how to [found] the principle of rationalization of the art of government on the rational behavior of those who are governed” (2012, p.287).

Finally, biopolitics could be then described as the art of governing that takes hold over people’s life to ensure the achievement of the government’s goals. Neoliberal governmentality considers this control essential in order to be able to sustain an untouched, free market and in turn sustain the government itself. In spite of some differences on neoliberalism expressed by the German ordoliberal and the North American anarcholiberal schools of thought, it would be safe to say that modern-day neoliberalism present in United States and the European Union is characterized by four aspects that Brown (2003) identifies: a) the subjection of every aspect of life to an economic rationality, b) the market is the foundation the state is based on and by which it gets legitimized, resulting in efforts of the latter to sustain the intervention-free functioning of the former, c) “neoliberal subjects are controlled through their freedom” (2003, p.43), as individuals are called to make rational choices and are held responsible for their success or problems they are facing, d) a profitability approach to social policy which reinforces the existence of a place of inequality where everyone must fend for themselves. One could argue that the state is seen as something inherently flawed that must be tamed so as to not upset the natural order of the market, resulting in society-wide adjustments for this maintenance of order.

2.3 Agential Realism

Karen Barad's Agential Realism and its entailing diffractive methodology will be the supplementing theory to Foucault's biopolitics and governmentality. Inspired by natural phenomena, their observation and their study in the field of quantum physics, Barad highlights the importance of materiality in scientific practices and suggests onto-epistemology as an approach that better allows the achievement of objectivity in the conducting of scientific research. Agential Realism, the theoretical framework she develops in *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Barad, 2007) will be utilized with the intention of taking into account the material changes and technological advancements that remain unaddressed in Foucault's theory (such as Artificial Intelligence and the increasing robotification), which Europe 2020 aims to address, and their effects on the implementation of the strategy.

For Barad, theorizing is not a practice unrelated to the researcher's material world, "theorizing, like experimenting, is a material practice" (2007, p.55). She denounces representationalism for being unable to capture the dynamics that birth processes and our interaction - or rather intra-action- with the world, as well as post-constructivists, who, in spite of recognizing the importance of matter, grant it a passivity resulting from a lack of its further examination. By presenting the phenomenon of diffraction, the way in which waves interact with each other after hitting an object, Barad showcases the effects of differences created by the entangled reality, a place where ontology and epistemology do not exist separately from each other (2007, p.73). A change to an apparatus with which the phenomenon of diffraction is examined, turns the table on existing beliefs on particle and wave behavior, as it shows that under certain circumstances, both can display a behavior that until then had not been considered a part of their ontology. This change to the apparatus brings to light a different nature of the studied objects that had this far been unknown and thought of as impossible for them to have. Simultaneously, reflexivity's reliance on representationalism becomes evident, as the researcher just states the possibility of their presence's influence on the results. Barad maintains that with Agential Realism, the researcher is instead able to explore the effects of their participation in the researching process and the knowledge resulting out of it. When using such a methodology, one becomes attentive to fine details as they acknowledge that "…practices of knowing are specific material engagements that participate in (re)configuring the world" (2007, p.91).

This realization leads Barad to propose a new definition of the term phenomenon, stemming from the observations made when using a specific set of arrangements and conditions (2007, p.119), implying that a change in the apparatus, of the researcher and/or the conditions in which the experiment is conducted, can produce different results and lead to different observations. This allows for objectivity to be claimed, as in this new understanding, the lack of distinction between object and instrument indicates that measuring practices are themselves actively participating in the understanding and the display of a phenomenon (2007, p.121). Thus, Barad terms a phenomenon as "a specific intra-action of an "object" and the "measuring agencies" where intra-action is coined in recognition of the indeterminacy and ontological inseparability (2007, p.128).

Agential Realism, that she describes as a "posthumanist performative approach" (2007, p.135), which, as observed in the diffraction experiment, supports that "the relationship of the cultural and the natural is a relation of "exteriority within". This is not a static relationality but a doing – the enactment of boundaries- that always entails constitutive exclusion and therefore requisite questions of accountability" (2007, p.135). In phenomena, "the ontological inseparability/entanglement of interacting "agencies" (2007, p.139), boundaries and properties become fixed, determinate through specific intra-actions with apparatuses constituting "boundary-drawing practices- specific material (re)configurations of the world- which come to matter" (Barad, 2007, p.140) that are not frozen in time and anything but static themselves. It becomes easy to deduce, that matter has agency, given its active role in the reshaping of the world.

According to Agential Realism, knowing is a continuous performance of the reality we live in, everything is produced and subject to changes by intra-activity. Bodies, boundaries, apparatuses, spatiality, temporality, causality are all entangled, and in this entanglement, objectivity becomes possible in a specific arrangement in which the phenomenon is manifesting, given the acknowledgement of onto-epistemological inseparability. Objectivity is then defined as "…being accountable for marks on bodies, that is, specific materializations in their differential mattering" (2007, p.178). Barad then makes the case of onto-epistemology, the inseparability of being and knowing, the inevitable intra-activity of the two in this entangled world we live in.

3. Methods of Analysis

Critical Frame Analysis, along with a diffractive lens, will be the methods with which this essay will examine the Europe 2020 strategy and the Flagship Initiatives set in place to advance its goals. Diffraction, the second method used along with Critical Frame Analysis aims to not only provide a solution to the shortcomings of the former, but also to suggest a different interpretation of the results produced by Critical Frame Analysis. Critical in its inception, coupled with a feminist perspective, the thesis stays true to social justice, as are feminist policy analyses, whose goals is to foster a "mutually enriching dialogue that uncovers theoretical and methodological blind spots" according to Paterson and Scala (2017, p.484) .

3.1 Critical Frame Analysis

Critical Frame Analysis will be the first method with which this essay will examine the Europe 2020 strategy and the policy texts related to it laying down in more detail the proposed actions. Specifically, Critical Frame Analysis, as developed by Verloo and Lombardo (Verloo and Lombardo, 2007) is an evolution on the already-existing Policy Frame Analysis method, as presented by Kathrin Braun (Braun, 2017). Specifically aimed towards the analysis of issues from a critical perspective that is sensitive to the diversity of thought, groups, approaches, contexts and the power structures resulting out of their interplay, it is described as "a methodology that allows the mapping of policy frames through an analysis of different dimensions of the latter" (Verloo and Lombardo, 2007, p.41). A policy frame, according to the two researchers, is "an interpretation scheme that structures the meaning of reality" whose origin lies not only in "discursive consciousness, to the extent that actors using them can explain discursively why they are using them and what they mean to them", but also in the "practical consciousness, to the extent that they originate in routines and rules that commonly are applied in certain contexts without an awareness that these are indeed rules or routines, and that they could have been different" (2007, p.32). This method recognises the multiple interpretations inherent in policy-making processes and seeks to explain the ways in which they shape the "two key dimensions of a policy frame: the "diagnosis" and the "prognosis" (Verloo and Lombardo, 2007, p.33), with "diagnosis" referring to the naming of the problem and "prognosis" to identifying the solutions for it respectively. The interpretation one can offer thanks to the identified intersections is another aspect presenting itself to me, the researcher, to which I have become attentive to. Furthermore, illuminating the innate intersectionality of the problem, further methodological aspects could come to surface, such as the agency of actors and the ways it is perceived and recognized, if at all, during the policymaking process, as well the issue of scale and dichotomy between public and private. Investigating these issues leads to the examination of roles in the dimensions Verloo and Lombardo identify (2007, p.34), specifically the "roles in prognosis" and "roles of diagnosis", a process that brings to light norms, expectations, actors' agency, intersectionality and scale, all entangled in the policy-making actions. It is suggested that the correlation between the diagnosis and the prognosis has to be put under the spotlight, as that is what frame policy analysis enables the research to achieve: explore the consistency between the identification of the issue and the solutions to it included within a policy text (2007, p.35).

However, this method is not without its limitations. While it makes it possible to notice latent inconsistencies, exclusions and various other aspects mentioned beforehand, it introduces a series of non-specifically defined notions. On top of that, the criteria used to examine the texts are indefinite, not absolute, meaning that they are susceptible to change both due to the researcher adjusting them according to the theoretical framework they use, as well as due to the changes policy texts undergo. The criteria are not "absolute points of reference fixed for once and for all" (2007, p.38). It is this open-endedness that allows the researcher to observe latent issues they had not considered as becoming apparent, or to even be present at the initial stages of planning their research. Yet, at the same time, the occurring multiplicity can lead to confusion because of a lack of a common understanding of notions included in the research.

Secondly, Critical Frame Analysis is touted as being a reflexive methodology, a trait stemming from its refusal to strictly adhere to normative definitions. The entailing deconstruction leaves room for one's own reflexivity towards the analytical categories, even though the comparisons it often makes to advance the depth of the research are not done in a reflexive-enough manner. In addition, the way in which the researcher's presuppositions and understanding of the used analytical categories come to life are left unexplored. As follows, the interpretation of the texts and other data is subjective and the possible effect on the results of the research cannot be ignored, with the remedy suggested to this issue being the consideration of the context in which the policy texts originated from. To the pitfalls of Critical Frame Analysis listed above, the main concern of the researcher seems to revolve around their reflexivity and positionality.

Karen Barad's diffractive approach can remediate these shortcomings and provide more aspects from which these texts can be viewed from.

3.2 Diffraction

As presented in the previous chapter, Diffraction is an essential part of Agential Realism. Inspired by the phenomenon of diffraction, where waves and particles have been observed to display behavior contrary to their ontology when changing the conditions under which they are observed, Barad proposes the study of the effects taking place after this alteration has occurred. Diffraction is about the difference, a difference that does not come to existence through comparisons. It is a difference lumbering within everything. What Barad means by that, is that a dichotomy between the researcher and the researched is not possible, yet, notwithstanding this inseparability, conditions for objectivity are made possible. The applied agential cuts and the agential separability in a phenomenon, the "resolution of the ontological indeterminacy" and the "agentially enacted material condition of exteriority-within-phenomena" respectively, redefine objectivity as a condition made possible in the specific arrangement in which the occurrence of the phenomenon is studied (Barad, 2007, p.175). Accountability -understood similarly to reflexivity- is manifesting, because according to Barad "that which is determinate (e.g. intelligible) is materially haunted by – infused with – that which is constitutively excluded (remains indeterminate, e.g., unintelligible)" (2014, p.178). In short, it is impossible to take oneself out of the relationship occurring between the subject and the object of the research, or a assume a distance or position that favors a matter-of-factly result and ignores the further entanglements created during the process. Alas, objectivity, the acknowledgements of entanglements and the focus on difference and its effects come to matter.

3.3 Research questions

Critical Frame Analysis will be the method with which the chosen policy texts and the retrieved data on its implementation will be analyzed. The research questions this thesis aims to answer are the following:

1. To what degree is this neoliberal approach to an inclusive growth of holistic essence, one that entails the adjustment of every aspect of life to its demands and is faithful to market rationality?
2. Is the Europe 2020 strategy considered to have achieved its goal of a smart, sustainable, and inclusive growth?

3. Is everyone reaping the fruits of a successful outcome and if not, why?

3.4 The structure of the thesis

At first, a glimpse of the historical context, of the way that lead to the adoption of the targets encompassed by Europe 2020, was given. A short reference to the predecessor to the current strategy, the Lisbon Agenda, has helped in assessing the hypothesis of the European Union being an institution that had already adhered to the rationality of the market. The question of whether this had already been the case and if so, to what degree, or if the turn to it might just have been a knee-jerk reaction to the worldwide financial crisis starting in 2008, has been partly answered and will be further elaborated on later.

At the following stage, Critical Frame Analysis will be applied on the policy texts. Amongst these will be the Europe 2020 strategy and the seven Flagship Initiatives it introduced. Accordingly, Critical Frame Analysis shall confirm the presence of characteristics ascribing to the neoliberal governmentality that Foucault has identified in his theory of Biopolitics. Statistical data provided not only by monitoring mechanisms, such as Eurostat, but also by the European Institute of Gender Equality (EIGE) are to serve a double end: an assessment of the success or failure of Europe 2020 that is reliant on quantitative data, along with the display of the silences present in the statistics.

After confirming the existence of the neoliberal nature of Europe 2020, a diffractive lens shall provide a different spin on the above analysis. Following Ulmer's steps (2016) in its application to this essay, a diffractive reading will be given after the policy analysis has been completed. The diffractive lens will make use of Agential Realism in order to provoke a more nuanced, yet not necessarily challenging viewing of the results. It shall act as a confirmation to homo œconomicus'es somewhat inescapable -at least perceived as such by the author- entrapment into a system that allows a freedom of thought that the latter thoroughly controls, leaving the human into a false sense of freedom and denying them any potential of an agency that is not consistent to its values. Given the attention of Agential Realism to matter and the agency of the latter which it recognizes, advancements in technology and recent events will add to the strength of the findings, by informing about changes that the intra-action of human and matter within this entangled world produces. This part of the thesis shall also serve as a passage from a somewhat dry, strict mode of research to a more colorful and creative one, a crossing reflecting the author's transition from a strict, rather restrictive and disciplinary field to a laxer, curiositycultivating one. In gender studies opponents' terms, the first part of the essay could be considered serious and respectful towards academic standards, whereas the second could be termed as an abstract babble thinly disguised with a veil of academic seriousness and objectivity. If so, then so be it. Diffraction will allow the mentions of other approaches in the analysis of Europe 2020, in the hope that they will inspire more research in such far-reaching policies. To be able to achieve this, a scalar approach will be applied. In her use of this approach, Roy (Roy, 2016) has been able to also prove that a scalar analysis has a causal relation to finding context- and translation-related issues, with issues such as these being found as well in policy texts, on both examined levels: the supranational and the national. The findings presented in this short scalar analysis shall be supported by an examination of the EU's competencies in Chapter 3 by looking at its foundations: the Treaty of the European Union (TEU) and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European (TFEU), which establish its values, aims, vision and its functioning.

With Foucault's work being eurocentric and exclusionary of parts of the continent -in this case understood as the dominant state powers in recent European history-, coupled with the early stages of the European project during the deliverance of his lectures, this thesis will attempt to provide a somewhat different, or maybe just supplementary picture to the whole phenomenon of the neoliberal nature of the European Union's strategy.

3.5 Limitations of the thesis

As fitting and complementary to each other the theories and methods used are, this thesis is not without its limitations. Taking into account these limitations maintains an openness to its conclusions, a characteristic required for a project that examines an overarching strategy encompassing many dimensions and perspectives. This openness is important not only for the research, with the help of which I will be able to be aware of my own positionality, but also for the examiners and its readers. Acknowledging this openness can inspire more detailed research and identify or hint towards blind spots I have been oblivious to.

The first limitation pertains to the use of Foucault's work as the foundation of the thesis. While Foucault's eurocentrism fits the theme of the thesis, the era in which he elaborated on his theory was a time during which the European Project was only just beginning. Even though Biopolitics is applied by neoliberal governmentality, the European Union has evolved into a very complex organization with a multitude of dimensions influencing its evolution and vice versa. To add to that, Biopolitics barely addresses matter and its influence on politics and thus, governance. Technological innovation has allowed the number of players entering the global market to increase and has thus provided challenges that had not been accounted for. Robotification, artificial intelligence (AI) and environmental challenges that birth other issues come hand in hand, a fact which Foucault is not addressing and thus, misses the intra-action between matter and meaning. However, due to time and length constraints, this thesis will only focus to a certain extent on these intra-actions, without considering the intra-actions between the EU and every kind of matter.

Last, but not least, the omission of an ethnographic mode of research, further widens the scope of the author's blind spots. The examination of statistical data produced by monitoring mechanisms and research papers, only provides part of the picture. The lack of personal accounts from individuals across various levels and from different contexts inevitably leads to a degree of essentialism, to which the European Union is anyway accountable for. Many perspectives, be it from lobbyists, activists, or specific societal groups will not be included and personal accountings will not be recited, as interviews were not being considered possible due to time constraints. Valuable feedback gathered through ethnography is not present in this thesis, thus weakening its potential in highlighting the production and reproduction of further systemic inequalities that may go beyond its scope.

3.6 Previous research

Despite a lengthy search, looking for articles, books or any other reference material dealing with Europe 2020 as a whole, instead of solely focusing on aspects of it, did not trigger any results. Even though scholars have been researching the neoliberal ways of the EU, the emphasis on Biopolitics has been relatively absent. The same applies for a study on the neoliberal and/or biopolitical aspects of Europe 2020 as a whole, or the previous Agenda for that matter. Nevertheless, studies on some of the thematic areas covered by the Agenda have been conducted, the results from which can be "glued" together to produce a bigger picture.

Having studied the new approach on the European industry, Wigger (Wigger, 2019) makes mention of competitiveness playing a central role in it. This competition is relentless, as internal devaluations are used to getting an advantage over others. In the fight that is won by reducing cost and prices and because of member's economies being unable to engage in their currencies' devaluation due to the European Monetary Union, cheapening labor and lowering corporate taxes are the solutions to attracting investment and enable competition on a global scale. As for education, Sørensen, Bloch and Young (2016), maintain that a shift to a high-quality, marketable knowledge with a high profit return has taken place. This shift has brought with it benchmarking of excellence, a process that is inherently based on comparison with other tertiary institutions in terms of impact, openness and attractiveness (2016, p.227), a change that could eventually disincentivize or weaken researchers' ability to examine less marketable topics. Education is set out to be improved so that employability gets boosted, but in the scenario presented by Europe 2020, one has to make the rational decision to choose the right, in-demand education, an approach that offers a sufficient amount of labor force, yet is not preoccupied with the actual amount of jobs on offer (Vero, 2012). And in regards to poverty alleviation, it is asserted that the inclusion of this target "is a product of timing, opportunism and political bargaining on all sides" (Copeland and Daly, 2012, p.283) making the argument for a target that is characterized by a lack of common understanding, inadequate preparedness and perhaps, in my interpretation, a degree of unwillingness to pursue it. Another article examining the same issue (Daly, 2012) highlights the importance given to smart and sustainable growth as facilitators for welfare systems, the absence of any mention to the mechanics behind this process and the lack of sufficient attention at seemingly perceiving poverty as a multifaceted phenomenon.

While all these articles examine aspects touched upon by Europe 2020, they do not identify the Biopolitics at work. Yet some of them seem to imply this without explicitly making any such statements. This is of course understandable, if only one particular domain is explored. However, they all reach the conclusion that the new Agenda framed the target it wished to reach and the problem the EU was experiencing in a neoliberal setting.

3.7 The Foundations of the Union

An overview of the foundations of the European Union is useful, if one wants to gain a better understanding of not just the strategy that is put under our lens, but also the limitations by which Europe 2020 is constrained. With reference to the EU foundations, I mean the Treaty of the European Union (TEU) and the Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), treaties that establish the supranational institution and detail the ways of its functioning. An extensive analysis of further legal documents setting out a more detailed picture of its structure and functioning would be warranted, yet not feasible in the context of this thesis.

In the TEU, Articles 2 and 3 set forth the characteristics of a democratic space, where human rights, equality, freedom, dignity, and justice shall be promoted, characteristics by which the European Union is permeated (Official Journal of the European Union, 2012a, p.5) . The key to providing these values is an internal market that makes it possible to grow economically and thus, provide the required conditions for the above system with a "highly competitive social market economy" (2012a, p.5). In the same article it is explained that it is the internal market which is going to foster cohesion, social justice, equality between women and men, respect for the cultural and linguistic diversity, socioeconomic and territorial cohesion.

The Treaty also makes mention of the three principles governing the institution. The principles of conferral, subsidiarity, and proportionality, elaborated on in paragraphs 2 to 4 in Article 5 (2012a, p.6) govern the power play between the EU and the member states comprising it. The principle of conferral limits the competences of the EU to those specifically conferred upon it, with any competences not assigned to it remaining to the member states. According to the principle of subsidiarity, in matters not included in the list of its exclusive competencies, the EU must act only and if member states cannot carry through on their own with the aspirations of the proposed action. As for the principle of proportionality, none of the EU's actions must be implemented in an overzealous way that goes beyond the necessary means that the institutions have been restricted to by the Treaties. These competencies, the exclusive ones and the shared ones, are listed in Articles 3 and 4 in the Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union respectively (Official Journal of the European Union, 2012b, p.5). On the issue this thesis shall be attentive to, that being the examination of the ongoing neoliberalisation of the EU displayed in Europe 2020 and the strategy's growth-inducing policies on equality, the following Articles can further help in reaching a conclusion. Of these competencies, none fall into the category of civil law, meaning that issues dealt with by member states' civil law are largely left to the latter to deal with, on the condition that they do not violate EU law. With Article 8, the process of gender mainstreaming is brought to "eliminate inequalities, and to promote equality, between men and women" and in the same spirit, Article 9 iterates the Union's pledge to consider the fight for employment, social protection, high levels of education, the protection of human health and against social exclusion at every stage of policy-making (2012b, p.7) . Article 10 reiterates the commitment to the same process in regard to uprooting discrimination on the grounds of "sex, race, ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation" (ibid).

It is easy to deduct, based on the short overview provided by now, that issues falling into the civil law category lie within the competencies of the member states. While equal rights are granted and protected -also by the European Charter of Human Rights, constituting now primary law- the definition of how they are interpreted varies from state to state. Researchers even wonder whether these rights are actually simply principles instead of rights (Lenaerts, 2012, p.400), or whether the emphasis on these rights relies on their economic value, constituting their underlining nothing more than a carefully constructed narrative (Smismans, 2010). Who is a woman and how is womanhood defined? What is gender and how is the latter term used, if even recognized, in the 28 different national contexts? And what about LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans*, queer) people? Discrimination on the ground of someone's sexual orientation is prohibited, yet it seems that not granting same-sex couples the right to marry -which in some cases is even explicitly outlawed- does not constitute discriminatory behavior. The same issue is also observed regarding the other protected characteristics as well. Alas, issues of civil law that are not correlated with the free movement of goods, individuals and services are competencies not lying within the scope of the EU. Simply said, the European Union does not have the competency to legislate on human rights issues that do not revolve around employment, free movement and the access to goods and services.

5. Europe 2020

With the Lisbon Strategy for the 2000-2010 decade not managing to deliver to the expectations of the Union and the member states and having completed its 10-year scope, it was time for a new Agenda. The new strategy would guide the EU's future for the succeeding decade. It goes without saying that the previous 10 years were marked by landmark happenings which all influenced Europe 2020, the subsequent strategy. First to be mentioned is the accession of 7 new member states in eastern Europe, a change of political, geostrategic and cultural importance that would alter the dynamics in policymaking and the steering of the European Union in general. Then, the rejection of the Constitutional Treaty of the European Union in 2005, owing to it not being passed by the French and Dutch Parliaments, was considered as an expression of doubt towards the deepening of the Union. In 2008, the global financial crisis hit the EU hard. With every member-state being affected financially, the crisis had an especially severe impact on mostly southern European countries, worsening their fiscal problems. The crisis' aftermath, still felt today, exposed a Union of two different speeds: the industry-heavy, services-oriented North one the one hand and the South on the other, whose economy lacked big key players and prominent presence in high-value business sectors. Shortly after the bubble of bliss burst, the Treaty of Lisbon was signed in 2009. This Treaty ratified the legal structure of the European Union and expanded the list of competencies it had been assigned by member states, allowing for more oversight and ameliorated coordination between the constituting units and the EU. It can be easily assumed that this eventful decade left a mark which most certainly defined Europe 2020.

In March 2010, 10 years after the Treaty of Lisbon was presented, the then European Commission President, Jose Manuel Barroso, released the new strategy. Prefacing the Commission's Communication (European Commission, 2010b), he went on to describe the financial crisis as a rude awakening, as well as an opportunity. Our set ways would have led the Union towards a decline and eventual downgrade to a global player of lesser importance, or rather to one unable to define the international system in a world order that was being violently reshaped. Considering the exit from the then-raging financial turmoil as a short-term priority and drawing conclusions on the preparedness of the EU for similar future events, Barroso envisioned a more important, long-term priority: a sustainable future. Commenting on the new arrangements, he explained:

> “To achieve a sustainable future, we must already look beyond the short term. Europe needs to get back on track. Then it must stay on track. That is the purpose of Europe 2020. It is about more jobs and better lives. It shows how Europe has the capability to deliver smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, to find the path to create new jobs and to offer a sense of direction to our societies” (2010b, sec.preface).

This long-term goal of sustainability is comprised of “three mutually reinforcing priorities” paving the way to the “social market economy of the 21st century”:

1. Smart growth: developing an economy based on knowledge and innovation.
2. Sustainable growth: promoting a more resource efficient, greener and more competitive economy.
3. Inclusive growth: fostering a high-employment economy delivering social and territorial cohesion.” (2010b, pp.8–9).

To measure the progress towards this goal, the European Commission developed 5 EU headline targets that indicate the achievement that is strived towards by 2020. These are:

1. Increasing the employment rate of the 20-60 years-olds to 75%.
2. Increasing the percentage of the Union’s GDP spent on R&D to 3%.
3. Meeting the 20/20/20[1] climate/energy targets: (with a possibility of further decreasing emissions to 30% under certain circumstances).
4. Decreasing the percentage of early-school leaver to less than 10% from 15% and raising the amount of tertiary degree holders in the young generations to 40%.
5. Lowering the number of people below the national poverty line by 25%, to less than 20 million.

Having its fundamental weaknesses exposed because of the crisis, focusing on getting to these 5 targets would improve the Union’s footing in the new world order. The identified weaknesses, according to the Commission (2010b, p.5), were for one the evident productivity gap in comparison to other major economic forces resulting from parts of the society not welcoming innovation. Accompanying this deficit, were the low investment in innovation, R&D and the differences in business structures. Additionally, the overall employment rate of 69% for those between the age of 20 and 65, an issue that had affected women and people of older ages to a

[1] The 20/20/20 target refers to “A 20 % reduction in GHG emissions compared with 1990 levels; A 20 % share of renewable energy in gross final energy consumption; and A 20 % cut in energy consumption compared to a 2020 business-as-usual projection” (European Commission and Statistical Office of the European Union, 2019, p.44).

greater degree (73% and 46% respectively), was lower than that of the USA and Japan (2010b, p.8). Interestingly, a 10% difference in working hours, again compared to these two countries, is apparently deemed as something worth mentioning, if not concerning. Lastly, the increasing pressure on welfare systems as a by-product of low birth rates and a progressively aging population were mentioned. In a worldwide system where new global players, such as China and India challenged the established ones by competing in terms of innovation and age of workforce, where speculative and high-risk market behaviours could promptly ignite another crisis and where climate change threatened the economy by negatively impacting businesses and individuals alike, Europe 2020 was introduced as a change-initiating step for the Union. Having learned as a lesson from the crisis that differently-performing economies yielded different amounts of financial resources available to the member states and that a higher degree of coordination and external representation are decisive factors for a successful implementation, lead the EU to witness itself challenged with a now-or-never moment that would define its future prosperity, and maybe even survival.

Outlining its plan for a “sustainable recovery”, the Commission introduced seven Flagship Initiatives that would steer the European Union to a “smart, sustainable and inclusive growth” : “Innovation Union”, “Youth on the move”, “A digital agenda for Europe”, “Resource efficient Europe”, “An industrial policy for the globalisation era”, “An agenda for new skills and jobs” and the “ European Platform against poverty” (2010b, p.4). With stronger economic governance introduced by the Lisbon Treaty and a new coordinating and benchmarking mechanism encompassed in the newly introduced European Semester, it was hoped that Europe 2020 would become a success.

In the following parts of this chapter, every single one of the 7 Flagship Initiatives will be reviewed. Their goals, the changes they introduced to previous efforts and the approach they follow for each addressed issue will be presented in a summary-like manner. Each of them will be dedicated a subchapter of its own, so that a better examination of whether the new Agenda conforms with Foucault’s Biopolitics and the concept of neoliberal governmentality will be made possible. After the Flagship Initiatives are analyzed, an answer will be provided to the first research question, with the other two being answered in Chapter 7. The final two subchapters will see the application of my chosen research method and will also make use of statistical data to provide evidence of quantitative nature.

5.1 Smart growth

5.1.1 Innovation Union

The first Initiative geared at creating sustainable growth, is *Innovation Union*. Many pressing issues in need of a solution had accumulated, such as increasing debt, a shrinking and aging labor force, environmental protection, access to resources and health maintenance. With innovation being at the heart of Europe 2020, it was expected that participating in the race for innovative, technologically novel and advanced products, the European Union would manage to deal with these issues. Increased innovation would result in the creation of jobs and improved fiscal performance and should provide the answer to other “major societal changes” taking place (European Commission, 2010f, p.2). Enabling the financing and entrance of innovative ideas to the market was the key concern of the initiative, as, at the time, investment in R&D was lower than that of the US and Japan, fewer SMEs (Small and Medium-sized Enterprises) were evolving into large corporations and the availability of investment opportunities in such ventures was low. Therefore, the Union committed itself with this Initiative to “collective responsibility for a strategic, inclusive and business-oriented research and innovation policy, to tackle major societal challenges, raise competitiveness and generate new jobs”, a task that was complemented by “prioritizing and protecting investments in our knowledge base, reducing costly fragmentation and making Europe a more rewarding place for innovation and for bringing ideas to market”, as well as initiating the European innovation partnerships (2010f, p.8). A scoreboard developed in conjunction with economists and business innovators, based on the number of fast-growing innovative firms, would inform the strategy’s monitoring process.

The first step to becoming more innovative was the reform of the current education systems. Science classes were viewed as a category of courses not taught well enough in some member states, while girls’ absence in advanced levels was also noted. Complexity caused by bureaucracy and a lack of uniformity regarding the recognition of skills within the Union held the number of scientists needed to actually achieve the 3% target of R&D expenditure at low levels. Therefore, an emphasis was put on not only filling the gap of scientists required, but on also producing such professionals that can be absorbed by the labour market. The involvement of businesses in the creation of curricula and doctoral training programmes, university benchmarking and luring workplace conditions (such as better private-professional life reconciliation compared to the US) would further assist towards getting there.

The then current systems governing research and research investment in the Union were observed to be acting more like bottlenecks, rather than accelerators in this change process. The steps suggested for such an adjustment were two; the reduction in administrative complexities, which would shrink administrative cost, time and effort invested by the private sector, rendering such opportunities more attractive and secondly, the financial backing for the creation of the needed infrastructure that would be politically prioritized and also pitched to funding partners. Such a step entailed the steering of all investment opportunities present in the Union to a path of conformity with the goals of Europe 2020, with several frameworks and the Cohesion Fund (an important tool for infrastructure-building in the Union's poorer states) being altered to reflect the emphasis on research and innovation. By acknowledging the "knowledge triangle" (2010f, p.12), a theory that refers to economic success being dependent on education, research and innovation, the creation of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology was put in motion. It was hoped that this move would stimulate research in innovation and business-creation, when combined with the proper accreditation offered to universities and the provision of entrepreneurial education to students.

Financing constituted another major point the Initiative sought to address. The *Innovation Union* highlighted the difficulty of bringing good ideas to the market, a task it believed the private sector to be mainly responsible for. With 15 billion less in R&D business investment compared to the US and with a 100 billion more needed to achieve the 3% quota (2010f, p.13), the Union had to embrace change. With European venture capitals unable to undertake the cost of funding due to their size, public-private partnerships had to be established. Partnerships with such funds were intended to provide loans to innovative SMEs, expanding businesses, grants to research projects and access to risk finance. The European Union committed itself to evaluating existing frameworks, so that certain domains of innovation could be better supported with aid. Among the former were state-aid and environmental frameworks, as well as existing standardization regulation. Becoming a "safe harbor" for venture capital and tightening environmental laws and standards, would create pressure for compliance with the codified targets and force companies to innovate, while standards and the setting up of the EU Patent could contribute to lowering the cost of innovation, product-creation and to establishing pre-emptively a dominancy in the global market. Consequently, and similarly to the USA, *Innovation Union* pledged at least €10 billion for procurements meant for innovative products and services that would lead to an improved public sector. The Commission would take the role of facilitating joint procurements between various actors. For all this funding to be able to be exploited effectively by an appropriately educated workforce, the uninhibited flow of innovative ideas from other domains from which the Union could benefit as well (like the cultural and artistic domain) needed securing, something that required a review of the existing competition regulations. For that to happen, networking within these industries would be supported, public-funded research would be made available and a patent and licensing trading market would be launched. This, according to the principle of supply and demand, ought to stimulate investment in left-behind domains that were still utilizing old intellectual property.

Understanding the danger of amplifying the existing North-South divide in innovation, social and territorial cohesion were also to be dealt with. With the Structural Funds dealing with innovation-enabling infrastructure, member states were called upon to improve their absorption capacity, so as to provide the skills and training needed to implement specialization strategies in certain domains and to participate in trans-national projects. Pre-accession funding for candidate countries had to also adhere to this principle. Social innovation, meaning innovation that is aimed at tackling social problems, would also get a boost in terms of funding and support for research and disseminating knowledge on economy at all levels would be another action to be examined. To find solutions to the pressing problems the European Union was facing, the European Innovation Partnerships were brought to life, a program that envisioned the cooperation of several actors in order to innovate. However, innovation had to be targeted at one of the aforementioned problems and ought to be of value for the EU. By undertaking fitting policy changes, it was believed that the Union would be able to attract and retain foreign talent, minimize the competition between states and regions in scientific cooperation agreements and aide the states in the transformation process by providing recommendations on the National Reform Programs they would be submitting as part of the European Semester monitoring mechanism.

Based on the above acknowledgments and promises, the Horizon 2020 framework was seen as "the key tool" (European Commission, 2011b, p.2) for carrying out the *Innovation Union* Initiative. This framework was actually a centralized way of managing the already-existing funding for innovation and research, setting forth more simplified, less bureaucratic processes, increased openness relating to possible partnerships, more support for marketable ideas and for young scientists proposing them in the overall attempt of using these efforts to get out of the hardship and as accelerators for business opportunities.

In summary, *Innovation Union* was an initiative that encompassed a multitude of actions aimed at boosting innovation efforts that would allow to challenge the main competitors of the EU. More efficient, agile responses to market demands, improved cooperation with the private sector with regards to research and funding, as well as the development of education systems that enable such a competition, were the main key issues to be tackled.

5.1.2 Youth on the move

Youth on the move is the second Flagship Initiative in the pack of the three Flagship Initiatives developed to create the path towards smart growth. Its main objective lied in the creation of a Single Market free of barriers hindering the free movement of young people. With the youth thought of as an essential part ensuring the Agenda's success, the document set out to outline the bottlenecks suppressing their potential: the high degree of adaptability needed to meet the market's demand and volatility, their unemployment rate of almost 21% and the ever-growing number of jobs demanding high-level qualifications (European Commission, 2010h, p.2). For the above reasons, the Initiative had identified four key areas around which its actions would be focused on.

Lifelong learning was the first focal point. The need for innovation -or rather, innovation that positioned the EU more competitively to its partners- created a demand for more people qualified in the disciplines the market was hungry for. This in turn opened the door to the validation of non-formally acquired skills, a development of particular importance for young people at risk of social exclusion, according to the Initiative (2010h, p.5), and the promotion of new types of vocational training that brought together the worlds of business and academia.

Secondly, institutions providing the competition-enabling education had to be rendered more attractive to young people. University benchmarking and efforts to boost the attractiveness and quality of universities would not only lure domestic and international talent, but business and international academic institutions that would cooperate with them as well. The European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) and the EU Forum for University Business Dialogue were to be exploited in this endeavor. The modernization of education systems in need of "targeted, sustained and enhanced levels of investment" (2010h, p.4) was seen as an important first step. The Council intended to combat early dropout rates by issuing recommendations and creating a High-Level expert group that would advise member states on literacy improvements. Young people in education also had to be prepared for the knowledge-based economy: good vocational guidance services should involve labor market institutions and "improve the image of sectors and professions with employment potential (2010h, p.4)". Among other important competencies, skills that enabled a rise of market-fit individuals such as information and communication technology (ICT) skills and entrepreneurial skills, should be included in curricula. It was suggested that this readiness would be implemented not only in higher education, but also in vocational education/training with the involvement of businesses. This required updated, market-conforming curricula and reinforced partnerships with the private sector through apprenticeship and traineeship schemes, responses which the EU had been sluggish to deliver. Increased funding of at least 2% of states' GDP, along with the diversification of universities' income were described as significant for tertiary education to be able to provide competitive research and the necessary amount of a competitive workforce for the European economies (2010h, p.6).

Thirdly, mobility was to complement these efforts. Making mobility easier, both for job seekers and aspiring young entrepreneurs would be achieved with Council Recommendations, improved communication of such possibilities, measuring and benchmarking member states' progress towards enabling increased mobility, as well as the use of existing programs, such as ERASMUS. A more seamless transition from academia to work had to be supported by public employment services that would lead actions backing young entrepreneurs and European-wide job searching. The change in tertiary education was to be supported by enhanced mobility for people engaging with it (researchers, students, etc.). An agile youth that was not restrained in one place could manage to accumulate skills, cultivate their talents, and improve their future employability. Communication of mobility's value to the individual and the creation of programs that provide chances of travelling, such as volunteering and education-related schemes, were to play a key role in achieving a greater degree of the youth exploring their options in fellow member states. And how was this to be made clear to everyone? By breaking down rulings of the European Court of Justice into accessible bits of information and creating a site dedicated to providing a clear overview of such rights. Young people had to become aware of their rights, of facts helping them make their decision confidently. On the institutional side, mobility rankings for each member state introduced a benchmarking approach, which on the one hand would create awareness of each country's situatedness, yet on the other hand would introduce the element of competition in the fight towards attractiveness. As previously described by Foucault, mobility is deemed as a great asset that raises one's chances of succeeding within the neoliberal capitalist system, which is why the small number of young adults benefiting from such efforts, estimated at 380.000 in the report, was seen as problematic (2010h, p.9). Other than that, recognition of skills in the entire single market was put forward in a way of further unburdening mobility, with Europass, the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) and the European Qualification Framework being prominent such examples. Areas identified as needing better communication were the rights of migrants within the EU, a move introduced to combat the brain-drain observed in specific professional domains.

A milestone towards reaching an employment rate of 75% was the promotion of youth employment, because of the high unemployment among younger ages of the workforce. This constituted the fourth line of action in this Initiative. In supporting secondary and tertiary graduates getting their first job, the Commission proposed the collaboration of public employment services with employers and institutions in offering skill development. The wage incentives presented by novice employees did indeed heighten their chances of landing a contract, but women -with migrants and specific other groups also mentioned as being more susceptible to the employment market's volatility (2010h, p.11)- were recognized as facing an increased risk of being stuck with temporary contracts and a stagnant skillset. As for young people having difficulties in entering the education system and the job market, a solution was sought by supporting them with benefits and providing them with income assistance, based however on the principle of conditionality. Be that as it may, one gets to wonder about the usefulness of such measures when the social state is usually the first sector to experience cuts in funding in times of economic downturns. How can one keep receiving these benefits if the conditions set to receive them cannot be fulfilled because of the defunding of services providing them? Lastly, young entrepreneurship and self-employment were also presented as a way out of unemployment, a route for which guidance and financial backing were needed. For all the above, the Commission highlighted the usefulness of the existing funding opportunities and made the case for the expansion of their existing scope (2010h, pp.15–17).

Overall, *Youth on the Move* saw young people as the upholders of the Agenda's initiatives and thus tried to cater to them conditions that would lead them to success. The latter is defined not in their own terms, but in a way imagined by the system. As Foucault notes (2012, p.215), for the neoliberal system, mobility, skills and knowledge constitute capital. Youth's upskilling would boost innovation. Existing structures had to support their potential by becoming more competitive, more flexible and by better communicating the resources available for them. Young people's success contributes to the vicious circle that is the current system: if one link fails, the entirety of the structure could collapse on its people, an outcome that neoliberal governmentality tries to avoid.

5.1.3 A Digital Agenda for Europe

The third Flagship Initiative listed under smart growth, is *A Digital Agenda for Europe*. As its name suggests, the EU aspired to "deliver sustainable economic and social benefits from a digital single market based on fast and ultra fast internet and interoperable applications" (European Commission, 2010c, p.3). With internet's prominent role and the intensifying digitalization of services, the EU saw itself obliged to step up its game to catch up with other big players in the field of ICT services. According to the initiative (2010c, p.4), the ICT sector accounted for more than 5% of the overall GDP, yet could promise greater productivity growth (20% by the sector itself, 30% by investments in this sector) due to the accelerated transition to a digital world. The Commission presented the virtuous cycle of the digital economy (2010c, p.5), according to which investments in digitalization-promoting measures foster the growth of this sector, leading to a greater offer of products and borderless services and thus, relevant job creation, which in turn creates the need for further investments. This cycle aptly demonstrated the need for more entrepreneurship and business investments, to the establishing of which existing impediments could develop into persistent problems, if left untreated. These were the lack of interoperability and fragmentation in the digital market, cybercrime and low trust in digital services, inadequate investment in networks, meager research and innovation, shortage in digital literacy and skills along with a lack of vision on the use of such technologies to solve societal issues.

To begin with, a digital single market where content cannot easily traverse members' boarders hinders the demand for the services on offer. The virtuous cycle would brake if restrictions, legal obstacles, and low trust in web-based services would continue to exist. Certain conditions had to be met to give citizens a hassle-free experience when dealing with digital services, so as to incentivize their increasing use. Policy that makes licensing easier in the common market ought to be supported by stronger interoperability, meaning that standards and policies regulating online transactions and the overall process of money’s traversing of internal borders had to be put in place. But these interventions would be fruitless unless people’s trust issues with the online world were resolved. Figures reported by Eurostat and quoted in the Initiative (2010c, p.12) reveal that privacy and safety concerns acted deterrently for many consumers. In similar ways to other Initiatives, communication efforts of consumers’ rights when being online and the measures employed to address their concerns would be intensified, as would safety measures. The maintaining of the fight against illegal activities in the digital space was to be backed by the expansion of the rights to privacy and the protection of personal data on the internet, along with the creation of a network of Computer Emergency Response Teams (CERT) and the overhaul of the European Network and Information Security Agency (ENISA). Developments like these were hoped to heighten consumers’ confidence and increase their engagement with digital services.

But getting the basics done first: setting up the required infrastructures. “The future economy will be a network-based knowledge economy with the internet at its center” (2010c, p.19) thus, shaping the goal for universal, fast-speed internet coverage. With the hope of creating spillover effects thanks to such investments, coordination amongst members states and the EU would not only enable such an achievement, but would also prevent innovation from being continuously stifled, an impact estimated at about €250 billion on annual activity (2010c, p.19). Increased funding should be properly allocated to research projects and to innovators looking for funding: a fragmented internal market, funding opportunities that are not consolidated, chronic underinvestment in digital technologies and an inefficient, technologically-challenged public sector had contributed their part to the then current situation. This underinvestment also applied to digital skills, an area in dire need of attention if Europe wished to remain competitive and see its investment in high-risk research pay off (2010c, p.23). A shortage of 700.000 IT professionals by 2015 put the creation of a knowledge-based economy at risk. Life-long learning, partnerships with actors from the private sector and making these professions attractive to groups thus far underrepresented in them, such as women and people with disabilities, was seen as a way to fill the gap in professionals.

The benefits reaped by a digital economy could go well beyond economic stability and employment. As discussed in the document, “deployment of ICT is becoming a critical element for delivering policy objectives like supporting an ageing society, climate change, reducing energy consumption, improving transportation efficiency and mobility, empowering patients and ensuring the inclusion of persons with disabilities” (2010c, p.27). Innovative solutions developed by players in the ICT sector, would help in determining the environmental impact of consumer goods, buildings, or even entire regions, leading to the creation of new products and technologies to address the deficits found. ICT could bring about similar positive outcomes in other parts of people’s daily lives, with this Flagship Initiative mentioning the aspects of health, transportation, cultural diversity, and digitalized public services. An emphasis on digitalization and e-services was thought to bring with it a slew of improvements, mostly related to cost and time efficiency, removal of administrative burdens and increased freedom of movement. Quicker access to doctors owing to e-health, easier and less costly means to create and distribute art, as well as better handling of traffic on European land, sky and sea routes would be rewarding both for citizens and for the economy. Lastly, as proposed in other Flagship Initiatives comprising Europe 2020, ensuring that such measures take into consideration the external policy was detrimental for a long-term success.

To sum up, this Flagship Initiative was in line with the first two, suggesting actions that follow the same pattern. The value of digitalization and of the ITC sector does not solely rely on what it has to offer to the general population in terms of making their lives easier by solving cumbersome situations that cost time and effort, but also on future-proofing the European economy. Investments in infrastructure, in programs seeking to eradicate digital illiteracy and in research schemes, combined with policies that remove administrative burdens and secure the online experience are hoped to have a twofold effect: for one, to lay down the basics needed for a modern innovation-focused economy. In this economy, digitalization plays a major role in getting an edge to the competitors. On the other hand, less restrictions and a tech-savvy population that is aware of its rights in the cyberspace and uses the internet/digital applications more routinely, heightens the demand for such products/services. As you may have started noticing, the pattern is the following: a tech-literate population creates increases demand, new products are developed to serve identified and yet unidentified needs, allowing the economy to adapt to a competitive mindset and embrace innovation.

5.2. Sustainable growth

5.2.1 Resource efficient Europe

The Flagship Initiative *Resource efficient Europe* is one of the two initiatives addressing sustainable growth. Resources are related to sustainability due to their limited amount present in nature and are connected to growth, thanks to the advantages they provide to their producers and owners. One would suppose that it is their increasing scarcity -further exacerbated by an ever-growing population- and the environmental impact caused by products' lifecycle, issues already mentioned in the document's introduction (European Commission, 2011a, p.2), that would be the major drivers behind this Initiative. Yet the EU introduced a twist: it is the search for solutions to these pressing problems that could act as a driver in getting the community out of the financial slump. As mentioned in the document, "…increasing resource efficiency will be key to securing growth and jobs for Europe. It will bring major economic opportunities, improve productivity, drive down costs and boost competitiveness" (2011a, p.2). In that essence, the EU saw its duty in taking action in 3 different areas: in policymaking, in securing funds for long-term projects paying off in the long-run and having consumers adapting to more resource-efficient consumption behaviors. Evidently, the fight against climate change was tied to competition-enhancing objectives with innovation playing an important role, again.

The benefits of a resource-sparing economy come to light when observing the existing synergies. The investment in green technologies would not only create more jobs but would also contribute to less pollution and improved public health. In addition, the dependency on resources, the supply of which has been getting increasingly shorter, could be dealt with by innovation brough forward by a green economy. Such actions would solve Europe's reliance on economic partners holding a monopoly/oligopoly of certain reserves, thus improving energy security. At the same time, the use of the continent's own resources would be reduced. Besides the economic incentives, a push towards a more environmentally friendly lifestyle could save energy, resources and enhance the demand for greener products. Despite the trade-offs resulting from such a major shift, presenting a clear vision for this transition could secure needed investment.

All of the above benefits had to be considered when creating this Initiative, the components of which the EU laid out in the form of roadmaps (2011a, pp.5–7). These roadmaps included the minimization of greenhouse gas emissions by more than 80%, so as to have a green, low-carbon economy by 2050, as well as all the other necessary adjustments that such a change entails. Amongst the targeted sectors were transport and energy systems, both of which had to become competitive and free of regulatory burdens affecting their modernization and availability in the internal market. Further roadmaps towards sector-wide energy savings of 20%, like the reform of the Common Agricultural and Common Fisheries Policies, the linking of the dependency on scarcely available materials to the EU's external policy, biodiversity preservation and the preliminary adaptation of our societies to climate change complete the list.

Employing the proper policies was thought to help towards this direction, particularly by keeping the prices that go hand in hand with such changes at bay. Realized together with public backing of R&D and innovation, as well as economic incentives (i.e. taxes and subsidies), they would facilitate an implementation of the roadmaps that would take care of any adverse effects coming up in the process. It is however noted, that the scope of energy efficiency had to be widened sufficiently to encompass all sectors of the economy (2011a, p.7). The interplay between them and the environment was in need of further examination due to our limited understanding of it back then. Lastly, returning to the issue of resource scarcity, the Commission put an emphasis on its international positioning in the competition for rare materials, considering that relevant innovation-critical products, such as lithium batteries, depend on minerals found exclusively outside of Europe. A shortage on resources could severely hurt European companies and leave the European economy unable to participate in the global competition and to reap the benefits the latter creates for the entirety of the European society. International conferences and declarations, such as Rio+, were "…a good opportunity for the EU to address resource efficiency with global partners" (2011a, p.9).

To sum up, resource efficiency was a domain where the EU saw a lot of potential for improvement, a potential that gained immensely in value when considering the benefits it added to innovation efforts. It created the need for products, new jobs and simultaneously provided a solution to the dependency on other countries, a dependency which could have dire consequences in the case of situations that affected the access to such resources. Inescapably, policymaking and public attitude towards environmental protection were in need of change in order to serve the new strategy.

5.2.2 An industrial policy for the globalization era

The second thematic area introduced to help with the sustainable growth of the European economy, is the focus on industry. With the Flagship Initiative *An industrial policy for the globalization era*, the Commission proposed ways to get the European industry ready for the post-crisis world. At the time of the strategy's inception, half of the jobs in the private sector were dependent on the industry, $^{2}/_{3}$ of these employees were working in SMEs, and with 80% of all R&D emerging from this sector, the industry was seen as a major driver of innovation (European Commission, 2010e, p.3). The initiative "proposes a fresh approach to industrial policy that will put the EU economy on a dynamic growth path strengthening EU competitiveness, providing growth and jobs, and enabling the transition to a low-carbon and resource-efficient economy" (2010e, p.4).

Policy-related changes targeting the industry, the first batch of actions the Initiative dealt with, had to rely on the principle of smart regulation (2010e, p.4), an approach characterized by an in-depth analysis of regulations' effects -for example financial or environmental- on the sector's ability to compete. The second dimension of this dynamic approach is an evaluation following the step of policy implementation, as assessing the results would allow for the detection of spillovers, new opportunities and eventual simplification of administrative processes. The established attention to SMEs ought to be continued, given the potential for growth inherent in eco-issues. Armoring the markets up and working on their efficiency, moves that had to be accompanied by dropping speculative behavior, would further enhance these efforts. Financing was to further back this change with new schemes being considered to address severed cash flows on the business side and issues created due to late payments by the states. Private capital and funding by the EU would have to create incentives for securing funding by them, but done in a way that aligns with the Agenda's aims. Adding to this, the single market had to be harmonized with these aims, as "competition drives innovation and efficiency gains and creates the incentives for firms to increase their productivity" (2010e, p.9). So, it comes as no surprise that a greater degree of integration was pitched. Competition policy was to be strengthened in order to ensure the undisrupted operation of the market. In this spirit, merger and antitrust control and state aid monitoring did have to continue to be applied to bolster competitiveness and thus, firms' positioning in the international markets. Integration in regards to property rights would also ease administrative issues manifesting as efficiency losses and at the same time, counter the problems of counterfeiting and piracy that plagued intellectual rights holders and prevented them from innovating by cause of small profit returns from their R&D investment. Pushing for greater standardization would provide innovators the chance to prevail in the international market and establish beneficial to them standards, to which other players would have to adhere to. A standards system for the single market in conjunction with improvements in infrastructure would addresses bottlenecks, ameliorate efficiency, sustain reasonable prices for newly introduced products and pave the way for a future-proof single market.

Nevertheless, no matter how well the internal market would eventually be structured, all the effort would not amount to much if the issue of innovation were not put on the spotlight. According to the Commission, with Europe "not good enough at turning its excellence in ideas into marketable goods and services" (2010e, p.12), policymakers had to intervene to ensure the coordination of education and R&D in the effort of creating key-enabling technologies. Technologies such as bio- and nanotechnology, photonics, micro- and nano-electronics could deliver new products and create entirely new industries in the future. Securing in advance a good standing in these fields could help firms compete better and for that reason, cooperation with stakeholders was envisioned. This fruitful cooperation would birth a new vision, provide feedback on policy initiatives and assist in enhancing the timely marketability of European research. Public-private partnerships like *Green cars* and *Factories of the future* were some of the first steps towards that direction. And while the *Digital Agenda for Europe* dealt with Europe's ICT sluggishness, this Initiative would complement the former thanks to more oversight by the Commission's Sectoral Innovation Watch and network-building efforts. The latter would become possible due to support given by the EU Regional Fund and the Framework Programmes that would help businesses, countries and regions come together and cross-pollinate, coordinate on common issues, identify new potential markets and provide them with funding. No matter the efforts to strengthen innovation, all this could be futile if regulation of the international markets was not going to be successful. This was a measure complementary to the oversight of the internal market, that is intended to maintain a function true to the market's nature. Facing growing pressure from growing markets like China, Brazil and India, the EU tasked itself with observing such countries' growth to rule out the use of protectionist measures that disturb the function of the market and create an uneven playing field (2010e, p.16). Despite such provisions, defensive measures from unfair trading practices were to be extended to SMEs, as was support for them to go international, with the help of networks like the Enterprise Europe Network. The Union would also strive for bilateral/multilateral agreements that would open the doors of the international market and global value chains to firms, creating simultaneously a tailwind on the issue of raw materials. Such agreements aimed to ensure access to such resources and reduce dependency on them by promoting recycling and efficiency-related technologies under the scope of sustainability.

Another needed intervention was the modernization of the industry. To start with, building up a workforce equipped with the skills that such a dynamic, market-focused economy required was partly dealt with the Flagship Initiative *An agenda for new skills and jobs*. To avoid skill mismatches leading to a long-term headache for the private sector, a problem projected to be amplified because of the shrinking population, coordination between the public sector and the industry could be facilitated on a policy level to increase the number of science graduates and medium-skilled workers demanded by the booming sectors. On the business side of things, the growing attention that ecological issues had been enjoying had rendered the industrial sectors providing such sought-after solutions very attractive, signaling the gains of shifting to a low carbon, energy- and resource-efficient economy. Therefore, "legislation must be predictable and proportionate and provide the legal certainty required for longer-term investments" and "to develop the EU market for environmental goods and services, the EU needs to ensure a fair and transparent internal market that rewards innovation" (2010e, p.20). Restructuring of a business for the sake of its modernization should also be supported with state aid provided to both the company and the workforce, for the sake of the latter's upskilling. Besides that, a recommendation was issued for companies to develop corporate social responsibility policies (CSR), a move which could add value to their brands and tie consumers to them. The companies would also be able to gain access to an EU-delivered common methodology examining the environmental impact of consumer products and could thus, based on it, build attractive CSR policies thanks to the insight gained by the methodology's proven application.

At the end of the document, the EC reveals more details on specific approaches targeted at certain sectors in the European industry, such as space, pharmaceuticals and healthcare, construction, security and the bio-based one. Looking at all of them, in a nutshell, one can see the common characteristics of every Flagship Initiative present in them as well: competition, innovation and efficiency

5.3. Inclusive Growth

5.3.1 An Agenda for new skills and jobs

The last pillar of the target set for the new decade, to support an inclusive growth, was partly supported by the Flagship Initiative *An Agenda for new skills and jobs*, one of the two Initiatives addressing this aspect of the target. The image painted at the opening paragraph created quite the bleak outlook, supposed that immediate remediation would not take place. A shrinking workforce unable to support the economy both quantitative- and quality-wise, increased unemployment by 10% and decreased employment to 69%, hitting women, young and older people particularly hard, had the EU set out 4 priorities to avoid further tumbling down (European Commission, 2010d, pp.2–3). Notably, it is stated that “The main responsibility and instruments to achieve these objectives rest with the Member States, in conformity with the Treaty and the subsidiarity principle” (2010d, p.3), meaning that States were going to be the sole enforces of relevant measures, leaving to the EU the right to provide them with assistance for their implementation, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity.

The first priority sets down the milestones for the other priorities to come. It was none other than the support for the creation of an inclusive labor market that would have adapted to the new reality. Policies based on the concept of flexicurity, an EU-developed method that member states had been called upon to implement, had been reported to have helped the latter minimize the impact of the crisis, with certain social groups though, like young and migrant workers, still having taken the hardest hit (2010d, p.3). Then, states did not only have to implement such actions with saving funds in mind, but were also called to further improve upon them. A restructuring of the labor market was then suggested (2010d, p.5): looser contracts with higher probation periods for the employees, coupled with increased flexibility in cutting working hours in times of hardship and increased employees’ rights as an act of balancing. Active Labor Market Policies, a component of flexicurity, would assist jobseekers at their search and with their up-skilling, finetune benefit conditionality and subsidize job-creation for low-skilled-, little-experienced workers. In regards to benefits, after weathering the storm from 2008, their provision would need to be generally rethought, so as to incentivize job-hunting. Their retention and expansion were thought of as necessary for more vulnerable groups within the workforce, but in a way that linked their provision with upskilling in accordance with the principle of life-long learning. A reform of pension systems did get suggested as a measure to facilitate the return of older people to the labor market, while a rethinking of the overall approach had to occur: the EU needed to move from reactive strategies to anticipative strategies (2010d, p.7). These market-sensitive strategies could minimize the impact of similar events in the future and better equip the workforce for any upcoming changes.

The second priority was about skill enhancement, the lack of which had left many people previously employed in the traditional industry unable to secure a job in the then current market. Sectors like the green-market and healthcare were in need of talent, talent in an amount that was even harder to find considering the decreasing population. This is where lifelong-learning came with the promise of creating this innovation boost, with re-skilling and skill-amelioration for vulnerable groups (Roma citizens, migrants, the unemployed, low-skilled people, people returning to the labor market after care leave). Important to this effort was a continuous dialogue with social partners in the sake of cost-sharing, implementation of upskilling schemes and effective cooperation of the public and the private sector. The anticipation approach saw the creation and support of councils/observatories that would provide labor market intelligence, with the Commission stepping in to coordinate the efforts and invest in cross-pollination of such supranational, national, and regional efforts. Examples of such efforts were to be found in the educational systems, which had to move on with the necessary changes in their curricula, if they wished to help young people transition effectively and quickly to their first job. Besides that, skill accumulation had to be cross-sector and cross-age, covering every person in or outside of work. Employers' involvement could further help to provide opportunities for upskilling, by offering vocational training and investing in educational activities, with the joint efforts by employment agencies and educational institutions also having an important role to play. As addressed previously, the aggregating efforts of enabling and easing-up migration towards the EU ought to be continued: migrants should be granted better access to information on the rights and services on standby to assist them, all while policy adjustments would ease up the problematic situation related to the recognition of their skills and other legal/administrative issues. Yet, while the "brain-waste" issue, a hindrance of systemic nature affecting them and their children was also put on the table, the initiative goes on to say: "a flexible, demand-driven admission policy can make an important contribution to meeting future labor needs" (2010d, p.12). Migration was seen as a tool in the growth toolbox and one could justifiably fear, that systemic inequalities already plaguing migrant communities would not be properly addressed, when an adjustable and conditional influx of people was provided as a solution to temporary or long-term problems.

Thirdly, working conditions and job satisfaction had also suffered under the financial crisis. The Commission acknowledged that the instability and the poorly-executed transitions from one job to another, accompanied by psychological disorders, caused benefits claims to rise and the retirement age to sink (2010d, p.14). For that problem, it planned to develop "soft" instruments after consulting with involved parties, evaluate the current legislation, as well as pursue further strengthening of workers' rights and safety, in relation for example to their exposure to dangerous substances and the fate of their supplementary occupational pensions when the employer went bankrupt.

In the final of these four priorities, the focus lied in job creation, as a recovery would be impossible if no jobs were available. Aside from measures introduced by other Flagship Initiatives, the Commission aimed to reduce administrative burdens that added unnecessary hassle and resources to recruitment procedures, an add-on that was especially troublesome for the swiftly changing innovative sectors. Replacing some costs with others, such as replacing labor taxes with environmental ones, was thought to stimulate recruitment and would probably also reinforce the transition to a greener economy by strengthening the demand for green services and products. In the same spirit, entrepreneurship is also suggested, because

> "Entrepreneurship should become a more widespread means of creating jobs, as well as fighting social exclusion. The accent must be put on training to ensure that education systems truly provide the basis to stimulate the appearance of new entrepreneurs, and that those willing to start and manage an SME acquire the right skills to do so. Member States should develop entrepreneurship in school curricula to create a critical mass of entrepreneurship teachers, and to promote cross-border universities and research centres' collaborations in the area of innovation and entrepreneurship" (2010d, p.18).

To sum up, one would argue that the cultivation of skills is beneficial not just for individual and their multifaceted development, but for society as well. However, this Flagship Initiative saw the dissemination of only particular skills as valuable, inextricably linking the economy's well-being to the educational system's ability to churn out masses of scientists and entrepreneurs. These professionals were even more important because the market demanded their existence. Schools, universities, and other educational institutions had to be rationalized, ought to not deviate from the natural order set in place by market. Upsetting its natural order would lead to distortions with severe implications, ones that the EU wanted to avoid keep reliving.

5.3.2 European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion

In this final Flagship Initiative, the EC raised the importance of eliminating poverty, a still prevalent phenomenon affecting millions of people. As stated in the document, 80 million people lived below the poverty line, 8% of the population suffered from severe material deprivation, with women being overrepresented with more than 50% and the number of the affected children being around 20 million, making this a reality "unacceptable in the 21st Century Europe" (European Commission, 2010g, p.2). "Restoring economic growth with more and better jobs will be key to the fight against poverty" (2010g, p.2). To better represent the various forms of poverty existing within the multiplicity of contexts, the headline target for poverty reduction was based on the rate of at-risk-of-poverty, the index of material deprivation and the percentage of individuals residing in households with low work intensity, upping the affected population to 116 million. It recognized the causal link between unemployment and poverty and made mention of the cycle of poverty, in which people coming from already poor conditions were trapped into, thus putting 1 out of every 5 young people at such risk.

When starting to describe the plans drawn to combat poverty, the Commission saw the problem as an issue in need of attention at every level, due to its many facets. In its first step, unemployment was to be addressed, because by just achieving the 75% employment rate for 2020, 20 million people would be pulled out of poverty (2010g, p.6), a goal with which the *Agenda for New Skills and Jobs* was preoccupied. Besides a Commission-issued recommendation on principles regarding sustained efforts on the inclusion of workers at the outskirts of the market, policies had to be focused on timely intervention and poverty prevention, apart from the by now often-mentioned efficiency. Hooking people off of small pensions that rendered their recipients poor would take a rethinking of our pension and health systems that would make older people's prolonged remaining in the labor market possible.

On the second step of the Initiative's intersectional lens, existing evidence on poverty illuminated further areas in need of attention. Barriers related to discrimination and inaccessibility to services and the labor market kept people with valuable skills excluded. The migrant population was plagued by "intergenerational transmission of disadvantage" and "discrimination in access to employment as well as to goods and services" (2010g, p.9), a fact that made the case for stronger, enhanced anti-discrimination policies. Also preventing social cohesion and a good quality of life not marred by poverty was the gender pay gap, the difficulties and the stigmatization to which Roma people, people living with disabilities and mental illnesses and homeless individuals were being exposed to. Policy was considered important, as it could help by maintaining a high level of accessibility to energy, networks, transport, communication services and financial services. These were the means to getting vulnerable people out of risk at poverty and thus had to be attainable for Europeans, as well as non-EU citizens from other parts of the world residing, or wishing to reside within the EU's borders.

Aside from policies and the impact in general that policies would have on social cohesion, EU funds would be another mechanism supporting inclusive growth. State-of-the-art, yet cost-effective approaches, should provide the needed stimulus. For example, the European Social Fund (ESF) would provide easier access to grants for beneficiaries with the goal of providing context-aware (at least group- and region-aware) skill-improving schemes, micro-financing to small companies and self-employment support would be underpinned by financial contributions to the European Progress Microfinance Facility and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and together with the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) it would supplement social and regional cohesion efforts in non-urban areas. Such procedures also entailed the involvement of actors, both public and private, in all possible levels of government. Lastly, building a social economy -as envisioned by the EU- also required a team spirit supported on the institutional level by the supranational institution's bodies and displayed by the people and the businesses in the form of volunteering, the creation of foundations and the corporate social responsibility programs.

Overall, the Flagship Initiative relied on "a mix of policy coordination, dialogue with institutional and non-institutional actors, funding and strategic partnerships" 2010g, p.20). Poverty was seen in its multidimensionality, but not as problem produced and reproduced by systemic structures. Policies, funding and dialogue that aimed to protect vulnerable groups because of their economic value, makes them seen from an economic perspective as potential profit-generating units. Creating educational programs that give such groups the potential to gain skills desired by the market and funding several actors who aimed to instill and cultivate an entrepreneurial spirit amongst affected populations, barely seems enough. Although they are in line with a neoliberal rationale, they would eventually fail to create change that actually benefits people, given that it does not go beyond seeing them as puppets that are just to be helped in order to sustain the established order.

5.4 Europe 2020: A distinctive neoliberal governmentality?

To get to the answer of this question, the findings from the previous chapters will be analyzed by applying the Critical Frame Analysis method. In each identified frame, I will start with the diagnosis, the initial step of the method that examines the framing of the problem. The prognosis, which looks into the solutions that the policy document pinpoints, will follow after that.

Right from the introduction of Europe 2020, the major framing of the problem is hard to miss. It is the competition to dominant economic forces like Japan and the US and other up-and-coming players. This competition is pertaining to a variety of aspects, ranging from fiscal and employment figures, to the population's productivity score and age. The USA were good in proactively responding to the markets' future demands by swiftly providing it with what it craved, whereas rising economies, such as India and China had started matching the former. Not falling behind and not remaining in a slump with a non-foreseeable exit demanded the use of the same means that others have used to grow. This is the diagnosis, increased competition owed to more innovation, an answer to be delivered with a double-down on innovation efforts. Continuous benchmarking, against member states and third countries would maintain the Community's drive to implement the Agenda, serving both as a naming and shaming practice and as a stressor to implement the necessary reforms. This process is found in decision-making, in assessing universities' status, progress in digital reforms, early drop-out rates from schools and so on. However, the EU believed that it was innovation that would allow for a greater capacity to challenge its key economic partners in competitiveness:

> "At a time of public budget constraints, major demographic changes and increasing global competition, Europe's competitiveness, our capacity to create millions of new jobs to replace those lost in the crisis and, overall, our future standard of living depends on our ability to drive innovation in products, services, business and social processes and models" (European Commission, 2010f, p.2).

And with this, I will move to the second big frame.

The second one is none other than innovation, an area in which the EU is framed as being far behind its competitors. This frame is present in the entirety of Europe 2020 and the Flagship Initiatives, as it informs all the areas that required future attention for the strategy to succeed. The preceding approach to innovation, that of the Lisbon Agenda, was seen as concerning, threating the standards of life Europeans had gotten used to, given its inability to address accordingly all the areas that have the potential to enhance innovation. Innovation was to spur growth and help member states' economies basing their growth on it to get a firm grasp of the markets by challenging the established powers in the development of new technologies and novel, highly marketable products. *Smart growth* and *sustainable growth*, two of Europe 2020 priorities, had their success linked directly to innovation, whereas the third priority, *inclusive growth*, was more of a goal dependent on achieving the first two. Innovation was to pay off in competitiveness. Moving on with the prognosis, innovation was to be pushed in every thematic area Europe 2020 touches. Innovation was to be pushed in education, with pupils and disadvantaged groups getting classes and lessons in entrepreneurship, in the fight against climate change and resource scarcity by developing new environmentally friendly products, modernizing the traditional industry sector. Infrastructure modernization and expansion also had an important role to play and thus had to be pursued, so that the foundations for innovation be present.

The third and final frame present in these documents is efficiency. As shown during their analysis, efficiency is understood both as the removal of administrative burdens and as the minimization of cost. Resolving issues of fragmentation is the first step. This translates into cutting back on bureaucracy in order to increase flexibility and agility of the national and supranational agencies, a decrease that would equal an increase in the quality of their provided services. ICT skills, innovation, resource and energy efficiency, efficiency-oriented reforms of plans to combat poverty and to reform the pension systems, together with efficient employment policies through flexicurity would drive defragmentation efforts. Efficiency is both understood as a budget-saving move and as the introduction of agility in policymaking and services. In the sense of limiting expenditure, the involvement of the private sector in many financing schemes makes the case. From financing infrastructure, innovation projects, their involvement in projects targeting inclusion and employment, it gets to contribute either financially or by forming synergies with the public sector. The latter also grants them an instrumental role in the mission for an administratively flexible, quickly adjustable public sector and funds some of their research projects. The envisioned openness, interpreted as easier mobility for EU and non-EU members, quick adoption of new ideas and prompt introduction of new products in the market, is part of this flexibility. This openness is part of a larger effort to create policies that do not hinder innovators, or businesses in general from entering the market and compete with the disadvantage of burdening regulations and the delayed introduction to consumers of what they have to sell. It also manifests itself in better communication practices of citizens' rights, an initiative that would inform people of their rights and help them make rational, advantageous for them decisions. Not to mention the homo œconomicus in the making, as shown in all these frames, who handles themselves efficiently not just by making rational choices, but contributes to the efficiency of the entire system too.

Inspired by Walker, Reed and Fletcher's (2020) and Meier's (2008) use of CFA in their research, it is also important to make mention of the silences in Europe 2020 and the Flagship Initiatives, especially in regards to who exactly gets to benefit from the new strategy. In the Flagship Initiative *European Platform against Poverty,* several societal groups are presented as having been impacted more severely not just by the crisis, but also by the states' indifference/ineptitude to shape the conditions required to grant them a good standing in the market, let alone in society in general. While the approach followed by Europe 2020 is intersectional to a degree, this intersectionality is not found in the people whose lives would benefit from a smarter, sustainable, inclusive economy, as they are mostly thought of as homogenous groups. What is meant by the term woman is rather unclear, leaving the interpretation, and thus the applicability of measures targeting specific categories of women up to the states. Given that different states have different laws on women's rights, LGBTQ rights, different migration and antidiscrimination laws (although the EU does set a minimum of standards to be adopted by every member state), the intersection of identities is missed. Thus, certain intersections are not only not focused on in the monitoring reports (such as non-white women, trans* individuals for example), but were not even able to be considered during the drafting process. As for power relations, a dynamic taken into consideration in both of the aforementioned articles and also explored in Spehar's (2015) use of CFA, they are not evident as group to group relations. Instead, I have observed a public-private dynamic, where the latter does have the upper hand and does not just influence, but rather guide the decisions of the public institutions.

Thanks to Critical Frame Analysis, the three identified frames, the focus on competition, innovation and efficiency, are able to confirm the presence of a neoliberal governmentality and Foucault's theory of Biopolitics. Foucault saw as the core focus of neoliberalism, no matter it's country of origin, the principles of the market as the base on which governing in general would establish itself (2012, p.131). Competition is at the heart of Europe 2020, a principle which he identified as having regulatory power over the functioning of society and according to which citizens are adapted to and eventually formed into the homo œconomicus. As described in the first frame identified, competition informs the entire process of policymaking, from the initial talks with social partners, the business world, and NGOs, to policy implementation and progress monitoring. Not only would the progress be tracked, but it would also be compared to the situation in which other big trading partners are in key areas. Every issue dealt with by the Flagship Initiatives was to be addressed in a manner that eventually should lead to the EU's economy situating itself more competitively in the international markets. Even poverty is viewed from the market perspective, with the resolution of this phenomenon being inextricably linked to achieving increased competitiveness. Everything is analyzed from the economic perspective; the economic benefit finds itself at the core of every decision made, turning the functioning of society and of the individual to one resembling that of a business. Not surprisingly, the private sector is heavily cared for and was given more leeway to operate more quickly and with greater support by the public sector, both by weakening administrative processes and by providing it with financing opportunities. This in turn sets limits to the sphere of intervention of the state, curbing its ability to put restrictions in a game whose outcome is always uncertain and whose wholeness cannot be completely understood, given its worldwide scope and the multitude of personal benefits. So, what is left to do? Nothing more than following the nature of the market, not disturbing its natural order, if one wishes to not suffer the consequences. This however does not mean that sovereignty is to be abandoned, it just shifts its focus to catering conditions to the market that help the ones governed reap the maximum benefits by aligning themselves to the rules of the game.

This makes Europe 2020, which is defined by its neoliberal governmentality, inherently biopolitical in its approach. It acknowledged the natural order of the market and aimed to make administrative changes that introduced a way of living and behaving compliant to market trends and its requirement of constant competition.

5.5. Has Europe 2020 been a success?

Well, the answer to this is not simple. To start with, judging from the most recent report based on the monitoring by Eurostat (European Commission and Statistical Office of the European Union, 2019), an agency also tasked with the monitoring of the progress of Europe 2020, the data looks promising. The goal of a 75% employment rate was in 2018 at 73,2% and even countries noticeably impacted by the 2008 financial crisis are reported to be on track of recovery in spite of the pre-crisis rate being higher than their current one (2019, pp.22–31). Older people and women also enjoy higher employability, even though a gender employment gap, mainly attributed to caring responsibilities, is still present and especially noticeable in the case of women between the age of 25-49. It is however noted that the migrant population has not recovered to pre-2008 levels.

On the contrary, having reached the 2,06% mark by 2018, the target of 3% on R&D expenditure would not be achieved by 2020, according to the same report (2019, p.35). Enterprises remain the biggest investors in funding towards innovation development, while publicly funded research has folded and an uptick in incentives for the private sector to innovate has been recorded. The latter development lowers the amount of research conducted in areas of non-critical importance for the market, like social security, health, quality of life (2019, p.38), but it is a tactic observed in China, Japan and the USA as well.

The third headline target is projected to be achieved by 2020. Greenhouse gas emissions have been lowered more than originally planned owing to the onset of the financial crisis, investment in renewable energy is well on track, as is energy consumption (2019, pp.44–55).

On the educational front, things are looking good too. Early school leavers' proportion had fallen to 10.6% in 2018, against a target of 10% and the 40% mark of 30 to 34-year-olds with a degree from tertiary education had been reached. Countries in the South have shown a substantial drop in young people not finishing their secondary education, but 4 Eastern European countries together with Sweden have seen a rise; a worrying trend given that on the EU level more than 50% of people with such an educational background end up not bring part of the labor force (2019, p.61). What also increased in the meantime, was the gender gap among such graduates, which grew to 10,1% in 2018 from being almost non-existent in 2002 (2019, p.62).

As for the final target, reducing the number of people at poverty or at risk of social exclusion by 20 million, the target will not only not be achieved by 2020, but it will also be missed noticeably by 16 million (2019, p.68). In women (23,3%) it is not the unequal sharing of household responsibilities that creates this risk, an issue believed to be solved, so it is thought that single-parent households with dependent children contribute in women's heightened risk. Young people constitute the most affected group (29% for 18-24-year-olds), followed by people with disabilities, whose percentage varies from 19,9% to 36% depending on the degree of their disability. 47% of single-parent households -often comprised by women-, 34,3% of people with low secondary education and 62,9% of their children, 38,3% of non-EU-born citizens and 23,9% of inhabitants in rural areas are the remaining identified groups with higher risk (2019, pp.71–75).

Judging from the quantitative data, one could draw many conclusions. From a staunch neoliberal standpoint, the convergence of every life aspect to a market-based rationality seems to be well underway. The inability of improving the well-being of Europeans, a byproduct of a well-functioning, intervention-free market could be explained by a yet unsuccessful, proper adjustment to the market. It could be also said that missing some of the targets -or rather the worsening of the situation in the domain of poverty- is nothing more than a natural occurrence manifesting itself after the aligning to the market's rationality had started to remediate the distortions created by previous state interventions, thus exposing the actual weaknesses prevalent in each member's economy. Nevertheless, growth might have occurred, but not in an inclusive manner. The conditionality of the benefits for social inclusion stemming from a competition-based approach suggested by neoliberal governmentality is only meant to make it easier for everyone to partake in the game. If everyone was able to govern themselves as one would govern a business, meaning making yourself investable and desirable by making the right choices, no one would remain in a disadvantaged position. Yet this approach does not do anything against what initially put disadvantaged groups in such positions, it just attempts to include them in the game. Social cohesion and well-being prerequisite economic growth, a decoupling thereof is not even given a thought. In patriarchal, institutionally discriminating systems made by the few for the specific few, many people will inevitably have it difficult to prosper.

6. Diffractive Understandings

With Diffraction, my aim is to provide more input that confirms the dedication of Europe 2020 to neoliberal ideals and to show through a quick contextual analysis that further problems exacerbated the shortcoming stemming from the neoliberal approach.

To start with, Barad's theory of Agential Realism will be used in this paragraph in order to provide backing to the following arguments. In short, the theory maintains the existence of a mutual relationship between matter and meaning, where one influences the other and vice versa. It is used supplementary to add to Foucault's Biopolitics, as it accounts for a system where everything has agency and the potential to exercise influence. The recent Covid-19 pandemic constitutes, in my opinion, a proper example to display this intra-action in motion. Its massive impact on the international market and the consequences thereof on the employment rate had the Commission introduce the proposal *Recovery Plan for Europe*, a response seeing an increased budget of €1.100 billion for the 2021-2017 period and a recovery instrument of €750 billion (2020a). With its 3 pillars, it aims to provide the necessary help for weathering the new crisis. The first pillar aims to help states recover from the crisis thanks to funds provided in the form of grants and loans to member states, as long as they will be used for goals identified in the European Semester and are aligned with the green, digital transformation (€560 bn.) and climate neutral transition (€40 bn.) Companies, other governmental levels and the European Agricultural Funds for Rural Development would be strengthened too (€55 and 15€ bn. respectively). The second pillar shall support the private sector with investment funds and funding support for viable companies (€30.3 and €31 bn.), while the third one intends to address the shortcomings exposed by the pandemic. Specifically, a new health programme shall be established with a budget of €9.4 billion being allocated to it, while the existing mechanisms dealing with large-scale emergencies are planned to be reinforced with €3.1 billion. In the same plan, the EC also presented the adjustments made in its *Work Programme* for 2020. Its focal points, at first sight, seem unaltered to the ones of Europe 2020. Supporting green and digitalization/ICT initiatives shall reinforce competition and lead to job creation, while tax evasion will continue to be combated. It is worth mentioning that the low business tax of countries like Luxembourg and Ireland seems to be a non-issue, or at least remains unaddressed. Unsurprisingly, upskilling -in the right domain of skills of course- shall be carried on, as are efforts to ensure access to scarce resources and openness to other markets and neighboring countries. A final decision on the proposals of the EC was made on the 21st of July 2021 (European Council, 2020), an analysis of which was impossible given this thesis' submission deadline.

Also worth noting is the development of artificial intelligence and the increasing value it is touted to add to any country involved in such efforts. Presenting the EU's plan of harnessing the potential of AI (von der Leyen, 2020), the President of the EC expressed the wish of having digital transformation and big data power the European economy. Competition for efficiency has brought with it the robotification of many sectors in the industry, with AI being now the new big milestone. The President makes note of many of the advantages it has to offer, ranging from AI-powered energy efficiency, farming and surgical operations to securing Europe prowess in this domain, given that the EU has the highest research output with regards to AI. For the latter reason, the EU is about to invest in necessary infrastructure and overall availability of big data to businesses, researchers and public services, having also considered the foreseen 11 million jobs sustained by the AI sector in about 5 years. In its White Paper on Artificial Intelligence (European Commission, 2020b), the community's approach to AI, the EC details its plan to capitalize on AI by funding research, creating infrastructure, supporting the development of needed skills, partnering with the private sector and by creating regulatory frameworks. Such legislation shall not just create the conditions for the effective and unobstructed use of AI, but at the same time shall also shield from possible disadvantages for the workforce emerging from the development of this technology, such as human and labor rights breaches, as well as liability cases emerging from faulty systems or the improper implementation thereof. As further noted by von der Leyen's remarks (2020), careful engagement with AI must be applied in order to avoid the creation of biases within these systems, which could be then further propagated by its use. With the EC touting AI as a "strategic technology" (2020b, p.25), the familiar by now pattern becomes once again visible. This time however, it is matter that influences meaning, it reinforces the neoliberal understanding of the system. Gains in efficiency and competitiveness, thanks to AI, make the argument for the continuation of the existing strategy. The biopolitical aspect is not missing either, as further changes in legislation, education and infrastructure are being proposed to create the set of conditions leading to the fruition of technologies benefiting from big data. As for the current pandemic, it has equally contributed to this understanding, as instead of focusing primarily on job security and temporary financing of people in hardship, the economy is seen in need of being better oriented towards the market, so that arising issues from unemployment are combated.

Another issue coming forth thanks to the use of the diffractive methodology, which is also a silence that unraveled itself thanks to CFA, is the intersectional nature of the people benefitting from a smart, sustainable, and inclusive growth. What is interesting is that it actually does not seem to be manifesting, raising thus the issue of context. As was mentioned in the previous subchapter, there is a silence on the category of women, as well as on other categories. How a woman is defined is unaddressed. If she is to be solely defined by traditional roles connected with womanhood, it can be argued that the Agenda is not addressing women's rights issues that play a major role in their wellbeing. Prominent examples would be the duration of parental leave, their overrepresentation in part-time jobs, gender-based violence and the gender pay gap. All of these issues vary to a degree of severity from country to country according to the most recent Gender Equality Index (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2020). If they happen to be a member of the LGBTQ community, further problems are added to the list. In a survey published by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2020), the situation for non-straight individuals seems to have gotten worse, given that 21% felt discriminated at work, with the percentage climbing to 36% for trans* people, 48% of the respondents still conceal their sexual identity and only 33% and 24% of the overall participant number and trans* participants, respectively believe that enough is done on the nation level in the fight against discrimination (2020, pp.10–13). Additionally, non-white people, individuals with an ethnic origin or immigrant background and respondents living with disabilities indicated these parts of their identity as further grounds of discrimination. As for intersex people, only two states have forbidden medical intervention on intersex babies on a non-consensual basis (2020, p.21) and regarding same-sex couples, only 11 member states have extended the provision of parental leave to them. While other demographics, such as age, race and citizenship could be analyzed as well, the line will be drawn here due to constraints of time and length. The use of women and LGBTQ people was used as an example to showcase the importance of context and scale, in a way similar to that of Roy (2016).

Nevertheless, it can be observed that the variety of contexts within the EU is immense. This creates an additional obstacle to the achievement of the goals of Europe 2020, as a holistic approach would be hard to implement where a lack of uniformity and convergence is present.

Adding to that, the EU's structure and the competencies granted to it, as described in Chapter 3, render the attempt even harder in its application. With issues related to equality and social policy remaining to the competency of the member states and the impossibility for the affected individuals to fix issues of systemic inequality themselves, no matter how well they govern themselves, it can be easily deduced that economic growth is not a panacea for every single issue.

7. Conclusion

The method of Critical Frame Analysis has provided answers to the three question this thesis has sought to answer. To the first question, as to whether Europe 2020 is of neoliberal nature, the answer is yes. It does correspond to Foucault's concept of Biopolitics and neoliberal governmentality and also carries the characteristics that Brown has identified as inherent to neoliberalism. The market constitutes the base of everything and responding correctly to its changes and needs legitimizes the governing structures, as it is widely believed that doing so leads to prosperity and the population's well-being. Individuals are controlled through their freedom, as, because of it, it gets to them abundantly clear that succeeding or failing depends on their own will to stick to the rules of the game and make the right choices, to govern themselves with profitability in mind. Social policy is thus, also penetrated by the market rationality. As for the last two questions, Europe 2020 has achieved some of its goals to a certain degree, but without everyone being able to benefit from these changes. Most notably, the goal~~s~~ of lifting 20 million people out of poverty was severely missed. Supplementing these findings with the use of the method of Diffraction, the shortcomings of Foucault's theory were addressed and the argument of the strategy's neoliberal approach was further enhanced. It simultaneously allowed the exploration of a more nuanced understanding of the strategy's failure. Matter has played an important role in convincing the EU and the member states that an even deeper neoliberal approach will help with almost any issue arising down the road, be it a systemic one, a natural disaster or a pandemic. As for systemic issues, the failure of shaping an inclusive growth is also to blame on omissions in the planning of social policy that exist because of the competencies assigned to the EU by the member states. Missing competencies in areas of human rights and social policy make it hard to create adequate social protection and inclusion measures that are truly applicable in the multitude of contexts existing within the EU.

Regarding my own positionality as the researcher conducting this review of Europe 2020, this project is its own little phenomenon. According to Agential Realism, the researcher, the time of the writing, the methods, the data and the theories used, all exist in an intra-acting relation to each other, shaping and being shaped and then, creating a reality which can be claimed to be an objective truth, when all of them are considered. That objectivity is an "agentially enacted material condition of exteriority-within-phenomena" (2007, p.175), meaning that in these specific circumstances one can explore the effects of these intra-actions and reach an objective conclusion. Making even the smallest of changes to a part of it would result in a different intra-action and thus, a different outcome. In this thesis, it was my interest in the EU and conviction that the institution's vision has already been permeated by neoliberal views that have been getting increasingly evident as of late, that motived me to choose this topic. Making myself accountable for the outcome of this thesis means that I acknowledge my influence on the research, that I am too, part of the phenomenon that this thesis constitutes. The methods chosen to research Europe 2020 and the Flagship Initiatives, along with the quantitative data, allow me to confidently answer the research questions. In short, these answers are objective, but a change to one of the parts constituting the research could lead to different answers.

One important aspect worth mentioning is the contribution of this research to the interdisciplinary field of Gender Studies. Some could even wonder if this project is fitting to be conducted by a postgraduate student in this field, as the subjects of research were not people whose interaction with power dynamics is described in a way that elucidates prejudice, discrimination and other societal and structural inequalities. I would counter that argument by claiming, that it is exactly that with which my project engaged, even if it was on a more abstract level. Its most important contribution is the actual examination of this specific far-reaching strategy, as it seems to be the first of its kind coming from a feminist perspective. Many articles have been written in the last 10 years on the EU's social policy strategies and the effects that policies from other domains have had on inclusion and equality, yet none examined the underlying strategy that set the tone for each of them. Furthermore, from a theoretical standpoint, it acknowledges the widespread use of Foucault's Biopolitics in social and political science as valuable, but also highlights its shortcomings owing to the passivity granted to matter. Foucault's Biopolitics does not embrace the potential of matter and its ability to not just be shaped by discourse, but also shape the discourse in return. The use of Agential Realism and Diffraction have allowed me to showcase this, as well as the fact that the main theory utilized does not take into consideration issues of context that also shape reality. In fact, exploring other contexts as well, such as the increasing dominance of Germany within the EU and the emerging neocolonialism coming forth through the amplified North-South divide in the last decade, could provide more insight and further supplement existing theories. The passage from discussing theoretical frameworks to their practical application is a complex feat. It can become easier though, if issues' complexities are being shed light upon when Diffraction and Agential Realism are added to the research process. Context awareness is critical to the success of research and action that wants to ameliorate people's lives. Therefore, I would suggest Diffraction and Agential Realism as complementary steps to a research that uses abstract concepts, as they provide both increased context and more room for practical application.

Conclusively, this thesis makes the case for a strategy that was doomed from its very inception to fail in its aim for an inclusive growth, due to its shortsightedness. It approached every thematic area with the motive of economic benefit, translated as competition and innovation within the neoliberal capitalist system, an approach that does not automatically solve issues of systemic nature. This is anything but surprising, given that Europe 2020 does not want to and cannot do so. It does not want to, because in neoliberal governmentality, inclusion and social well-being are the natural outcomes of a competitive, innovative economy that respects the market's natural order. In fact, the inclusion of this target has been described as conjunctural, a statement supported by its last-minute addition to the strategy (Copeland and Daly, 2012). It also cannot do so, given the limit to the EU's competencies. In spite of the obvious shortcomings in addressing poverty and inequality, both of which have been reported by quantitative data to be growing and will probably be growing more severely due to the alt-right/extreme right-wing movement hatching in Europe, the EU and its member states do not seem to be considering a change in their direction. The current Covid-19 pandemic will most likely undo the progress made in the past 10 years- if it has not already done so. What is certain is that it has seemingly made the institution come forward with a plan insisting on competition and innovation, instead of considering the search for other sources on which inequality and poverty are dwelling on.

To close this thesis, I hope that my research has sparked your interest in European politics and in context-aware approaches to social issues, such as equality. Even better, it may even have given you ideas on starting your own research or insight on how to complement it. Maybe it has inspired you to research European policy from a feminist perspective, a field that I have grown to love. As for me, I am very content with the outcome this thesis. It has been an enriching, constructive journey that I am grateful to have embarked on.

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Appendix

Abbreviations

AI	Artificial Intelligence
CERT	Computer Emergency Response Teams
CFA	Critical Frame Analysis
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
EAFRD	European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
EC	European Commission
ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
EIGE	European Institute for Gender Equality
EIT	European Institute of Information and Technology
ENISA	European Union Agency for Cybersecurity
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESF	European Social Fund
EU	European Union
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
LGBTQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans*, Queer
SME	Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises
TEU	Treaty of the European Union
TFEU	Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union