

GENERATION CARBON

Loss, goodness and youth climate activism
in Norway's oil capital



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Summary

In this dissertation *Generation Carbon – loss, goodness and youth climate activism in Norway's oil capital*, I explore generational dynamics of youth climate activism in Norway's oil capital, Stavanger, and the local and situated dilemmas of phasing out fossil fuels in the context of a welfare society that understands itself as enabled by technologies of oil and gas production.

Drawing on nine months of in-person and online ethnographic fieldwork, the dissertation analyses the young climate activists' practices and their relationship to their oil industry dependent parents and local community. Because carbon emissions from oil and gas and their impact on the global climate are one of the most defining challenges of this generation of young people – in my own opinion and in that of the young Norwegians who participated in my study - I name them 'Generation Carbon.' In this dissertation, I focus on climate activism as one response to the predicament of Stavanger's Generation Carbon. I set out to understand and discuss their experiences and how they must relate to oil and the wealth it brings their nation and local community in new ways, as the rising level of carbon in the atmosphere makes the production and use of fossil fuels increasingly damaging and complex. However, situated in an oil city that stands to lose its wealth and significance, the young activists face a dilemma of loss. If their aim to preserve a climatically liveable future by phasing out Norwegian oil and gas production becomes successful it will have severe consequences for the flourishing of their local community.

Over the course of four chapters, I demonstrate that climate change in Stavanger is causing experiences of loss, demands for technoscientific facticity, as well as shifts and changes in what is regarded as 'doing good' and that new understandings of 'goodness' are emerging and being contested locally. Out of the combination of experiences of loss and attempts to realign with a tradition of Norwegian goodness – encompassing the universalist welfare state, environmentalism and peacebuilding - grows an activism with a particular window of opportunity to act on the experiences of loss through activism.

The central argument I put forward in the dissertation is that the oil-saturated social environment of Stavanger produces an activism that works from the theory of change that the future can be *refigured* through caring for social relations in the present despite radical disagreement. Refiguration is a pivotal way of giving a new shape to an undesired future of climate catastrophe. This relationship between activism and the future grows out of an implicated and caring activism that acknowledges and works from the premise that it is relationally intertwined with and presently benefits from that which it aims to change. The concept of refiguration grows out of my observation that in Stavanger, the future is a site of loss which is already present through the ways the activists experience information about climate change emotionally and affectually in their bodies. Through their caring and implicated activism, the Stavanger activists seek to act on this pre-emptive yet present loss in order to give the future a shape where disaster is avoided or diminished.

The dissertation contributes to scholarly understandings of activism in the Global North by adding refiguration as a novel conceptualisation of the relationship between activism and the future based on the activist responses of Stavanger's Generation Carbon.

In summary, the dissertation tells a story of unease and hesitation towards the present propelled by a double sense of loss, alongside a need to hinge ideas about 'the good' in the future with ideas about 'the

good' in the present. Thus, the dissertation ethnographically depicts how phasing out oil and gas are just as much about social and cultural change as about dismantling or abandoning fossil infrastructure alongside the bureaucratic regulation such action requires.

Sammendrag

I avhandlingen *Generation Carbon – loss, goodness and youth climate activism in Norway's oil capital* undersøker jeg generasjonsdynamikker i ungdomsklimaaktivisme i Norges oljehovedstad Stavanger, samt de lokale og situerte dilemmaene som springer ut av å utfase olje og gass i et velferdssamfunn som forstår seg selv som muliggjort av olje- og gassproduksjonsteknologier.

På bakgrunn av ni måneders etnografisk feltarbeid fordelt mellom personlig og nettbasert tilstedeværelse analyserer jeg i avhandlingen de unge klimaaktivistenes praksiser og deres forhold til de oljeindustriavhengige foreldrene og lokalsamfunnet. Fordi karbonutslipp fra olje og gass er en av de viktigste definerende utfordringene for denne generasjonen av ungdommer – etter min mening og den til de unge norske aktivistene, som deltok i studien min – giver jeg dem navnet 'Generasjon Karbon'. Jeg setter ut for å forstå opplevelsen deres av at de må relatere til olje og velstanden oljen har bragt nasjonen og lokalsamfunnet deres på nye måter i takt med at økende nivåer av karbon gjør produksjonen av fossile brensler mer og mer ødeleggende og kompleks. Ettersom de befinner seg i en oljeby, som står til å miste velstanden og betydningen sin står de unge aktivistene overfor et tapsdilemma. Oppnår de målet sitt om å bevare en framtid med et levelig klima ved å utfase norsk olje og gass, da vil det ha alvorlige negative konsekvenser for lokalsamfunnet deres.

Igjennom fire kapitler demonstrerer jeg at de globale klimaendringene i Stavanger medfører opplevelser av tap, krav om teknovitenskapelige fakta samt skift og endringer i hva som blir oppfattet som å 'gjøre godt' samtidig som der oppstår nye forståelser av 'godhet' og uenighet om disse lokalt i Stavanger. Ut av kombinasjonen av opplevelser av tap og forsøk på å gjenetablere overensstemmelse med en tradisjon av norsk godhet, der innebærer den universalistiske velferdsstaten, omsorg for naturen og fredsoppbygning, vokser en aktivisme med et særlig mulighetsrom for å handle på opplevelsene av tab gjennom aktivisme.

Det sentrale argumentet jeg fremfører i avhandlingen er at Stavangers oljegjennomsyrede sosiale miljø produserer en aktivisme som arbeider fra den forandringsteorien at framtiden kan bli refigurert ved å utvise omsorg for sosiale relasjoner i nuet på tross av radikale uenigheter. Refiguration er en avgjørende måte å gi en ny form til en uønsket framtid preget av klimakatastrofe. Dette forholdet mellom aktivisme og framtiden vokser ut av en implisert og omsorgsfull aktivisme, som anerkjenner og arbeider fra den premissen at den er relasjonelt sammenfiltret med og drager nytte i nuet av det, som den søker å forandre. Konseptet refigurasjon vokser ut av min observasjon, at i Stavanger er framtiden som et sted preget av tab allerede tilstede i nuet gjennom de måtene som aktivistene opplever informasjon om klimaendringene følelsesmessig og affektivt i kroppene sine. Igjennom den omsorgsfulle og impliserte aktivismen sin forsøker Stavangeraktivistene å agere på dette forutgribende og tilstedeværende tap med det formål å gi framtiden en ny form, hvori katastrofe kan bli unngått eller redusert.

Avhandlingen bidrar til akademiske forståelse av aktivisme i det Globale Nord ved å tilføye en ny konseptualisering av forholdet mellom aktivisme og framtiden basert på de aktivistiske responsene fra Stavangers Generasjon Karbon.

I helheten sin forteller avhandlingen en historie om ubehag overfor nuet drevet av en dobbelt følelse av tap sammen med et behov for å sammenkople ideer om 'det gode' i framtiden sammen med ideer om 'det gode' i nuet. Dermed portretterer avhandlingen etnografisk, hvordan det å utfase olje og gass i like høy grad

handler om sosial og kulturell endring som å nedbryte, omstrukturere og demontere fossil infrastruktur og den byråkratiske regulering dette innebærer.

Resumé

I denne afhandling *Generation Carbon – loss, goodness and youth climate activism in Norway's oil capital* undersøger jeg de generationelle dynamikker af ungdomsklimaaktivisme i Norges olie hovedstad Stavanger samt de lokale og situerede dilemmaer medfører at udfase olie og gas i konteksten af et velfærdssamfund, som forstår sig selv som muligjort af olie- og gasproduktionsteknologier.

På baggrund af ni måneders etnografisk feltarbejde gennem både personlig tilstedeværelse og online tilstedeværelse, analyserer jeg i afhandlingen de unge klimaaktivisters praksisser og forhold til deres forældre og lokalsamfund, som alle på egen vis er afhængige af olieindustrien. Fordi CO₂ udledning fra olie og gas, såkaldte carbon emissioner, er en af de vigtigste definerende udfordringer for denne generation af unge – efter min mening såvel som de unge norske aktivister, der deltog i min forskning – navngiver jeg dem 'Generation Carbon'. Jeg sætter ud for at forstå og diskutere deres oplevelse af, at de bliver nødt til at relatere til olien og den velstand den har bragt deres nation og lokalsamfund på nye måder i takt med, at stigende niveauer af carbon i atmosfæren gør produktionen af fossile brændstoffer tiltagende ødelæggende og kompleks. Eftersom de er situerede i en olieby, der står til at miste sin velstand og betydning står de unge aktivister dog overfor et tabsdilemma. Hvis de opnår deres mål om at bevare en fremtid med et leveligt klima ved at udfase norsk olie og gas, så vil det have alvorlige negative konsekvenser for deres lokalsamfund.

Igennem fire kapitler demonstrerer jeg, at de globale klimaforandringer i Stavanger medfører oplevelser af tab, krav om teknovidenskabelige fakta såvel som skift og forandringer i, hvad der bliver betragtet som at 'gøre godt' samtidig med, at der opstår nye forståelser af 'godhed', der ikke er stabiliseret enighed om i Stavanger. Ud af kombinationen af oplevelser af tab og forsøg på at genetablere overensstemmelse med en tradition af norsk godhed, der indebærer den universalistiske velfærdsstat, omsorg for naturen og fredsofbygning, vokser en aktivisme med et særligt mulighedsrum for at handle på oplevelserne af tab gennem aktivisme.

Det centrale argument, jeg fremfører i afhandlingen, er at Stavangers olie gennemsyrede sociale miljø producerer en aktivisme, der arbejder fra en forandringsteori om at fremtiden kan blive refigureret ved at udvise omsorg for sociale relationer i nuet på trods af radikale uenigheder. Refigurering er en afgørende tilgang til at give en ny form til en uønsket fremtid præget af klimakatastrofe. Dette forhold mellem aktivisme og fremtiden vokser ud af en impliceret og omsorgsfuld aktivisme, der anerkender og arbejder fra den præmis, at den er relationelt sammenfiltret med og drager nytte i nuet fra det, som den søger at forandre. Konceptet refigurering vokser ud af min observation, at i Stavanger er fremtiden et sted, der er tabsdefineret allerede til stede i nuet gennem den måde aktivisterne oplever information om klimaforandringerne følelsesmæssigt og affektivt i deres kroppe. Gennem deres omsorgsfulde og implicerede aktivisme forsøger Stavangeraktivisterne at agere på dette både foregribende og tilstedeværende tab med formålet at give fremtiden en ny form, hvori katastrofe kan blive undgået eller formindsket.

Afhandlingen bidrager til akademiske forståelser af aktivisme i det Globale Nord ved at tilføje en ny konceptualisering af forholdet mellem aktivisme og fremtiden baseret på de aktivistiske responser fra Stavangers Generation Carbon.

I sin helhed fortæller afhandlingen en historie om ubehag og tøven overfor nuet drevet af en dobbelt følelse af tab sammen med et behov for at sammenkoble ideer om 'det gode' i fremtiden med ideer om 'det

gode' i nuet. Således portrætterer afhandlingen etnografisk hvordan det at udfase olie og gas handler lige så meget om social og kulturel forandring, som det handler om at nedbryde, omstrukturere og demontere fossil infrastruktur og den dertilhørende bureaukratiske regulering.

Note on translation

Norway has two official languages, ‘norsk’, Norwegian, and ‘sámi’, Sámi. The majority language in Norway is Norwegian, which comes in two written versions: Bokmål and Nynorsk. The former is closest to Danish, and is primarily used in the South and East of Norway. The second was created in 1853 as a synthesis of regional dialects of Norwegian, and was intended by its creator Ivar Aasen as a means of differentiating Norway from the language of the Danes, who were at the time enforcing colonial rule over Norway. Nynorsk was officially recognised in 1885 (Brittanica n.d., see also Loftsdóttir and Jensen 2021).

In practice, however, Norwegian consists of a lively variety of dialects. Norway’s municipalities can choose to have an official language, but some remain neutral and in several municipalities in the Northern part of Norway, different Samí languages are used as the official language. In Stavanger, the official language is Bokmål, though Stavanger has its own distinct varieties of dialects that most people speak and use as written language for informal communication. In accordance with the official language of the municipality of Stavanger, I have chosen to present Norwegian words and phrases in Bokmål, unless they come from written sources originally in Nynorsk. I present my own translation to English in the main text and original Bokmål in the footnotes.

Writing this dissertation English enables me to connect with an international community of researchers. However, it glosses over some of the situated specificity of the original language that the present study has been carried out in. To retain at least some of this specificity and situatedness of my research, I have chosen to keep an original Norwegian Bokmål version of all direct speech in the footnotes of the dissertation. Some sentences come from recorded interviews, some are reconstructed approximations based on my fieldnotes. I keep these Bokmål phrases as reminder of the language the research took place in order to preserve a sense of the original language that the dissertation’s points and arguments grow from, as well as to give my bilingual readers a chance to see tension points of translation. If specific words or phrasings are of particular ethnographic importance, I attend to them in the main text.

INTRODUCTION

Wrapped up in a woollen coat and a big scarf, 16-year-old Nora presented a passionate appeal to care for the climate and environment on behalf of future generations. “If we are to preserve the planet and the environment both now and for future generations, we need a change of direction,”¹ she said causing a round of applause. The November darkness embraced the small, cobbled square in the city centre of Stavanger, where some 20 people in their early to late teens gathered to light candles in support of the Norwegian Constitution’s Article 112. This Article importantly states that everyone has the right to a liveable environment including future generations (see Figure 1). In her speech, Nora expressed pride in this part of the Norwegian constitution.

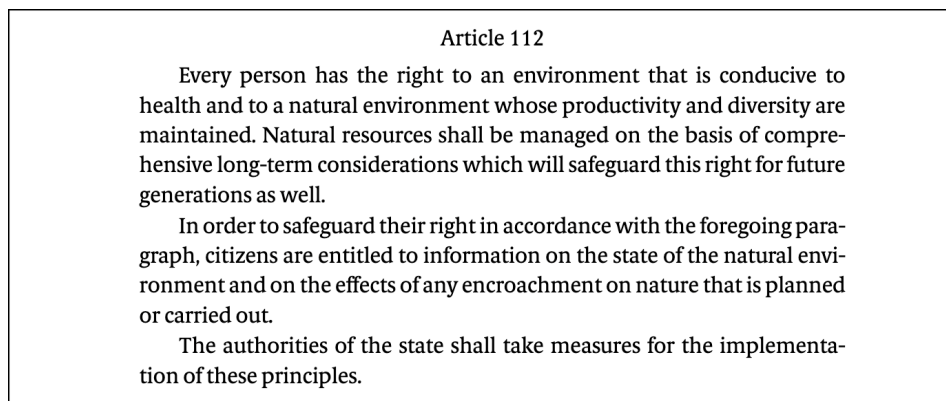


Figure 1 Screenshot of Article 112 in the online English version of the Norwegian constitution (Stortinget, n.d.)

However, we gathered at the square on this particular evening because the activists asserted that Article 112 had been breached as new oil drilling licenses had been awarded in the Norwegian Arctic, a location previously closed to oil exploration. They argued that continued and expanding oil exploration would severely compromise the right of future generations to a liveable environment because expansion of oil production undermines important climate targets such as the Paris Agreements’ 2-degree target. The activists stressed such climate goals as a collective responsibility, emphasising that Norway has a responsibility for the carbon emissions that occur when exported Norwegian oil is combusted abroad.

¹ Norwegian Bokmål: “Skal vi bevare kloden og miljøet både nå og for etterslekten må vi skifte kurs”

In her appeal, Nora underlined that she felt lucky to live in Norway, where the government is obliged by the constitution to take care of the climate and the environment to the benefit of present as well as future generations. However, Nora also pointed out there seemed to be a need to remind the government of this obligation.

After Nora's appeal, we gathered around a stone monument on the square. A young person with curly hair and a practical outdoor jacket gave me a small candle. The metal wrapping around the small candle was cold to the touch in the November evening. We would light our candles when the digital clock hit 18:14, to mirror the Norwegian Constitution which had come into effect in 1814. Article 112 was not added until 1992. This was an awkward number to translate into digital clock time so we stuck to 18:14.

"It's time"² someone announced. Lighters appeared from pockets and wandered among hands as we lit our candles. A person standing next to me extended a lit candle towards mine helping me light its flame from hers. We placed the lights on the stone monument (see Figure 2). A cold wind was blowing, and it was a continuous work to keep the lights shining.

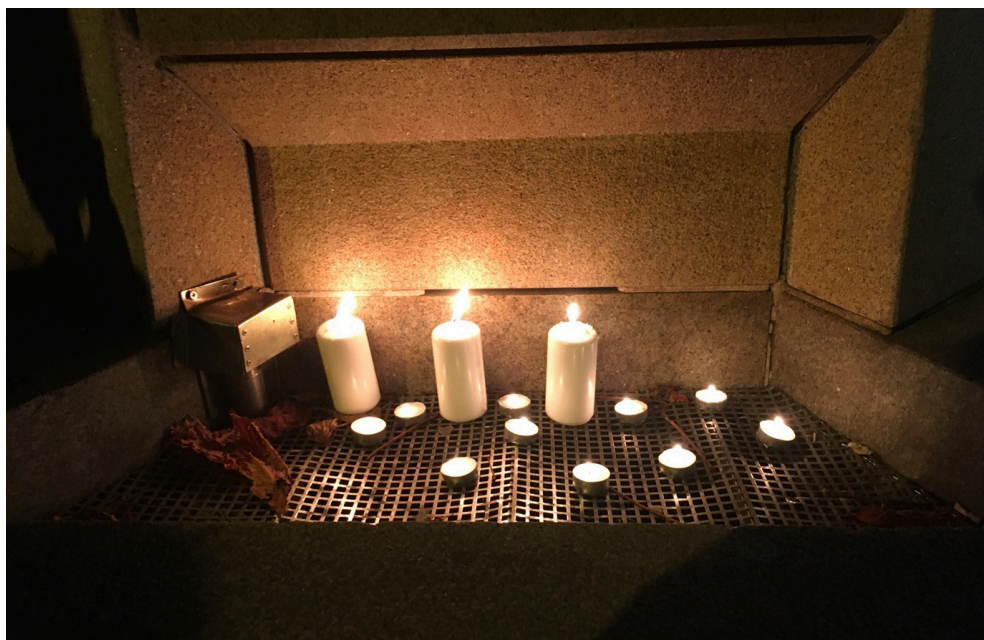


Figure 2 Candles lit by young climate activists in Stavanger in support of the Norwegian Constitution's Article 112.

Nora presented a big paper box and revealed the contents: a huge marzipan covered cake with Article 112 written in chocolate letters surrounded by pink marzipan roses and black chocolate butterflies. We gathered around her to get a piece of cake which we ate on paper plates with compostable, single-use forks. The large cake and the warm glow of the candles attracted people passing by the square. However, upon learning the event was in opposition of new oil and gas drilling licenses most people declined a piece of cake.

I lit candles with Nora and some of Stavanger's other young climate activists on my first visit to Stavanger in late 2019. At the time, I did not quite understand why people declined a piece of cake. By the time Nora took me to a debate at her high school two years later, my perspective had shifted. I had

2 Norwegian Bokmål: "Det er tid"

learnt from many encounters the significance of the oil and gas industry for those living in Stavanger. One particular experience cemented this for me.

“Everyone whose parents work in oil, raise your hand,”³ the young debater said as he looked out over the audience of high school students. About three quarters of the students raised their hands. The debate had become heated as the participants discussed the future of the Norwegian oil industry and what they saw as the need to either expand, sustain, or urgently begin to phase out oil and gas production as part of an ambitious climate policy. The debater, who was from the then-ruling party Høyre, was in favour of sustaining oil and gas production in combination with the development of new technology for handling carbon emissions from the production and in time, only very gradually phasing the industry out. He made a hand gesture towards the student audience and said, “all your parents are going to lose their jobs if we stop with the oil too quickly. We must be able to hold two thoughts in mind at the same time.”⁴

After the debate I chatted to Nora outside the high school. It was windy and our hair whipped about in the air. The school building is by the harbour, and we could see the Rosenberg shipyard where the production vessel, Jotun A, was laid up for essential repairs that would enable it to serve Norwegian oil fields for another 20 years. The debater did a good job, Nora thought, even though she disagreed and maintained the opinion that oil and gas urgently need to be phased out. She was especially impressed by the argument that “we must be able to hold two thoughts in mind at the same time” when it comes to oil and climate issues. “It is so tempting when he puts it like that,”⁵ Nora said, “I get why people want to believe it.”⁶

The central concerns that I address in this dissertation are aptly caught by these two situations about climate concerns and oil production in Stavanger. Throughout the following chapters, I attend to the relationship between the experiences of loss, aspirations to goodness, and the aims and challenges of youth climate activism in Norway’s oil capital Stavanger. I set out to understand and discuss the predicament experienced by young people in Stavanger, who must relate to oil and the wealth it brings their nation in new ways as the climate crisis makes the production and use of fossil fuels increasingly damaging and complex. The growing severity of the climate crisis means that young people need to navigate their relationship to oil, not only as oil, but also as the carbon, which is emitted in oil production and combustion. Because carbon emissions are one of the most important defining challenges of this generation – in my own opinion and in that of the young Norwegians I met - I name them ‘Generation Carbon’. In this dissertation, I focus on climate activism as one response to the predicament of Stavanger’s Generation Carbon. I expand upon the meaning of the name ‘Generation Carbon’ later in this introduction.

The questions I ask in the dissertation began to form as I witnessed young people around the world make demands for greener futures throughout 2018, with increasing intensity and significance in 2019. I wondered what youth climate activism looked like in a place where fossil fuels not only have negative, but also positive

3 Norwegian Bokmål: “Alle med foreldre som jobber i olje og gass opp med hånden”

4 Norwegian Bokmål: “Alle foreldrene deres kommer til å miste jobben sin om vi stopper med olje og gass for tidlig. Vi må kunne holde to tanker i hodet samtidig”

5 Norwegian Bokmål: “Det er så fristende når han sier det på den måten”

6 Norwegian Bokmål: “Jeg forstår hvorfor folk har lyst å tro på det”

consequences and associations. Stavanger is an interesting place to learn more about young climate activists because of the proximity to the oil and gas industry. There is something at stake in protesting oil and gas when your parents, friends, or extended family rely on the industry for their livelihood, and when the place you live is built on the opportunities and affluence afforded by oil and gas. The picture on the front page of the dissertation, tellingly underlines the position of oil-enabled affluence from which the Stavanger activists articulate and act upon their concerns about the future. It portrays two young people in Stavanger wearing silvery backpacks that read, translated from Norwegian to English: “to grow up in the richest country in the world – money as entry ticket”⁷. However, what one sees at first glance is only: “The richest country in the world” because of the size and font of the text. What does youth climate activism look like in the oil-capital of ‘the richest country in the world,’ where almost everyone is related to someone who are working in oil and gas? What are the central disagreements between individuals and between generations and how are they managed? What windows of opportunity for activism and activist theories of change grow out of such an oil saturated social environment? What fundamental values does climate change unsettle in Stavanger and how does its inhabitants navigate such changes? Through these questions, I ethnographically trace situated shifts and changes in what it means to be and do ‘good’ as a society and as individuals in a time of a climate crisis.

Empirically, the dissertation is based on in-person and online ethnographic fieldwork among young climate activists and their local community in Stavanger between November 2019 and September 2021. The activists were aged between 15 and 19 when I began fieldwork in 2019. There were not many of them, and their points of view and activities are far from the norm in city. A core group of 10 activists make up the main cohort of my interlocutors within this thesis alongside a larger group of around 30 activists who they interacted with. Some of these young activists were in the audience at the school debate, raising their hands because their parents work in the oil and gas sector.

The idea of keeping two thoughts in mind at the same time which the young debater presented at the school debate points to a central tension in contemporary Norwegian society. This is namely between two different approaches to what the conditions are for establishing liveable worlds: a world liveable through economic welfare or a world liveable through climatic stability. To Nora and her small group of fellow young climate activists in Stavanger, the tension rings with an unbearable dissonance that cannot be soothed by holding two thoughts in mind at the same time. To them, there is no question that action must be taken and that Norwegian oil and gas production urgently needs to be phased out gradually, but steadily, in order to retain a liveable world for themselves and future generations. Without climatic stability, wealth and welfare have no place on earth. Nora’s pride in the Norwegian constitution’s Article 112 portrays the activists’ commitment to Norway as a country with a proud tradition and identity of doing what is deemed to be ‘good.’ Insisting that exploring for more oil and gas is unconstitutional, the activists insist that a new policy and practice is needed to sustain this national identity, what they see as the constitution’s good and important emphasis on the right to a liveable environment for present and future generations. However, to those working in close relation to the oil and gas industry such as the young debater and many of the activists’ parents, this tension is further bound up with their jobs, livelihoods, and ability to lead good lives in the present. This to an extent that makes them reject a piece of a cake offered in the context of demanding the Norwegian oil and gas extraction to be phased out.

7 Norwegian Bokmål: ”Vokse opp i verdens rikeste land. Penger som inngangsbillett”.

Stavanger is a complicated place to undertake climate activism. The city has been Norway's oil capital from around the beginning of Norway's oil production and there is an intricate relationship between the coastal city's wealth from oil, a predominantly high-emission lifestyle, concerns about fossil fuels' impact on climate change and the Norwegian national identity where both nature and environmentalism play an important role (Norgaard 2011; Witoszek 2011; Anker 2020; Ween and Abram 2012). Furthermore, in the relatively small city of Stavanger, activists and industry people often share social ties of friendship and family. Stavanger is an affluent city, and the oil and gas industries are vital for both Stavanger and Norway. In 2022, 28% of total GDP, 42% of the state's revenue, and 58% of total export came from the oil and gas sector (Norwegian Petroleum Directorate 2022). In Stavanger, the oil and gas sectors are even more significant. Across Stavanger and its immediate neighbouring municipalities, more than 40% of people employed in the private sector work in oil and gas, while for the region of Rogaland, 73,400 jobs are estimated to be related to the oil sector, which amounts to nearly 30 percent of all employment (Hernes, Erraia, and Fjose 2021, 9–10). In Stavanger, dominant responses to climate change centre on a trust in the development of new technology that will enable capture and storage of carbon emissions from oil and gas production as well as the development of renewable energy technologies spearheaded by the oil industry itself. The oil-enabled affluence of Stavanger is central to the tension between the comfort of a privileged oil-enabled life and the drive for social change to preserve a liveable climate. Within this set-up, the activist members of Stavanger's Generation Carbon must manage what they experience as a double loss. Firstly, the oil dependent city's loss of wealth, welfare and a comfortable lifestyle in the present. Secondly, the vulnerability of a climatically volatile future that they may risk losing altogether.

Throughout the dissertation, I show that phasing out oil and gas is just as much about social and cultural change as it is about plans for dismantling or abandoning fossil infrastructure and the bureaucratic regulations of such dismantling. I explore such nascent social and cultural changes through the young climate activists and their relationships to their local community. Key tensions that emerge from this exploration run between welfare values and climate values in an oil producing welfare state.

The central argument of this dissertation is that the young Stavanger activists' form part of a Generation Carbon who are growing up marked by the increasing severity of the climate crisis, which means they increasingly need to negotiate and change their relationship to Norwegian oil through its carbon-polluting qualities. Stavanger's Generation Carbon is defined by experiences of loss and appeals to a tradition of Norwegian goodness, which in turn enables a particular window of opportunity to act on their experiences of loss through activism. Out of the combination of loss and goodness grows firstly, an activism that acknowledges and works from the premise that it is implicated in and relationally intertwined with that which it seeks to change. Secondly, an activism with the theory of change that caring for relations in the present, despite radical disagreement, is a critical way to create a desired future. Through a conversation with literature about activist practices of prefiguration (Maeckelbergh 2009) and figuration (Krøijer 2020), I label this relationship between activism and the future as *refiguration*. By refiguration I refer to that in Stavanger the future is a site loss, which is already affectually present through the activists' emotional and bodily responses to information about climate change. Through their caring and implicated activism, they seek to act on this loss and give the future a new shape where disaster could be avoided or diminished. This implicated and caring activism aiming to refigure the future contributes to scholarly understandings of activism in the Global North by adding refiguration as a new conceptualisation of the relationship between

activism and future. Existing analyses of activism in the Global North often centre activism as undertaken from a position of antagonistic opposition to that which it seeks to change (Maeckelbergh 2009; Graeber 2009; Juris 2012; Krøijer 2020). The view from Stavanger offers a perspective of what activism looks like and the theory of change it works from under conditions of relational intertwinement with and implication in that which it seeks to change.

Substantiating my argument requires defining both ‘generation’ and ‘carbon’ as well as a more thorough outline of the anthropological literature about activism. I begin by defining my use and understanding of Generation Carbon, proceeded by an elaboration upon my decision to centre activist responses of Stavanger’s Generation Carbon and situating my dissertation in relation to anthropological literature about activism and social movements. I further discuss loss and goodness as central analytical concepts in the dissertation, detail the fieldwork, methodology and positionality that have made my study possible and end by summing up the individual chapters.

Generation Carbon

Through the name ‘Generation Carbon’ I propose a particular framing of the problem of climate change that combines temporality, intergenerational concerns and tackling fossil fuels as carbon. By putting ‘generation’ together with ‘carbon’ in the name Generation Carbon, I create a proposition that describes the predicament of growing up in the climate crisis in societies enabled by fossil fuels. Societies that are in the process of figuring out what it means and requires to recast fossil fuels, like oil, as carbon and the social and cultural change involved in relating to fossil fuels through their carbon-polluting qualities. In the dissertation I explore one situated and site-specific account of the predicament of Generation Carbon in Stavanger. Exploring what Generation Carbon looks like and how they respond to oil as carbon is particularly interesting in Stavanger, where dependence on oil production for local employment and national welfare makes the complexities of recasting oil as carbon especially articulate.

Generation Carbon is a concept somewhere between a heuristic, analytical concept and an empirical observation that assists me in articulating important aspects of the activists’ position relative to two factors. Firstly, their relationship to their oil-dependent local community and secondly, climate change as an object of knowledge mediated by digital technology premised on carbon as a central metric. Below I will expand on my understanding of generation and carbon respectively.

The generation element of Generation Carbon helps me conceptualise the empirical observation that Stavanger’s young activists experience key differences in their perspective on oil and gas between themselves and their parents and grandparents. I think through these differences in terms of a Generation Oil – a generation formed significantly by becoming adults or growing up with the development of the oil and gas industry. And a Generation Carbon concurrently formed by growing up with the increasing severity of the climate crisis. This distinction is of course a gross generalisation. However, this generalisation grows out of empirical observations of articulations of difference. Pitching a Generation Oil against a Generation Carbon helps me to stay attentive to different ways of ascribing value to oil and different perceptions of risks and dangers growing out of age-based life experiences.

The social science literature on generational dynamics tend to focus on a specific generation and the conditions of life afforded in a certain historical moment in contrast to the generation that comes before (Edmunds and Turner 2002). This type of analysis grew out of the work of the sociologist Karl Mannheim (1928). Generations, Mannheim argues, often crystallise and gain social meaning in relation to significant historical events that produce social change (Mannheim 1928). I see climate change as one such significant historical event that allows for a generation to crystallise and gain social meaning. However, taking shape as a generation around the same historical event does not mean that everyone within it relates in the same way. In her work about Generation X, the anthropologist Shery Ortner (1998) argues that though the individuals belonging to a certain generation share specific historical predicaments, what is most significant for how they relate to these predicaments are their position within structures of oppression particularly related to class (Ortner 1998, 420, 423). My understanding of generations follows Mannheim and Ortner as I pay attention to a shared historical predicament that the members of a cohort relate to, based upon their position within systems of oppression like class, race, gender and age.

Generation Oil refers to people in Stavanger for whom the discovery and development of oil has been a significant defining factor in their lives that they've had to relate to in different ways based on their position in society and the systems of class, gender, race and age. In contrast, those belonging to Stavanger's Generation Carbon need to figure out how to relate to oil in light of the climate impact caused by the carbon emitted through its production and combustion that has become apparent. Generation Carbon thus specifically indexes oil in another way than other popular attempts to label the generational predicament of contemporary youth in the climate crisis such as Generation Climate Change (Eriksen 2021) or Generation Dread (Wray 2022).

Recasting oil as carbon is integral to the underlying tension I explore in Stavanger, since carbon is what enables the activists to connect the local level of oil production to the global level of climate change. Questions about carbon connects my work to discussions about carbon as the dominant metric for understanding, managing and governing climate change (Whittington 2016; Beuret 2017; Knox 2015; Knox-Hayes 2010; Lövbrand and Stripple 2011; Paterson and Stripple 2010; Dalsgaard 2013). What is usually simply referred to as carbon covers a broad spectrum of greenhouse gasses, whose climate impact can be translated into carbon equivalents. Carbon is made comprehensible through data about its actual or potential emission. From climate models to carbon budgets and carbon footprints, carbon features increasingly in social and political life. Carbon accounting has been characterised as a way of reassembling people's entanglement in a global world in the light of climate change (Knox 2020, 94), signifying how carbon is a certain technique for enacting the complex relationships between actions, emissions, climatic change and futures (Lippert 2018). Carbon also connects to issues arising from climate change's technological mediation – that climate change as an object of knowledge is only available through accumulated data about carbon emissions, sea levels rising, weather patterns etc. that in turn feeds digital models able to predict future climatic changes (Edwards 2010; see also Knox 2021). By emphasising carbon, I draw attention to changes in what oil entails and how reconceptualising oil as carbon has implications for oil's social meaning and value (see also Knox 2015, 323). However, recasting oil as carbon can also enable continued use of fossil fuels by offsetting carbon emissions from fossil fuel through methods such as forest preservation (see for example MacKenzie 2009; Knox 2015; Lohmann 2005; 2011; Dalsgaard 2013).

I see all youth in Stavanger as part of a local Generation Carbon, who are in the process of figuring out how to relate to oil's carbon polluting characteristics. However, *how* this generation relate differs widely. For example, some young people in Stavanger are in favour of continued oil and gas exploration and production or think similarly to the young debater from Høyre, that the tension between an economically liveable world and a climatically liveable world can be soothed by holding two thoughts in mind at the same time. In this dissertation, I focus on youth who have a critical and activist approach to oil and gas production. My work relays the details of one group of highly engaged young activists and their relationship to their local, oil-dependent community as opposed to illuminating all the different ways Stavanger's Generation Carbon relate to oil as carbon.

What scholarship that centre on generation have in common is a focus on the present and the relationship between the generations of or immediately outside the present. However, climate change propels questions about intergenerational responsibility and justice beyond the immediate future.⁸ A recent special issue in *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* takes up this discussion about intergenerational ethnography (Gibbon and Lamoreaux 2021). The editors, anthropologists Sahra Gibbon and Janelle Lamoreaux, argue that “[i]n a moment of growing concerns about planetary survival including environmental toxicity, climate change, and diminishing biodiversity, attention to intergenerational relations has taken on renewed urgency” (Gibbon and Lamoreaux 2021). Gibbon and Lamoreaux take their lead from the science and technology studies scholar Michelle Murphy (2013), who ask the timely question of what it means to live in “intergenerational times” (Murphy 2013, 2). Through Generation Carbon, I also seek to index how the young climate activists in Stavanger feel connected to and responsible for future generations and the harm that carbon emissions from oil and gas entail intergenerationally.

I find it particularly pertinent to provide alternative accounts of children and youth given that contemporary Euro-American children and youth are often understood through names like ‘digital generation’ or ‘digital natives,’⁹ framing children and youth as somehow inherently capable of harnessing digital technology in the service of capitalist innovations (Nguyen 2021, 4, 8; see also Iversen, Smith, and Dindler 2017). The activist responses of Stavanger's Generation Carbon provide a counter story to the technological control and optimism characterising ‘digital generation’ narratives. The activists' practices and concerns show a mismatch between narratives of technological control and narratives of a climatic emergency leading to crisis and chaos, where rising emissions of carbon animate nature in dangerous ways that turns the future into a site of loss.

8 The philosopher Roman Krznaric (2021) addresses issues of intergenerational responsibility from the perspective of the Global North through the concept of ‘being a good ancestor’ (Krznaric 2021, 11). I have chosen not to engage with this concept in the thesis because the activists never referred to themselves as ancestors. Further the ‘good ancestor’ concept portrays a normative prescription of how to be a good ancestor, whereas my concern in this thesis is rather to attend to how what is considered ‘good’ is not universal, but highly specific and contextual (Robbins 2013; Mol, Moser, and Pols 2010), and to explore how goodness is negotiated and contested locally in Stavanger.

9 I agree with critiques of terms like ‘digital natives’ and ‘digital generation’ that they gloss over the work of acquiring digital literacy (boyd 2014) and that children and youth can also be understood to be digitally at risk because they need guidance to navigate the digital world (Pedersen 2016). Further, particularly in the US American context in which the concepts originate, the use of ‘digital native’, works to gloss over what ‘native’ or ‘indigenous’ actually means in a settler colonial context and instead conceives of ‘digital natives’ as those who will create the future, while actual Indigenous peoples are understood to be stuck in the past (Byrd 2014).

Activism, values and ways of life

In this section, I elaborate on my decision to centre the activist responses of Stavanger's Generation Carbon analytically and ethnographically. My choice to focus on climate activism is particularly inspired by and indebted to the work of the anthropologist Gökçe Günel (2019) about 'technical adjustments' as climate adaptation strategies based on ethnographic insights from the eco-city experiment, Masdar City in Abu Dhabi, and the sociologist Kari Norgaard's work on the centrality of emotions for climate denial from the vantage point of a Norwegian village (Norgaard 2011). Günel's analysis points to that 'technical adjustments' are a type of climate solution aimed at preserving the status quo with technological assistance (Günel 2019, 11, 31). More precisely 'technical adjustments' enable avoidance of moral, ethical and political question about how to live by framing climate change as a problem that can be solved purely on a technical level (Günel 2019, 10–11). Avoidance is also a central part of Norgaard's work, which shows how norms of feeling and emotion are an essential part of what enable people to keep climate change at a distance and preserve a sense of reality in which "all is well" (Norgaard 2011, 148). Within this dissertation, I try to work from some of the empty spaces their insightful analyses point towards, as I centre young climate activists' explicit contestation over values and ways of life and the emotional work it requires to create a sense of proximity to the climate crisis that enacts it as needing urgent action. As the dissertation shows, this is no easy task, albeit a deeply necessary one.

By focusing on activist responses to recasting oil as carbon from the vantage point of Stavanger, I can attend to conflicts over halting or diminishing oil production rather than the techniques that makes it possible to maintain oil production and consumption. Oil's significance and meaning in Norway have been explored by other social science scholars (Bergsgard and Vassenden 2015; Tømmerbakk 2021; Ryggvik and Kristoffersen 2015; Dale 2018; Rauter 2022; Norgaard 2011). For example, these studies have expanded upon how oil wealth has shaped social life particularly in Stavanger (Bergsgard and Vassenden 2015), how the Norwegian Arctic is becoming the new resource frontier for oil extraction (Dale 2018), the political framing of the relationship between oil production and climate change in Norway (Tømmerbakk 2021), and the role of energy elites in driving a transition towards renewable energy (Rauter 2022). My research builds from these studies by focusing on the role of youth climate activism in rethinking and responding to Norway's oil dilemma as a question of changes to values and ways of life and the dilemmas of loss this entails in Stavanger.

In the following two sections, I expand upon this activism by detailing its relationship to loss and situating it in relation to anthropological literature about activism.

Activism as a response to loss

A central challenge faced by the activists this dissertation revolves around is the kind of changes that climate change requires from a place of privilege. While the development of the Norwegian oil industry was driven by pioneering spirit and the excitement of creating and contributing to something new, the change that Stavanger faces today is about finding responsible ways of stopping oil and gas production. Ending oil and gas production creates considerable loss for the local community in Stavanger as well as the national

community of Norway. Loss of wealth, loss of jobs, loss of significance. Simultaneously, the climate crisis introduces its own significant loss. The loss of a future, the loss of nature, and the questions about what to do with the affectual responses to the anticipation of losing a stable future to climate disaster chaos. I use loss as an empirical concept that synthesises these dynamics about loss present in the field and I am interested in the conditions for activist action in the context of these multiple losses. While the activists strive for changes that will preserve a liveable planet, they also experience a pertinent need to navigate the risk of losing their community and grapple with how to practice, achieve and negotiate what is good and right to do in the context of these multiple losses. Loss is thus defining for the activism that the young Stavanger activists' practice. Loss activates the need for change that activism is a response to and loss actualises the need for negotiating goodness.

What kind of activism arises from the position the activists find themselves in? A position where the activists and their local community stand to lose privileges in the future but where the activists also stand to lose the kind of lifestyle they had imagined for themselves. A life defined by a stable future that is now put in jeopardy by rising levels of carbon in the atmosphere. Simultaneously, the activists also stand in a particular relationship to their local community because they are implicated in the oil production that they benefit from in the present, even though they fully understand it as a source of what is destroying the future for themselves as well as future generations. What activist theories of change grow out of Stavanger youth activists inhabiting this complex position? Through the following section, I attend to how other studies of activism in the Global North have assisted me in illuminating the particularities of youth climate activism as a response to loss in the context of Stavanger. Following this discussion, I return to and elaborate on my understanding of goodness.

Scholarship about activism in the Global North

The young climate activists in Stavanger are situated in relation to the global youth climate movement. Several recent publications about climate activism contextualise climate activism in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic that impeded the momentum of the youth climate movement (see for example Von Storch, Ley, and Sun 2021; Goldhill and Fitzgibbon 2021; Hornborg 2021; Krauß 2021; Jones et al. 2021). In my work, I wish to explore another path. Though united by a common goal to retain a liveable future, the youth climate movement activists are different across cities and countries (Martiskainen et al. 2020, 16) and express their dissent in different ways (O'Brien, Selboe, and Hayward 2018). In order to articulate the particularities of the young climate activists in Stavanger, I engage in conversation with literature about activism in the Global North more broadly. This helps me to articulate three important characteristics of the activism of Stavanger's Generation Carbon. Firstly, that their critique comes from a position of being relationally intertwined with and implicated in that which they seek to change. Secondly, that their protest is characterised by an awareness of both their privilege and young age. Thirdly, that their close relationship to that which they seek to change and their experience of the future as a site of loss results in a particular relationship between activism and the future, which I label refiguration.

Articulating critique from a position of implication

The activists that are at the centre of prominent anthropological accounts of activism in the Global North largely articulate and practice their critique and alternatives from a position of being outside of and in antagonistic opposition to that which they seek to change (see for example Maeckelbergh 2009; Juris 2008; Krøijer 2020; Graeber 2009; Juris 2012; Razsa and Kurnik 2012). For example, in her work about decision-making processes in the alter globalisation movement, Marianne Maeckelbergh (2009) describes the movement as characterised by “an opposition to neoliberal globalisation and multilateral organisations, the abolition of capitalism, anti-corporatism” among other things (Maeckelbergh 2009, 7). This shared opposition creates unity in a movement without a single overarching goal constituted by “networks of formal and informal interactions” (Maeckelbergh 2009, 7). The point of ignition for Maeckelbergh’s analysis was an event where a massive mobilisation of alter globalisation activists were able to shut down the summit of the World Trade Organisation in Seattle in 1999 (Maeckelbergh 2009, 2). The relationship between the activists and the objects of their opposition in Seattle, exemplified by the World Trade Organisation, are one of outside, antagonistic opposition in contrast to the Stavanger activists, who are relationally intertwined with the oil industry through ties of kinship and friendship.

Similarly, to Maeckelbergh’s accounts of the alter globalisation movement, analyses of the Occupy Movement portray a movement dedicated to protesting and creating alternatives to what they perceive as an unjust economic system from which they do not benefit. These alternatives took the form of taking direct democracy to the public spaces the activists occupied as part of their resistance (Juris 2008; Razsa and Kurnik 2012). “We are the 99%” was the characteristic slogan of the movement, which occupied public spaces in opposition to the skewed distribution of wealth, where the vast majority do not enjoy the influence and wealth of the 1% (Juris 2012, 261). Though the Occupy Movement has struggled to actually “represent the diversity of the 99%” and has been critiqued for being “skewed towards the upper end of the spectrum of socioeconomic power and privilege” (Juris 2012, 265), the framing of the 99% versus the 1% still provides an interesting counterpoint to the position from which the Stavanger activists articulate critique and their desire for social change. In the Occupy Movement, critique and protest was articulated from the position of being outside the 1%. These protestors were not implicated or complicit in the exploitation that enables the 1% to enjoy their disproportionate wealth and influence. In contrast, the young climate activists in Stavanger cannot articulate their critiques and alternatives from a position of being outside because they cannot renounce their implication in the oil and gas industry which they are trying to change. Though not part of the 1% in a global climate perspective, they are still part of those who reap the benefits of an enterprise whose climatic pollution is displaced in time and space from the geographical and temporal position they inhabit. They are placed in a double position; on the one hand they benefit from oil and gas production in the present with the affluence and significance it brings to their local community through well-paying jobs for their parents, and on the other hand, they risk losing their future entirely. In the following, I’ll contextualise this position of privilege in relation to research about contemporary youth rebellions in the Nordics.

Protest, privilege and age

The activism of the young climate activists in Stavanger is further marked by their position as young people living in the Nordics - a place of economic and environmental privilege. They are aware that Norway is not first in line when it comes to the consequences of rising levels of carbon in the global atmosphere. They

further stand in solidarity with anti-racist and feminist movements like the Black Lives Matter and the #MeToo movements. Their agreement that “no one can do everything, but everyone can do something,”¹⁰, a popular saying among them, shows a commitment to that differences in ability and resources should not be an obstacle to participation. In a special issue of the *Journal of Nordic Youth Research*¹¹ (Sand and Jørgensen 2022a my translation from Danish) about youth rebellion in the Nordic countries from the perspective of the fields of youth research and anthropology, the editors, Anne-Lene Sand and Nanna Jordt Jørgensen, argue that contemporary youth rebellions in the Nordics are characterised by a high degree of awareness about privilege (Sand and Jørgensen 2022b, 6). As a result of this awareness, Sand and Jørgensen suggest the activism, rebellion and dissent that youth in the Nordics engage in are more quiet, humble or pragmatic than the youth rebellion of the 1960’s to which their activities are often compared (Sand and Jørgensen 2022b, 6). Sand and Jørgensen’s conceptualisation of contemporary Nordic youth rebellion as ‘quiet’ resonates with my impression of the young activists in Stavanger. However, I do not see this characteristic as solely stemming from an awareness about privileges. In Chapter 4, I argue that the quiet or ‘nice’ youth activism in Stavanger needs to be understood in relation to the limitations that the social environment of Stavanger installs on the action that feels available to the activists.

Ethnographically, their age plays a role in how the activists are perceived in Stavanger. They often face dismissals of their claims and analyses on the basis that they are too young. As I expand upon in Chapter 2, particularly people working in the oil industry accuse the activists of being too young to know properly and thereby dismiss their demands for phasing out oil and gas as an unrealistic proposition made by naïve youngsters.

The locus point of young people’s activism and protest is often understood to be a result of their youth and an almost natural part of a growing up. For example, the anthropologist Thomas Hylland Eriksen (2021) describes youth climate activists in Norway as having “invested little in the existing social order,” which makes it easier for them to imagine the world being different (Eriksen 2021, 220). Consequently, Eriksen wonders if the mobilisation of young climate activists is best understood as a youth-specific phase in the activists’ life or if the youth climate movement indicates a lasting change in dominant sentiment, discourse and practice (Eriksen 2021, 220). Reading the protests of children and youth in relation to preconceived ideas about opposition to the parental generation is a common analysis of youth protest. The anthropologist Stine Krøijer (2020) criticises such an analysis. As part of a larger work on left-radical activism in Northern Europe, Krøijer analyses youth protests to preserve a building that gave home to youth activist activities in Copenhagen. Krøijer’s ethnography shows youth activism to be about “a collective sense of autonomy embedded in how activism is about ‘becoming active’ and absorbed in common activities” (Krøijer 2020, 32). In my study, I follow Krøijer’s approach in letting the ethnography lead when attempting to understand what is at stake in the activism of young people rather than assuming their mobilisation to be an expected part of growing up.

The relationship to the future

Given activism’s commitment to social change, an important aspect of activism is its relationship to the future. In this section, I engage with the concepts of prefiguration (Maeckelbergh 2009; Juris 2008; Polletta 2002) and figuration (Krøijer 2020) as descriptors for the relationship between activism and the future,

10 Norwegian Bokmål: ”Ingen kan gjøre alt, men alle kan gjøre nået”

11 Original Danish title: Nordisk Tidsskrift for Ungdomsforskning

and propose my own additional concept, that of refiguration. I return to these arguments in more detail in Chapter 4 and here I outline them for the purpose of positioning my study and its contribution.

In the anthropological literature about activism in the Global North, prefiguration is a central concept mobilised to explain the relationship between activism and the future (Maeckelbergh 2009; Graeber 2009; Juris 2008; Polletta 2002). For example, Marianne Maeckelbergh (2009) argues in her study of decision-making processes among activists in the alter globalisation movement, that the activists prefigure the future they want to see through their processes of direct democracy and are “always trying to make the process we use to achieve our immediate goals an embodiment of our ultimate goals” (Maeckelbergh 2009, 66). Similarly, Jeffrey Juris (2008) argues in his analysis of activist networks anchored in Spain that the activists through their networking practices “prefigure the utopian worlds they are struggling to create” (Juris 2008, 9). Common across Maeckelbergh and Juris’ analyses is the view that the activists of their studies attempt to generate social change through creating alterative spaces, free of the repressive structures the activists desire to dismantle. Thereby the activists seek to create change by creating alternatives, purposefully removed from what they see as wrong in the present.

Stine Krøijer critiques the concept of prefiguration for placing undue significance on intentional agents operating from a linear perception of time. Krøijer argues that activism based on prefiguration does not enable understanding and analysis of “the radically open and indeterminate elements of activists practice” (Krøijer 2020, 27). To capture the indeterminate and open character of the future, Krøijer suggests the concept ‘figuration,’ emphasising that form rather than intent is key to how the future is enacted in left-radical activism (Krøijer 2020, 3, 4–5). Centrally, Krøijer describes how the left-radical activists of her study see capitalism as their main object of opposition, yet perceive no outside of capitalism and hence not a need to attend to the future as a point in time (Krøijer 2020, 5). Rather than think in terms of a revolution, the activists seek to create new worlds “within the shell of the old” (Krøijer 2020, 59). But what if the imperilment of the shell itself is the problem and cause for protest? What if the issue is neither prefiguring the desired future nor finding ways to create new worlds within the old? What if the problem is about retaining the future as a possibility for social life altogether? These are the premises I understand the Stavanger activists’ to be working from and I argue that these premises create a different relationship between activism and the future.

To the Stavanger activists the future is not a desired state nor a state enacted at particular moments. To them, the future is already affectually and emotionally present as a site of loss through their emotional and bodily responses to information about climate change. Their desired future is about avoidance of loss and about preserving the world as liveable and thereby the future of humans and other living beings which I expand upon in Chapter 2 and Chapter 4.

My understanding of the relationship between activism and the future and the theory of change that emerges from the Stavanger activists’ practices is that the future can be preserved through relational repair work in the present. This is by cultivating the ability to stay in relation to and care for the oil-saturated social environment they want to change. I name this relationship between activism and the future *refiguration*. Etymologically ‘to figure’ is derived from the latin ‘figurare’, meaning to give form or to shape (Online Etymology Dictionary n.d.). The preposition ‘re’ can indicate several things, for example, doing something again as in repetition, bringing something back or giving it new life as in ‘revive’ or make new again as in the word ‘renew.’ By adding ‘re’ to ‘figuration,’ I aim to convey a relationship between activism and the

future in which the future is brought back into a shape where it is not in jeopardy or experienced as already lost. Refiguration thus refers to the activists' attempts to avoid imminent disaster by practicing relational caring in the present through which they hope to bring back a version of the future in which disaster is avoided or diminished. Through the concept of refiguration, I contribute to scholarly understandings of the relationship between activism and the future activism in the Global North.

Loss is a defining factor for the activism of the young Stavanger activists. It shapes their understanding of the relationship between activism and the future as one of refiguration. It also actualises negotiations of what it means to be and do good as a society in the climate crisis which I now turn to.

A contested landscape of goodness

After my discussion of the young activists in Stavanger relative to other analyses of youth rebellion and activism, I now expand upon contextualising them in relation to the local environment of Stavanger. I do so by building upon concepts of Norwegian goodness and anthropology of the good.

Norwegian goodness

The theme of Norwegian goodness leads me back to the opening scene from the school debate where a debater insisted that managing the two conflicting issues of oil production and climate change mitigation is a matter of being able to keep two thoughts in mind at the same time. Within this logic, what stands out as the main issue is the simultaneous keeping of two thoughts in mind *without* conflict rather than acknowledging and resolving the conflict. The container for holding these contrasting issues becomes interesting. What kind of container does it require to allow two conflicting issues to calmly coexist? Drawing inspiration from discussions between historians Terje Tvedt (Tvedt 2006; 1998; 2003) and Peder Anker (2020) as well as the cultural historical Nina Witoszek (2011), I suggest that this container is a “national regime of Norwegian goodness”¹² in which Norway is understood to represent what is “universally good”¹³ (Tvedt 2006, 67, my translation from Norwegian). Engagement with notions of Norwegian goodness positions this thesis in a larger conversation with literature on Nordic and welfare state exceptionalism. This literature connects the discussions of Norwegian goodness to studies of Nordic self-images through which the Nordic countries emerge as morally ‘good’ because of their perceived non-involvement in colonial activities (Loftsdóttir and Jensen 2012; Jensen and Loftsdóttir 2016; Loftsdottir and Jensen 2021; see also Habel 2015; Diallo 2019; Khalid 2021).

In Chapter 1, I further detail my encounters with the stories told by people in Stavanger about Norwegian oil and how empirical articulations of goodness became formative for my understanding of the social and cultural dimensions of Norwegian energy transitions. The altered outlook on the future that climate change entails for the young climate activists in turn poses questions about what a good life is in a climate changed world. In Chapter 3, I engage with goodness from the perspective of how the climate crisis disrupts norms about how life was supposed to unfold. For the purpose of this introduction, I will outline three key aspects of my understanding of the national regime of goodness as it is invoked in Stavanger.

12 Norwegian bokmål: ”det nasjonale godhetsregimet”

13 Norwegian bokmål: ”det universelt gode”

Firstly, that oil has done good in Norway particularly for Stavanger. The development of the oil industry enabled an unprecedented social mobility, made people wealthy and allowed for the establishment of a strong egalitarian welfare state. Secondly, that the Norwegians were not only lucky to reside over vast fossil fuel resources, but they also showed a particular skill in harnessing the wealth from the oil to the benefit of the national community rather than only transnational oil companies and national elites. Something many other oil states have struggled and failed to achieve. In Chapter 1, I engage critically with the boundaries of this national community that oil is understood to benefit as well as the comparisons people make between Norway and other oil states. Thirdly, that being and doing good is central to Norwegian self-perception both when it comes to foreign aid (Tvedt 2006), environmentalism and peacebuilding (Anker 2020; Witoszek 2011), and that oil is tied up with this goodness. As I further detail in Chapter 1, I understand the activists' practices as both challenging and seeking to continue the national regime of goodness.

To summarise, 'goodness' is an empirically founded concept that I use in conversation with literature that attends to goodness in the Norwegian context. I find that ideas about being and doing good are central to understanding the dilemma of the Norwegian energy transition and its social and cultural dimensions.

Anthropology of the good

Studying what people perceive as good has a distinct history in the field of anthropology as the anthropologist Joel Robbins (2013) points out. Robbins situates what he calls "an anthropology of the good" within broader shifts in the field of anthropology (Robbins 2013, 447, 457). He maps out shifts in anthropological attention and argues that early anthropology, with its intimate entanglements with colonial dominance, produced what Robbins drawing on the anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot call "the savage slot" as its main object of attention (Robbins 2013, 448). According to Robbins, 'the savage slot' focused on cultural difference and the critical perspective that cross-cultural analysis can add understanding of different ways of life. However, while doing so, 'the savage slot' also created a problematic and harmful othering of the people it studied (Robbins 2013, 448–49). In the 1990's "the suffering slot," according to Robbins, became the solution to the problem of harmful othering, as anthropologists made analyses based on the premise of shared humanity and similarity in the face of suffering (Robbins 2013, 448). While 'the suffering slot' has resulted in important work, Robbins argues the focus on similarity also misses something, namely the importance of difference and cultural context (Robbins 2013, 456). As a line of anthropological attention that can work complimentary to the anthropology of suffering, Robbins suggest 'an anthropology of the good' that attends to how people imagine better worlds and what it takes to move towards them (Robbins 2013, 456,459). This is a line of enquiry that attends to "the different ways people organize their personal and collective lives in order to foster what they think of as good" (Robbins 2013, 457).

In my work, I follow on from Robbins' invitation and attempt to understand how the activists "foster what they think of as good" (Robbins 2013, 457). At the same time, what is defined as good is currently highly contested in Stavanger. There is thus not one 'good' to be ethnographically uncovered and described. Oil can no longer be contained within the framework of goodness premised on the nation, resulting in cracks and fissures in the social cohesion of goodness without a new notion of what can now define 'good.'

Following my account of key analytical concepts and literatures I engage with in the thesis, I now turn to a set of methodological reflections about ethics, access, positionality and the fieldwork from which the dissertation have grown.

Methodological reflections



Figure 3 Illustration showing the fieldwork location and the character of the fieldwork. Map from snazzymaps.com

The fieldwork which forms the empirical basis of the thesis consists of approximately nine months divided between 5.5 months in-person carried out in two main periods during 2020, an initial shorter visit and two follow up visits, as well as 3.5 months of online fieldwork carried out from my home in Copenhagen during the first Covid-19 lockdown in Denmark and Norway (see Figure 3). The 10 activists who make up the core group of my interlocutors are part of a larger group of around 30 activists. The ethnographic material consists of 12 formal interviews with young activists, 2 intergenerational interviews with an activist and their parent, 10 interviews with people working in the oil and gas industry, 3 focus groups with young activists, 1 focus group with students at Stavanger Offshore and Technical School, 4 climate diaries with activists over the course of 4–9 weeks, alongside pictures and numerous pages of handwritten and digital fieldnotes from participation in the small, local climate strikes, activists’ meetings, events and meetings at the Norwegian Petroleum Museum, as well as hang-outs and hiking trips with local friends. The Petroleum Museum is a Stavanger-based exhibition space and cultural institution dedicated to the industrial heritage of the Norwegian oil industry. It receives funding from the Norwegian state but also obtains sponsorship from the oil and gas industry (Norsk Oljemuseum n.d.).

The research is part of the larger research project called SocioCultural Carbon (SOCCAR), funded by the Independent Research Fund Denmark which explores the sociocultural significance of carbon emission data. From this project I draw my interest in carbon as our discussions about carbon technologies have let me to consider climate activism as a site of carbon politics.

In the following sections, I describe key ethical and methodological considerations arising from my fieldwork. Firstly, my reflections about the juridical and ethical framework available for working with people below the age of 18 in Norway. Secondly, reflections about my positionality and personal experience with activism. And finally, my fieldwork as an instance of patchwork ethnography (Cardoza et al. 2021; Günel, Varma, and Watanabe 2020).

Informed consent and young people's autonomy

The conditions for my collaboration with the young climate activists in Stavanger mirrored the challenge the activists face with being taken seriously because of their young age. My options to collaborate with the activists were juridically conditioned by obtaining their parent's consent to their participation – a condition I believed to run counter to my commitment to respect the authority and autonomy of the young activists, who actively, and not always with the blessing of their parents, engage in climate activism. Taking them seriously as activists did not sit right with having to obtain permission from their parent(s) or guardian(s) for them to be able to participate in the research. I found myself in an ethical dilemma from the outset of my fieldwork, where I had to navigate tensions between legal requirements and the rights of children and youth to be heard while staying attentive to their age-based vulnerabilities. In resolving this dilemma, I have drawn upon the Norwegian research ethical guidelines (De nasjonale forskningsetiske komiteene 2016) as well as the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (United Nations 1989).

According to the guidelines of the Norwegian National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities at the time of my research, people aged 15 and older could give written, informed consent to participating in research without the consent of their parent(s) or guardian(s) (De nasjonale forskningsetiske komiteene 2016, 20).¹⁴ However, if the research subject included sensitive information, parent(s) or guardian(s) still had to provide their consent (De nasjonale forskningsetiske komiteene 2016, 20). Under European GDPR law, which Norway complies with as a European Economic Area country, political opinion is considered sensitive information (Datatilsynet 2018). As my research would engage with young people about their activism on political matters my research fell into the category of sensitive information requiring parent(s) or guardian(s) consent. Given that the activists I encountered were all aged 15 or older, and that I was exploring research questions about political activities which they were publicly active and visible about through participation on the public debate, writing of letters to the editor of the local newspaper, as well as public actions in the city, my discretion was that their right to express their point of view and have their opinion heard was the right thing to value.

¹⁴ New guidelines were published in 2021 that do not contain the information that adolescents aged over 15 can give informed consent on their own behalf and instead in the footnotes emphasise that children below the age of 18 as point of departure do not have the legal competency to consent to sharing their personal information (De nasjonale forskningsetiske komiteene 2021)

My discretion is supported by Article 12 of The UN Convention of the Rights of the Child, which states that “parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child” (United Nations 1989). This Article is the basis of a rights-based approach to the participation of children and youth in research based on their right to express their views and be heard (Gulløv and Højlund 2003, 176–77). Such a rights-based approach can sometimes, as in my case, be at odds with the legal requirement to obtain consent from parent(s) or guardian(s).

Upon discussing these issues with the activists, I learned that they saw the informed consent formula as an occasion to show to their parents that official researchers cared about their activities, and not only as a devaluation of their individual ability to consent to participating. I therefore ended up asking the activists aged below the age of 18 individually if they felt comfortable asking for their parents’ signature on the informed consent form. I underlined that if they did not feel comfortable with asking their parents, they did not have to and that I would be happy to work with their individual consent. All the activists below the age of 18 obtained written consent by one of their parents.

I did not only ask young people for informed consent. Informed consent was part of my engagement with all research participants. I wrote my informed consent formula in one version for adults and one for adolescents, in age-appropriate language and in close collaboration with my university’s legal department. I had a local friend ensure my translation to Norwegian was correct. However, when it comes to research ethics, I agree with scholars such as the anthropologist Steffen Jöhncke (2009) who argue that informed consent is a continuous endeavour, that neither begins nor ends with a signature on a written document (Jöhncke 2009, 250). Throughout the fieldwork and write up-phase, I have continuously discussed my research with the young activists to ensure their continued consent to participate.

Positionality and access

Firstly, a note on my situatedness as ethnographer and writer. My educational background is in anthropology and I am a white Dane in my early thirties with an ambiguous gender expression, though most often read as female. Studying young people’s climate engagement in Norway’s oil capital, I provide a perspective from the outside of Norway, while being embedded in the cultural web of the Scandinavian welfare society. I attend in detail to my position in the field and questions about access through four sections. Firstly, my own experience with activism. Secondly, my reaction to the oil-saturated social environment of Stavanger. Thirdly, reflections about language and undertaking research in Southern Norway, and lastly reflections about anonymity.

Personal experience with activism

Getting to know and understand the context in which the young Stavanger activists practice their activism and coming to understand the theories of change and ethico-political commitments (Puig de la Bellacasa 2011) they work from have enriched and expanded my understanding of activism. I have personal experience with queer and anti-racist activism that seeks to prefigure spaces in which the desired world can, if only for a limited time and space, be a reality. Despite the difficulties of creating such spaces, I firmly believe

in their transformative potential. This belief has formed my initial approach and understanding of the activism of the young people I came to know in Stavanger. Over the course of the fieldwork and the writing of this thesis, I have had to expand my take on both what activism means and what it entails in order to do their activism justice in my analysis. Personal development through fieldwork is not news in anthropology. For example, the anthropologist Bob Simpson (2006) writes in the title of an essay about ethnographic fieldwork that “You don’t do fieldwork, fieldwork does you,” highlighting how fieldwork often changes the person undertaking the fieldwork (Simpson 2006, 126). This has indeed been the case for me. I have great respect for the activists’ efforts to stay in relation to their local environment and figuring out how to handle the dilemmas that arise through this commitment, and I am grateful for what they have taught me about the value of care in activism, as well as the need to find ways to stay with what is difficult in relations.

My personal experience with activism and trajectory of coming to appreciate the activism of the young Stavanger activists brings me to the relationship between anthropology and activism. Anthropologists have labelled themselves as engaged (Hale 2006), militant (Scheper-Hughes 1995) or simply activist (Willow and Yotebieng 2020) to indicate their active participation in the activism of those with whom they work. I have not found that the role of activist anthropologist was open to me in Stavanger, despite a personal inclination towards inhabiting it. Given the importance of care and implication for the activism of the young Stavanger activists, I could not as an outsider to Stavanger inhabit their activism in the same way. In contrast to other accounts from anthropologists’ fieldwork among activists, I found my role leaning towards observation rather than participation on the spectrum of participant-observation (Scheper-Hughes 1995; Juris 2008; Maeckelbergh 2009; Krøijer 2020). I have not been passive, but I have also not taken the lead and, for example, actively facilitated meetings like Marianne Maeckelbergh did during her fieldwork among the alter globalisation movement (Maeckelbergh 2009, 25). The inclination towards observation grew out of my dedication to letting the activists take the lead and show my trust in them as proper knowledge agents. Contrary to the forementioned studies, I have not found that my access was premised on active participation, but rather on an engagement in the activists’ cause and the ability and willingness to listen and learn.

Given the issues the activists face with being listened to and taken seriously by their immediate environment, listening, showing keen interest and in time, proposing perspectives on the activists’ practices through my analysis turned out to both facilitate access and be a significant way of contributing to and supporting their work in Stavanger. The activists were used to focus their activities outwards and think about what would create support for their cause from externals or finding ways to speak back to those who disagree with their opinions. Given these circumstances, my interest in their work and lives provided a space for talking things through amongst themselves. It provided a welcome occasion, they expressed, to explore and explain their points of view, their fears and hopes, their doubt and ambivalence in depth to become surer of themselves and of their opinions.

An oil saturated environment

“Do you work in oil?” was a question I received regularly during my time in Stavanger. When I met new people through sports, on a night out or in a cabin in the mountains, this seemed to be a common conversation-starter and an obvious question to ask. In the beginning, the question took me by surprise. I had subconsciously associated oil and gas jobs with the shiny offices of different oil companies and the people

in smart trousers, leather shoes, blazers, shirts, fitted woollen overcoats with briefcases, I had seen going in and out of them. With my usual boyish look of denim jeans and T-shirt, hiking shoes and an outdoor jacket, I found it surprising to be associated with working in oil and gas. However, in the gym or on a mountainside, who is to say who does what by the look of the clothes they wear? Still, the question also struck a deeper chord. It made me reflect about my position as well as ideas about myself in the field. I came to Stavanger with curiosity concerning oil and gas production and its local and national significance in a time of a rapidly changing climate. Yet working in oil and gas admittedly seemed foreign to me. It took me by surprise that I could easily be considered a part of this sector. In my early 30's, I could very well have been a young professional in an oil and gas company. However, the question challenged my self-image. I was doing a PhD on the topic of climate change. I have previous professional experience from the Danish Environmental Protection Agency and I know more people engaged in climate activism than I know people working in the corporate world. The recurrent suggestion that I might work in oil and gas made me realise the omnipresent nature of the oil and gas sector in Stavanger. Working in oil and gas was the obvious reason for being in Stavanger and for coming to the city. As I came to understand the wide variety of occupations associated with oil and gas, the question began to make more sense. There is a wide variety of specialised and general office jobs such as in geology, engineering, management, HR, communication and accounting, as well as the cleaning and maintenance of office jobs. There are offshore jobs with varied levels of skills required as well as cleaning, catering and maintenance of these platforms and rigs. Then there is the vast supply industry that does everything from safety equipment to specialised, patented components used in the extraction process. And all the companies whose major customers are oil and gas companies, consultancy firms, interior design businesses, recycling companies to name but a few.

The relationship between Norway and Denmark

Both strong welfare states situated in Scandinavia, Denmark and Norway, share many similarities on the surface. However, historically Norway has been under Danish rule classified as a Danish province following the collapse of the Kalmar Union, which had united the kingdoms of Norway, Sweden and Denmark from 1380 to 1536 (Loftsdóttir and Jensen 2021, 78–79). In 1814 Norway entered into a union with Sweden and though Norway was granted home rule and constitutional independence, the country remained under the Swedish Crown until independence in 1905 (Loftsdóttir and Jensen 2021, 79). Despite a past of skewed power relations and supranational rule, contemporary Norway is largely understood to be better-off than Denmark and Sweden due to oil wealth. Jokes about how allegedly the Danish government delegate was drunk when giving up large parts of the North Sea to Norway contributes to a perception of Norway now having the upper hand, making the past relationships of oppression radically different from the continued neo-colonial dispossession of other former colonies. Further Norwegians, Danes and Swedes see themselves as closely related due to linguistic affinities as well as a tradition of strong welfare states of a universalist bent. Coming to Norway as a Dane provided little difficulty in terms of fitting in – maybe except for my initial lack of hiking skills

The Norwegian and Danish languages are particularly closely related. Reading written Norwegian Bokmål is almost like reading Danish, while Norwegian Nynorsk is a bit further removed, but still generally understandable for most Danes. In theory, Danes and Norwegians should be able to understand each other when speaking, but in practice this does not always seem to be the case. I generally found that people

had a hard time understanding me when I spoke in Danish, which made me put more effort into learning Norwegian. The result was what some jokingly call ‘dorsk’ or ‘Dorwegian’— a contraction of Danish (dansk) and Norwegian (norsk), describing a Danes’ attempt to attune their language to the melodic ups and downs of the Norwegian language. My Dorwegian made me comprehensible to my interlocutors. In the beginning they believed I spoke a Danish dialect that was easy to understand. Towards the end of my fieldwork, new people I met most often thought I spoke a slightly unfamiliar eastern dialect of Norwegian. I conducted my interviews in Norwegian and my fieldnotes are a mix of Danish and Norwegian. All translations from Norwegian to English are my own. When I have been in doubt about differences in the cultural meaning of specific words and phrases, I have consulted Norwegian friends to ensure I had the right translation. My proficiency in Norwegian has further proved a particular asset in the my ability to access Norwegian language academic literature, and the crucial nuances that this literature provides to scholarly accounts of Norwegian and Scandinavian culture and society (Abram 2018).

Norway is a country with a long, narrow geography and there are substantial differences between Southern and Northern Norway. As has been pointed out by the anthropologist Marianne Lien, some of the regional anthropological scholarship about Norway, particularly on equality as sameness, best describes Southern Norway (Lien 2001). Important scholarship attend to resource and climate politics in the Norwegian North and how resource extraction violates the rights of the indigenous Sámi, whose nation of Sápmi is occupied by Norway along with Sweden, Finland and Russia (Dale 2018; Fjellheim 2020; Henriksen 2010; Henriksen and Hernes 2011). Much could be written on the difference between oil extraction and climate policy between the Norwegian South and North, but this is beyond the scope of this dissertation. My choice to centre Stavanger is based on that Stavanger is and has been the locus of Norway’s petrochemical power since the inception of the Norwegian oil industry.

Reflections about anonymity

I have attended to the anonymity of my interlocutors in several ways. I have provided all participants with a pseudonym, and in one instance, I have split a person into two characters to make sure they were not too easily recognised and generally I have left some of the personal characteristics of the characters in the dissertation deliberately vague. It is however a timely question if anonymity can truly be preserved when doing ethnographic research. The anthropologists Charles Bosk and Raymond de Vries (2004) point out that the author of an ethnographic text “can do nothing to prohibit a sufficiently determined reader from trying to decode the text” (Bosk and De Vries 2004, 254). Keeping this in mind, there are certain events and discussions I have chosen not to include in the dissertation. Further, I have chosen not to mention the specific names of the organisations the activists are part of. My aspiration with this choice is to make it easier for the activists to distance themselves from my analysis should they wish to now or at a later point. Additionally, I have found the context of the city to be such a strong common context for the activists that the affiliation to a particular organisation was of less importance. Many of the activists are part of several locally-operating organisations at the same time and therefore I don’t find that my choice to not distinguish between organisations does damage to the nuances of the ethnography.

Learning from pandemic fieldwork through patchwork ethnography

When I left for Stavanger in late January 2020 it was with the intention to spend 8-10 consecutive months there. I had visited Stavanger in November 2019 to establish collaborations with different youth climate organisations active in the city as well as the Norwegian Petroleum Museum and the University of Stavanger, as I expected affiliations with local institutions to facilitate further access to the field.

However, the Covid-19 pandemic made my plans for long-term, in-person fieldwork unfeasible. By mid-March 2020, I returned home to Copenhagen due to the lockdowns in both Norwegian and Danish society. The lockdown prompted me to reflect about my conceptualisation of long-term, in-person fieldwork and to peruse novel ways of engaging with my field site. The Covid-19 pandemic echoes in the character of the empirical material that makes up this dissertation. The material is largely based on conversations and thus reflects people's thoughts and discussions about what is important to them and how this affects their actions, but to a lesser extent contain examples of activist actions.

The need to re-evaluate my research design caused me a great deal of frustration and disappointment. The options available for redesign clashed with disciplinary norms in anthropology that privileged long-term, in-person fieldwork making me feel inadequate and like my research project would be of a lower quality because my fieldwork was disrupted by the pandemic.

Gökçe Günel, Saiba Varma and Chika Watanabe's proposal for a 'patchwork ethnography' has been an important inspiration for rethinking my ideas about long-term fieldwork (Günel, Varma, and Watanabe 2020; Cardoza et al. 2021; Patchwork Ethnography n.d.). Günel, Varma and Watanabe define patchwork ethnography as "ethnographic processes and protocols designed around short-term field visits, using fragmentary yet rigorous data, and other innovations that resist the fixity, holism, and certainty demanded in the publication process" (Günel, Varma, and Watanabe 2020)¹⁵. Günel, Varma and Watanabe importantly stresses how patchwork ethnography does not grow out of the pandemic, but stems from deeper issues of inequality in researchers' ability to engage in long-term, in-person fieldwork due to for example caring responsibilities, funding issues or health concerns (Günel, Varma, and Watanabe 2020). Key concerns of patchwork ethnography include rethinking the relationship between home and the field, to "write with rather than against interruptions and disruptions to fieldwork" (Cardoza et al. 2021)¹⁶, and "keeping hold of the relational work that is at the heart of ethnographic research," while resisting the idea that long-term, in-person fieldwork is always the best option (Cardoza et al. 2021)¹⁷. These three key concerns alongside the need to rethink my methods have been formative for how I have approached the disruption and interruptions the pandemic caused my PhD fieldwork.

Upon learning that conversations about broader conceptions of fieldwork and the politics of long-term fieldwork were already taking place in the discipline of anthropology, I was able to relate to the disruption to my fieldwork in new ways. It was not just the pandemic that had unpicked fieldwork. Patchwork ethnography taught me that there was already political work going on aimed at unsettling the dominant 'lone hero' narrative of fieldwork and the limitations of access it creates.

15 The publication is unpaginated. The direct quote occurs in the fourth paragraph of the text and begins on the fourth line of the paragraph.

16 The publication is unpaginated. The direct quote occurs in the 12th paragraph of the text and begins on the third line of the paragraph.

17 The publication is unpaginated. The direct quote occurs in the 23rd paragraph of the text and begins on the sixth line of the paragraph.

My redesign took the form of smaller periods of in-person fieldwork connected by online contact and online diary methods, which together did produce valuable insights. Importantly, I did not find, as I had feared, that the patchy nature of the fieldwork compromised the relational work and building of cooperation and trust that I, together with Günel, Varma and Wanatabe (Cardoza et al. 2021), find so integral to ethnographic work. The political work of patchwork ethnography made it possible for me to connect to what I had learned through the process of methodological redesign not as a silver lining but as part of a timely larger, political discussion of what good fieldwork is and who has access to undertake it. These are insights I am grateful to take with me in my future work.

In the following, I will detail the course of the fieldwork chronologically with particular attention to this work of rethinking as it took place both during and after the fieldwork. I attend to the fieldwork chronologically because the pandemic meant that I divided this into sections with different premises for engagement. These sections include pre-pandemic, in-person fieldwork, online pandemic fieldwork, in-person pandemic fieldwork as well as two follow-up visits centred on sharing and discussing tentative research results.

Pre-pandemic, in-person fieldwork

During my first longer stay in Stavanger from late January to mid-March 2020, I followed the activities of two climate and environmental youth organisations, small weekly climate strikes inspired by the global climate strike movement, and educational activities for upper secondary and high school students at the Norwegian Petroleum Museum about climate change, fossil and renewable energy. I carried out interviews with some of the young activists as well as focus group with the members of each of the youth political organisations whose work I was following. The focus groups helped me open the field, gain understanding of what was at stake for the young activists and gain a sense of how they talked to each other about certain issues (Kamberelis and Dimitriadis 2013; Schensul 1999). Printouts of pictures, photos, newspaper headlines and social media posts related to oil and gas as well as climate change served as the opening of the focus groups, where I asked the participants to look at the pictures and talk to each other about what they saw. From there, I gently directed the conversation to cover a set of pre-defined themes I wanted to cover. I further familiarised myself with the perception of local nature through hiking trips alone and with friends which proved invaluable to understand the centrality of hiking and ideas about nature for Norwegian national identity, a theme I draw on particularly in Chapter 3 (see also Ween and Abram 2012). Together, these activities showed me a social landscape where oil plays an important role and creates tension alongside generational and political lines. Yet I also understood these lines as blurry, as some young people are pro-oil, or at least find alternatives to the status quo highly unimaginable and sometimes adults also show up to support the climate strikes. Climate engaged youth are relatively few, but dedicated, and deal with a lot of resistance from parents, peers and industry.

Pandemic, online fieldwork

By the middle of March 2020, I returned to my home in Copenhagen due to the increasing severity of the Covid-19 pandemic. During the beginning of the pandemic, many activities migrated online, and I was able to attend meetings and events online. Both my research participants and I stumbled into this use of the online realm and while we all had to learn to navigate online meeting platforms like Zoom, I found that I

also had to relearn the art of paying ethnographic attention in the online social landscape. Remembering what happened during these online activities proved difficult and I found it challenging to write fieldnotes. During this time, it became painfully clear to me that my former training as an anthropologist was informed by an understanding of ethnographic methods as being there (in the field), and that I did not know how to cultivate my ethnographic attention in an online setting. I was used to relying on sensory and bodily experience. The difference between home and the field took on a new aspect for me, with the field now in my home online yet without the sensory impressions I was used to using partly removed.

When it came to online activities, all the faces in the little rectangles on different platforms blurred into the same thing and I had difficulties distinguishing one activity from the other. A struggle eloquently captured by the president of the Social Science Research Council Alondra Nelson (2020), who in an essay reflecting about the pandemic's impact on social research asked "how do we account for the information that might be lost when physical contact is not possible, the inability to see gestures like toes tapping and nervous hands, the "intersubjective encounter"" (Nelson 2020). For me, I realised the intersubjective encounter that Nelson described not only provided thick layers of information, I also used it to structure my attention and memory. I had to think in very practical terms about how to adjust in order to recreate some form of what I was missing. This became a much more structured and protocol-like way of both conducting interviews and writing fieldnotes. The digital environment couldn't provide me with the sensorial prompts I needed, but I could prompt my memory by structuring it more heavily.

In addition to following activities as they migrated online, I developed and initiated a series of digital multimodal diaries – diaries where the participants express themselves through multiple formats such as video, audio, pictures, writing etc. (Hyers 2018, 29). The social psychologist Lauri Hyers (2018) points out that the methodological strength of the personal diary is "the power of immediate personal witness" (Hyers 2018, 27). I saw the lockdowns as an unprecedented social situation, and I found the diary method ideal for creating accounts of how my research recorded participants experiencing this change and if/how this affected their experience of themselves in relation to global climate change. The diaries took point of departure in weekly climate-related themes with a set of inspirational questions and asked the participants to produce a multimodal response. I combined the diary method with follow-up interviews, where I used the diary answers as a conversation starter to gain a broader understanding of the entries (Bartlett and Milligan 2015, 25).

In my subsequent work of analysing and making sense of the fieldwork, I realised that I was trying to gloss over this period of online fieldwork and the feeling of inadequacy I associated with my struggles to revert to online fieldwork, meanwhile coping with the social ramifications of being in lockdown. Finding ways to work, think and "write with rather than against the interruptions and disruptions" (Cardoza et al. 2021)¹⁸ was paramount to coming to terms with how my fieldwork actually was, not how I had hoped it would be. The climate diaries in particular which I would not have initiated during in-person, long-term fieldwork, proved seminal to my understanding of the young activists' visions of the future that I detail in both Chapter 2 and Chapter 4. Working through the material from this period rather than bracketing it off has enhanced my final analysis.

18 The publication is unpaginated. The direct quote occurs in the 12th paragraph of the text and begins on the third line of the paragraph.

Pandemic, in-person fieldwork

The lifting of travel restrictions enabled me to return to Stavanger during the summer of 2020 where I stayed for two and a half months. Norms of interaction as well as what it meant to be mindful of my interlocutors and my own safety had radically changed. This meant that I was not able to just pick up where I left off the last time I was in Stavanger. Social life had changed and the types of activities I had wanted to participate in to gain insight into the more practice-based aspects of the activists' lives were either not happening or unavailable due to safety measures. Though infection rates were declining and restrictions were gradually lifted, the fear of infection still lingered along with the smell of hand sanitiser. However, it was possible to meet people for an interview outside or within government guidelines at a safe distance inside. Walking and hiking with research participants and friends proved a way to spend time together with due safety measures, whilst also pursuing my interest in Norwegian perceptions of nature. Upon my return, I found that the relationships I had nurtured via online communication during the pandemic were easy to pick up despite the need for safety measures. This made me realise that the patchworked nature of my fieldwork was not necessarily an impediment to the relational work so central to ethnography (Günel, Varma, and Watanabe 2020; Cardoza et al. 2021).

During this stay in Stavanger, I wanted to focus on exploring the opposition that the young climate activists met from both peers, parents and industry. I initiated interviews with the activist and their parents or grandparents together. As I detail in Chapter 4, not everyone was willing to engage in a joint interview with a family member. I did however manage to conduct two such intergenerational interviews. These are two-to-three-hour long sessions of extensive conversation. As they provide unique insight into direct relational interaction between activists and their parents that crystallise several important themes of the fieldwork, I use excerpts from these interviews across several chapters.

Alongside following the activities of the local activists and trying to set up intergenerational interviews, I initiated a series of interviews with people working in the oil and gas sector. Employees at the Petroleum Museum put me in contact with people from their personal and professional networks. These interviews provided insight into a sector that pays far better than other sectors who cannot match their salaries. For some, this is an issue if they want to leave the industry as they are bound to expensive mortgages if wanting the lifestyle of a big house and a nice car. They know the oil industry is coming to an end, but they see that end as so far into the future that they can finish their working lives within the sector. Some hope the industry will be part of pushing a green transition through increased profitability of renewables, while others look for stricter regulation as the way forward. After a few interviews, it became clear that I was mainly getting in touch with middle and upper middle-class people working primarily in office jobs. To get a broader class perspective in my material, I contacted an oil and gas workers union and a vocational college that offers practical technical education in areas such as oil well drilling and where I carried out a focus group. Here I met a group of young people whose working future is bound up in the oil industry. They either explicitly did not care so much about climate change, or they emphasised the energy demand of the world and Norway's low-emission oil production. In addition to this, I carried out a series of interviews with employees at the Petroleum Museum in order to understand the work of the museum and its portrayal of Norwegian oil history and industrial heritage.

Whilst activists' voices feature most prominently on the pages of this dissertation, I draw explicitly on these series of interviews with people from the oil industry in Chapter 1, and otherwise mainly use them as a backdrop which the activists' stories and struggles resonate from.

Follow-up visits and sharing of research results

During the later summer of 2021 and 2022, I carried out follow-up visits in Stavanger with the dual purpose of sharing and discussing research results with the activists and attending respectively an academic workshop and conference. On one of these occasions, I was able to combine the two by inviting the activists to attend my panel presentation, and subsequently discuss my research in further detail. The sharing and discussion of preliminary research results has been a significant way of sustaining my relationship to the activists and negotiate continued consent to their participation. I'll expand upon the first iteration of sharing my research results with the activists, as it relays insight into the context in which their activism takes place as well as how they view the potential impact of the research.

"We're excited to hear what have you found out!"¹⁹ Nora exclaimed as she and two other activists named Tiril and Linn arrived to our meeting. I explained that my research was still ongoing and that what I was sharing was tentative ideas which I wanted to get their input on. We met in a small meeting room at the local library with the telling name 'The Glass Box,' since the room is situated inside the library hall and all its walls made of glass. I had bought pizza and local lemonade with reusable cups and prepared a small presentation. It was important for me to give the activists a chance of coming with suggestions and pointing out misunderstandings and giving their input on what I wanted to do with the ethnographic material. We discussed that the fieldwork in which they had taken part was only one component of the thesis, and that since I was last in Stavanger, I had been looking for patterns in the ethnographic material generated through my participation in their meetings and interviews with them.

Nora commented on my presentation with a story. Nora and another activist were invited to the city council in the context of a new climate and environmental plan for the municipality. They had been excited and prepared with a lot of suggestions. When they came to the meeting, it turned out the plan had already been made and finalised and the activists' role was not to comment and suggest, but to applaud and show that young people were present and supportive. They had found this very disappointing. Nora ended the story by saying that she appreciated to be let in on my preliminary ideas. Additionally, all three activists pointed out that my analysis was not too harsh and pointing fingers at the fossil fuel industry, but rather tried to shed light on the dilemmas of oil production and how people manage these. They were enthusiastic about this, because in their experience no one would listen if things were presented too black and white. Such input has guided my understanding and theorising of the young activists' windows of opportunity for practicing activism and the theories of change that emerge from it.

Having described and reflected about the methodological set-up that have enabled and shaped my study, I now turn to an outline of the dissertation's four chapters.

19 Norwegian Bokmål: "Vi er spente på å høre hva du har funnet ut av"

Dissertation outline

Across the following four chapters, I explore the activists' pursuit to phase out oil and gas without compromising the humanity and dignity of their local community. Through the chapters, I lay out my understanding of Stavanger's Generation Carbon as a relationship between goodness and loss and detail responses to this relationship that forms through activism. Loss features in all chapters, whilst goodness and activism oscillate between foreground and background in order to portray the tensions the activists work among.

In Chapter 1, *Negotiations of goodness – oil's social meaning and the national regime of goodness*, I introduce Stavanger and lay out the social stories people tell about how much oil has changed life for the better in the city and how these stories inform ideas about the possibilities for change in the present. Here, goodness is in the foreground and loss features as the risk of losing the prosperity and affluence oil has brought to Stavanger. I connect the social stories to literature attending to Norway's national regime of goodness (Tvedt 2006; Witoszek 2011; Anker 2020). I show that the activists appeal to the national regime of goodness in their efforts to phase out oil and gas and suggest the need to expand Norwegian goodness in order to sustain it over time. The activists do so by proposing that to stay true to being good over time, Norway needs to practice goodness beyond its borders by phasing out oil and gas production. I argue that these social stories shape Stavanger's Generation Carbon's present opportunity to respond to the recasting of oil as carbon, and that through appealing to Norwegian notions of goodness they attempt to rethink core values under climatically critical conditions.

In Chapter 2, *'Getting tougher' - facts, feelings and coming of age in the climate crisis*, activism moves to the foreground as I explore how the activists' experience of the social environment of Stavanger demands them to form a toughness using technoscientific facticity. Loss takes the form of the activists' emotional responses to information about the climate crisis, which turns the future into a site of loss whilst simultaneously making the future emotionally present. To the young activists, facts about climate change hurt because they tell stories about a destroyed world and an imperilled future. I detail how emotions and affect play a central role in keeping the climate crisis present and urgent. However, the activists face dismissals from people in the oil industry who claim they are too young to be proper knowledge agents. In their attempts to be taken seriously, the activists find that they must downplay their experience of the climate crisis as deeply personal and emotional in their interactions with their local oil-dependent social environment. This chapter contributes to the understanding of Stavanger's Generation Carbon by showing that addressing oil as carbon in the social environment of Stavanger requires toughness in the form of technoscientific facticity that can protect the activists from age-based dismissals.

In Chapter 3, *A climate changed world is no place for children - child figures, loss and the future*, goodness comes to the fore. I show that the activists also question the welfare state and Norwegian goodness through their unease and hesitation towards having children, and by extension question fulfilling the welfare state's expectation that its citizens are reproductive citizens. I explore the young climate activists' deepfelt sense that something is wrong in the world, their sense of a loss of the normal due to the changed outlook on the future that climate change creates. I use queer theory to address and analyse what happens in the face of losing normality. Specifically, I mobilise queer theory about the figure of the child (Edelman 2004; Sheldon 2016; Kverndokk 2020) to think about the relationship between time, the child and what is considered normal and desirable, as well as to discuss the significance of the child in relation to climate change. By

localisation of the child figure in the Norwegian context, where the natural environment plays an important role in conceptions of both a good life and a good childhood, the chapter lays out the risks and dangers that the young activists perceive when it comes to climate change - the future that is lost to the child and the child that is lost to the future. Through the activists' stories about loss, which centre around loss of nature, I argue that their experience of loss is premised on their investment in the good life that the welfare state promises them, and a nascent realisation that there is a limit to what their investment can deliver. The chapter shows how Stavanger's Generation Carbon's experience of loss, particularly the loss of nature that a changing climate entails, creates cracks in their trust in the goodness of the Norwegian welfare state.

In the fourth and final chapter, "*It is something you could not really do in Stavanger*" – *conflict, care and loss*, activism again moves to the foreground. The chapter explores the kind of activism the Stavanger activists experience as possible in Stavanger and how the social environment installs limits on activist practices. Theoretically informed by the concept of care (Puig de la Bellacasa 2011), I show that the activists seek balance in their critique of oil and gas production. Building from this, I argue that the activists work from the theory of change that caring for relations in the present despite radical differences is an important part of creating their desired future – what I call refiguration. This theory of change is based on an activism that acknowledges and works from the premise that it is relationally intertwined with that which it seeks to change. Therefore, the chapter illuminates the theory of change from which the climate activists of Stavanger's Generation Carbon are working from.

Together the chapters illuminate why young people in Stavanger would be lighting candles at a stone monument in support of the Norwegian Constitution's promise to preserve a liveable environment for present at future generations. The chapters tell a story about growing up in the climate crisis with the understanding that rising levels of carbon, propelled particularly by fossil fuels, are making the world uninhabitable. And at the same time growing up in a place where oil is understood as the main driver of positive change and a social environment where people will decline a piece of cake offered in opposition to the continuously expanding oil industry. Their relationship to this local oil saturated environment put young people who respond to the climate crisis through activism in a position where they must navigate difficult dilemmas of loss. They light candles in the hope of countering the loss of a liveable future through a phase-out of Norwegian oil and gas. However, if this endeavour should prove successful, it will severely harm the flourishing of their local oil dependent community. Making sense of this ethnographic dilemma of loss has required a bringing together of literature attentive to local and situated understandings and contestations over what is 'good,' with literature about activist conceptualisation of social change and the future. It is goodness that I now expand upon in Chapter 1.

CHAPTER 1

Negotiations of goodness – oil’s social meaning and the national regime of goodness

On one of my first nights in Stavanger, I attended practice at a local sports club I had just joined. My new teammate Une gave me and Mari, another member of the team, a lift home. We would drop Mari in the city centre before heading towards my place outside the city. Une asked me if I worked in the oil industry. I remembered that the name of the local ice hockey team is ‘Stavanger Oilers.’ I explained to Une that I was doing research for my PhD thesis. We passed the white wooden houses of the residential areas that line the city. As we approached the city centre, we could see the tall hotel buildings that share the narrow, cobbled streets with smaller wooden houses. An odd contrast and telling reminder of the vast changes Stavanger has undergone since oil was first struck 50 years ago. I asked Une why she thought I worked in the oil industry. “In Stavanger, almost everyone works in the oil industry or something related,”²⁰ she told me and added that “it is a common thing to ask.”²¹ Her own job, she explained, was in a company that provides services to oil companies. Mari added that she and her partner moved to Stavanger because her partner got a really good job in a big oil company. I got the impression that working in the oil industry was the most obvious reason for coming to and being in the city.

We dropped Mari off and headed to the highway that connects Stavanger with the neighbouring town Sandnes via the industrial area Forus - where the main offices of the local oil industry are based. I noticed the other cars on the highway. Tesla, Porsche, Jaguar. We turned off the highway before Forus and drove past another industry area called Jåttåvågen. We passed the office of an oil company, a huge, black and white multistorey building. Further down towards the sea there were several tall apartment blocks in concrete, glass and steel, as well as a crooked concrete tower built in a futuristic style with a turquoise ring around its top. Une told me that the area used to be a construction site for huge concrete foundations for offshore oil platforms, so-called concrete deep-water structures, typically abbreviated as ‘condeeps.’ Condeeps are massive concrete constructions with the power to withstand the violent weather conditions

20 Norwegian Bokmål: ”I Stavanger jobber nesten alle innom olje og gass eller noe sånt”

21 Norwegian Bokmål: ”Det er en vanlig ting å spørre om”

of the North Sea. A short drive along a shopping mall and a big stadium, home of the local soccer club called Viking, took us to a residential area right on the cusp of the fjord. Here, the houses had one or two storeys and the materials were mostly wood. The windows in the houses were big and the biggest ones faced the picturesque view of the mountains on the other side of the fjord. I would later learn that they were too small to be considered proper mountains by Norwegians. Une and I chatted about the significance of the oil industry for Stavanger. I told her I was interested in “climate activism in the oil capital.”²² “You will probably soon come to see how significant the industry is for everyone in Stavanger. That makes it very difficult to change,”²³ she told me and added that she thinks “it is great that young people are engaged and care about the climate”²⁴ At the same time, she thinks that “they don’t always understand how much the oil has changed for the better in Stavanger because they have not experienced the changes themselves directly.”²⁵

The drive with my new teammates was my first in-person encounter with the significance of oil in Stavanger. It surprised me that working in the oil industry was the most obvious reason for my presence in the city. However, I soon came to assume that I would be regularly asked this question. The oil industry is very present in the city and there is a high degree of dependence on it in almost all sectors of employment. Une alluded to a central component of the way most people I encountered in Stavanger tell the story of the city. The narrative of how much oil has changed Stavanger for the better and that this change for the better could be lost if it is not understood or if it is taken for granted.

Oil’s changes in the city are reflected in Stavanger’s architecture, where newer buildings in glass concrete and steel rise above white wooden houses (see Figure 4). What I find to be implicit in framings like



Figure 4 Newer buildings in glass, concrete and steel behind white, wooden houses in Stavanger.

22 Norwegian Bokmål: ”klimaaktivisme i oljehovedstaden”

23 Norwegian Bokmål: ”Du kommer sikkert snart til å se hvor avgjørende industrien er for alle i Stavanger. Det gjør det vanskelig og forandre seg”

24 Norwegian Bokmål: ”det er bra at unge mennesker engasjerer seg og bryr seg om klimaet”

25 Norwegian Bokmål: ”de forstår ikke alltid hvor mye oljen har endret for bedre i Stavanger, fordi de ikke selv har opplevet de endringene direkte”

Une's on the importance of understanding and appreciating the changes oil has brought to Stavanger, is that if you, like the young activists, suggest phasing out the oil industry, you have not really understood the importance of oil. If you had you would not want to see it go, at least, not yet.

What exactly is it that people in Stavanger understand oil to have changed apart from the architecture of the city? What larger social and cultural changes did the arrival of tall hotel and apartment buildings among the white wooden houses signify? And what do the stories people tell about these changes mean for how change can be thought of going forward? These are the questions that I explore in this chapter. This exploration provides an indispensable backdrop for understanding the context in which the young climate activists are operating, the narratives they must speak to in order to appear as legitimate actors and make people listen to and respect them, and, as I will return to in Chapter 4, the theory of change they work from. Chapter 1 thus lays the groundwork for understanding the window of opportunity available to Stavanger's Generation Carbon to act on oil's carbon polluting qualities through activism.

To understand what my teammate meant when she told me that young climate activists don't always get how much oil has changed in Stavanger, I found that I needed to explore this change for the better as a social story that is continuously enacted with particular effects. In this chapter, I introduce a series of vignettes and observations which together illustrate the main arc of the story people in Stavanger tell of oil's significance to their city. I supplement the vignettes with existing literature and newspaper articles. The chapter provides a situated and contemporary version of how oil's significance is narrated and enacted in Stavanger and is thus not a chronological, historical account. My perspective on the rich story of what oil has meant and continues to mean for Stavanger and the people inhabiting the city is formed by the experiences and conversations I've had with the young activists, their parents, people working in the oil and gas industry and my time spent at the Petroleum Museum. I use newspaper articles mainly from the local newspaper *Stavanger Aftenblad*, the work of Norwegian historians about the history of Stavanger (Gjerde 2002) and the oil industry in Norway (Ryggvik 2010), alongside my experiences, observations and conversations from which I piece together the narratives that I understand as formative for how the dilemma of oil plays out in Stavanger. Throughout the chapter, I move between stories about the past and their enactments and effects in contemporary Stavanger and the worlds they continue to make possible.

There is much joy, pride, and excitement in the stories about how the oil industry came to Stavanger and I aim at letting these affects shine through in my writing. I do so because I find that these affects are an important backdrop for properly understanding the dilemma that the global climate crisis causes in Stavanger, and how deeply the climate activism of the young people I have spent time with cuts into the intricate entanglements between industry, national and local identity.

Overall, the chapter tells a story about a moment when oil cannot be reconciled with the qualification of being good or moral despite the positive changes it is understood to have brought to Stavanger. Within Science and Technology Studies (STS), studies of both care and valuation also attend to the good. Within these approaches, goodness is understood as the result of situated and local practices (Mol, Moser, and Pols 2010), where actors can draw on different 'registers of valuing' (Heuts and Mol 2013) in their perceptions and assessments of goodness. In my understanding, these registers of valuing are ways to distribute ethical, political and affective attachment to certain ideas and practices. Registers of valuing is a helpful concept for understanding the changes the value of oil is undergoing in Stavanger, as the framework suggest that oil represents a different value depending on the register of valuing used to assess it.

Winning the lottery is a common metaphor mobilised in relation to Norwegian oil (see for example Krogh and Lindberg 2022), implying that the oil was a prize Norway was lucky enough to receive. However, the reason finding oil was like winning the lottery is not only because of luck. The stories people tell about Norway's oil also centre on how Norwegians did remarkably well with handling the oil. To understand this narrative of luck and skill, I draw on scholarly conversations about Norway's "national regime of goodness" (Tvedt 1998; 2006; Witoszek 2011) and Norwegians as "the world's green do-gooders" (Anker 2020, 238). However, as I demonstrate in this chapter, climate change is introducing irreconcilable dilemmas that means the dominant way of valuing oil cannot contain the cultural meaning of oil anymore.

I begin the chapter by outlining the stories people tell about oil in Stavanger. I then move on to identify a dominant 'oil-as-welfare' register of valuing based on the understanding that oil benefits the national community of Norway through the redistributive mechanisms of the welfare state. I introduce the activists and how they initiate a climate concern register of valuing oil by appealing to the regime of goodness and portray how the ongoing negotiations of oil's social meaning play out socially and relationally.

My main argument in this chapter is that the activists reorient the regime of goodness beyond the nation, thus refusing the benefit of the national community as a sufficient horizon for what it means to be and do good as a collective. I understand the activists to be suggesting that to stay true to the regime of goodness over time, it needs to be expanded spatially beyond the nation, entailing that Norway holds responsibility for the climate impact of oil and gas it exports. Nevertheless, there is not yet a total shift in registers of valuing. Rather, cracks and frictions within the dominant register of valuing lead to ongoing reformulations of what is valuable and for whom and thereby a rethinking of what it means to be and do good as Norwegians in the climate crisis.

Through analysis and perspectives on oil's inability to be confined within the oil-as-welfare register of valuing, the chapter sets the scene for the subsequent chapters which look closely at the concrete strategies the young activists mobilise to be treated seriously as legitimate actors, how they manage disagreement and how they attempt to bring about change from the locality of Stavanger.

The social story about oil

This section attends to the main narratives that characterise the social stories people tell in Stavanger about oil's significance as the main driver of positive change. Supplementing ethnographic vignettes with historical literature and newspaper articles, I detail five main themes; pride in being part of building the oil industry, a new sense of possibility, technological development, accidents and safety and lastly, the 2014 oil crisis.

The pride in being part of building the oil industry.

At the opening of the Petroleum Museum's temporary subsea exhibition in early 2020, many of the people present were older men, who were either former North Sea divers, who risked their life working on dangerous depths to help establish the Norwegian oil industry, or engineers who contributed to developing the subsea technology that have replaced the diver's dangerous work. The artifacts that made up the exhibition

were large and rather odd. They seemed to be from another world somehow, a glimpse into other dimensions. The first object, a so-called Jim-Suit, was a sort of diver's suit that can enable a person to be transported down to very deep water (see Figure 5). A round body in a yellow metallic material with a round glass bulb where the face of a person would peep out when worn. The old men were telling stories among the machines. They placed their hands on a special place on a machine and I imagined that they shared a memory or a detail about the machine that only they knew.

The museum's permanent exhibition of miniature platforms further elaborated the story of the vast technological constructions it takes to bring oil from below the bottom of the sea to the surface, and the engineering skill that goes into making these constructions. The platforms and subsea extraction machines had a certain brutalist aesthetic to them that I came to appreciate during my time in Stavanger. Gigantic constructions with big edgy tops resting on long concrete legs that seem too feeble to support the vastness of the top, yet made from tonnes and tonnes of concrete.

Life on the platforms have their own nostalgia. Most people work in rotations of a few weeks on the platform followed by a few weeks off. The money is good and there is a lot of free time to travel and pursue other interests during the periods at home from sea. When I spoke to people who worked offshore during fieldwork, they explained that it was hard work but the sense of community among the worker's and the fun they have together is a big part of the attraction combined with the long periods off and the high salaries.

In the late summer of 2021, a temporary photography exhibition titled *Photographic Memory*²⁶ displayed private photos portraying life at the platforms. One section was dedicated to pictures of platforms against sunsets – one more stunning than the next (see Figure 6). Another section showed leisure activities. For example, a picture of a room full of people dressed in characteristically tight and colourful bicycle outfits dripping with sweat, each riding a spinning bike, and a picture of a couple dancing like ballerinas next to a small band on a platform deck. From almost every image, people smile and look at the camera in front of a task they are working on, in the canteen balancing a plate with an enormous breakfast, in full safety attire stepping out of a helicopter. As a viewer, I moved from awe at the technological constructions to a sense of joy at the everyday life that continues to take place offshore. Most of the pictures are people's private photos they have taken themselves or inherited from family members and given or on loan to the museum. Together, the pictures tell a story of the intimate connections between the oil industry and people's lives. The good memories from working offshore. The pride in being part of building the oil industry. The sense of possibility the industry brought to Stavanger. I'll elaborate on this sense of possibility in the following section.



Figure 5 The Jim-suit exhibited at the Norwegian Petroleum Museum as part of the *At Work Under Water* Exhibition.

26 Norwegian Bokmål: "Fotografisk hukommelse" (Norsk Oljemuseum 2021)



Figure 6 Oil platforms in sunsets, photo of the exhibition *Photographic Memory* at the Norwegian Petroleum Museum.

New possibilities

In May 1966, a canning factory worker in Stavanger almost fainted when he read the local newspaper and saw the pay offered in the first job advertisement for working on an oil rig – it was more than 50% higher than his current salary (Gjerde 2002, 13). The oil created new possibilities in Stavanger when the search for oil began in the early 1960's, and especially when the first commercial oil field, Ekofisk, was discovered in 1969 and put into production in 1971. People with no or little formal education could get work on the platforms – to a much higher salary as the canning worker's surprise testifies to. The inhabitants of Stavanger increasingly went from tending to small farms, fishing a declining stock of fish, or working at the canning factory to flying out to work on the platforms in a helicopter, or to building condeeps in Jåttåvågen and oil platforms at Rosenberg Shipyard (Gjerde 2002, 55–56, 65; Berge 2014, 14). These new possibilities and the rise in income came to characterise life in Stavanger over the next few decades and continues to frame conversations about what is at stake in phasing out oil and gas.

On June 14, 1972, people in Stavanger raised the flags in celebration of exciting news. The Norwegian Parliament, Stortinget, had granted Stavanger the role as Norway's official oil capital. The new title entailed the placement of the newly founded Petroleum Directorate, as well as the newly founded state-owned oil company Statoil (now Equinor) in Stavanger. The competition with the cities of Bergen and Trondheim had been intense, but emphasis on the already existing oil environment in Stavanger seemed to have done the trick (Gjerde 2002, 41). The placement of the two state institutions created “ripple effects that hardly can be overestimated,” writes a senior researcher at the Norwegian Petroleum Museum in Stavanger, Kristin Øye Gjerde, in an op-ed on the occasion of the 50-year anniversary of Stavanger's title as Norway's oil capital (Gjerde 2022).

In the following years, new oil fields were discovered and surrounding the oil industry itself, a lively and profitable supply industry bloomed. A steady influx of workers from abroad, particularly from the US, created a bustling international environment in Stavanger (Gjerde 2002, 28). Alongside the Petroleum Directorate and Statoil, the technical vocational school of Stavanger developed into a university specialising in petroleum engineering to supply the oil industry's rising need for skilled work (Gjerde 2002, 62; Berge 2014, 16). To enhance the establishment of Stavanger as a renowned and respected oil city the idea to establish an oil expo in Stavanger was conceived, inspired by the American oil mess in Houston, Texas. The Offshore Northern Sea (ONS) conference and industry exhibition has been a recurring event in Stavanger since 1974, bringing industry people from all over the world together to discuss technological development, network and engage in business (Gjerde 2002, 43). A high-profile international event like ONS had not been conceivable in Stavanger only a few years before and became a significant indicator of Stavanger's growing international significance. The oil industry's presence in Stavanger also caused a boom in cultural and sports activities through sponsorship from the industry, with most of the uniforms of Stavanger-based athletes carrying the logo of a locally operating oil company. (Gjerde 2002, 87).

“Look to Norway”

Norway's experience as an oil-exporting nation is in popular accounts often referred to as an adventure or a fairy tale (see for example, Ruud 2019). During a workshop at the Petroleum Museum, where the Museum sourced input from industry people for a new exhibition about subsea technology for oil exploration and extraction, I caught a glimpse of the pride and excitement akin to the images and accounts of the early days of the Norwegian oil adventure showing oil's continued relevance.

Present around the large meeting table were employees from the museum, several high-profile people from different oil companies, and people from a consultancy company who assisted with the creative aspects of the exhibition. The point of departure for the exhibition was a book written by an industrial heritage historian from the museum and a professor in petroleum engineering, sponsored by Equinor amongst others. During the presentation of the book, the workshop convenors explained that the book tells the story of the past 50 years of rapid and creative development of Norwegian subsea technology in the realm of subsea oil drilling and extraction. Whilst the book deals with the past 50 years, they would like to see the exhibition communicate: “welcome to the next 50 years!”²⁷

The discussion at the workshop kept circling back to how to get young people interested in subsea technology which was seen as the main aim of the exhibition. The purpose of this would be to both develop new areas where subsea technology can be applied, such as deep-sea offshore wind power, and to maintain the oil and gas production that the participants were sure will be sustained well into the future - 50 years and beyond. Upon trying to identify key moments for the development of subsea technology, the participants talked about the golden days of Stavanger. They compared subsea technology to space technology because both succeeded in crossing new frontiers and doing something that had never been done before. They talked about past collaborations with the American National Aeronautics and Space Administration

27 Norwegian Bokmål: ”velkommen til de neste 50 årene”

(NASA), and recalled the time when NASA had a local office in Stavanger. “Look to Norway,” one of the participants from the industry exclaimed in English with a distinct Norwegian accent and explained this was what everybody working with offshore oil was saying at the time. Around the table people nodded and smiled and someone added that Stavanger has been a leading global power of petro-engineering for many years. Later, another industry representative explained how the time for crossing new technological frontiers had passed and that the key job was now rather to optimise existing solutions. He compared the challenges of the present to identifying the “cheap and practical IKEA solutions”²⁸ which admittedly was “less sexy”²⁹ than the work of being at the frontier of the technologically possible.

The people at the workshop expected the oil industry to keep producing for 50 years and beyond. This is in line with the Norwegian government’s policy of continued oil exploration and production. It also speaks to a wish to continue or maybe even revive the golden age of Stavanger, when people would say “look to Norway” when trying to figure out something related to subsea technology because this was where technological frontiers were continuously being crossed. The excitement of this time stands in contrast to the “less sexy” pragmatism of the present, as one of the participants dryly put it. When the participants discussed how to explain the power and allure of subsea technology to young people, they compared subsea technology to space technology and recalled NASA’s presence in Stavanger, underlining a past sense of global significance they are eager to revive. What the workshop left me with was the impression of immense pride in the technological achievements of the Norwegian oil industry mixed with a certain nostalgia for the excitement of the past golden age of oil.

When Stavanger became the official centre for the Norwegian oil industry in 1972, it was also the beginning of what many people I encountered during my fieldwork referred to as the “golden age”³⁰ of Stavanger. This golden age was often recounted to me by those who had been in the oil industry for many years. A dreamy look would arise in their eyes. A gaze accompanied by a smile while they recounted when Stavanger’s oil industry peaked. “It was an exciting time, Stavanger was an exciting place to be,”³¹ Geir told me, when I interviewed him about his 40+ years of working in the oil industry. He studied petro-engineering in Stavanger in the 1970’s and quickly advanced to high level jobs in oil companies both in Norway and abroad. Geir jokingly explained that he regularly had to get a new passport in those days because he went to Houston, also known as the heart of the US oil industry, so often that there swiftly weren’t enough pages left in his passport for immigration to stamp. Still, the travel itself was easy since Stavanger had direct flights to Houston at the time.

Stavanger and Houston remain in a relationship of sister cities today. From what people told me, the connections between Stavanger and Houston are still materialised in Stavanger’s cityscape. A piece of street art on the harbour in central Stavanger reminds residents and visitors of these past and present connections (see Figure 7). A set of yellow hands with a characteristic Norwegian knitting pattern on them holds a globe with an oil platform at its centre between the North American continent and Norway. A person in a space suit holds the other side of the globe referencing the placement of NASA in Houston. Large letters spell: Houston, and on top of these, smaller letters spell: Stavanger.

28 Norwegian Bokmål: ”billige og praktiske IKEA løsningene”

29 Norwegian Bokmål: “mindre sexy”

30 Norwegian Bokmål: ”gylne tider”

31 Norwegian Bokmål: ”Det var en spennende tid, Stavanger var en spennende platts å være”



Figure 7 Street art piece reminding of the close connections between Stavanger and Houston.

The extreme profitability of oil meant that big money began to flow through Stavanger, and the city became known as one of world's largest consumers of champagne, mainly popping to celebrate lucrative new oil deals as well as a place where you could get gold-sprinkled sushi. I have not been able to find a study confirming the assumed first place in champagne consumption, but it is a recurring element of stories about the golden age and newspaper articles about the Stavanger (see for example Knudsen 2016; Jacobsen and Fourche 2015).

“Mayday, mayday, Alexander Kielland”

There was also a darker side to the rapid development that Stavanger went through during the early years of the oil industry. Things moved fast and often safety measures did not follow. The subsea was uncharted territory and especially the divers, who played an important role in accessing the subsea, suffered serious work injuries and have put up a long and hard fight to have these acknowledged (Gjerde and Ryggvik 2009). One event in particular shook the whole nation of Norway.

“Mayday, mayday, Alexander Kielland,” this was the terrifying call that reached safety operators in Stavanger on the stormy evening of March 27, 1980 (Gjerde 2002, 73). Alexander Kielland was a living quarters platform servicing people working on the Ekkofisk field. One of the massive columns carrying the platform was destroyed and the platform capsized in the most violent and lethal accident in Norwegian oil history, sadly claiming 123 lives (Gjerde 2002, 73). The accident deeply upset all of Norway, but especially the communities in and surrounding Stavanger in the region of Rogaland, who lost community members in the accident.

2020, the year in which I undertook the main part of my fieldwork, also marked the 40 year memorial since the Kielland accident. At the Petroleum Museum, this occasioned an exhibition focusing on safety and how the lacking safety measures onboard the platform contributed to the severity of the accident. The exhibition emphasised the accident as a turning point in safety regulations for offshore oil rigs and the

beginning of a new era of enhanced, state-regulated safety and working conditions. Though the tragedy is still a sore spot in the national memory, the Kielland accident is also narrated as the birth of the current good and responsible safety practices. A move from what anthropologist Knut Haukelid (2008) has termed a “Texas-style”, characterised by “wild and rough “macho” culture with many accidents – but also pride in doing a good job,” to a new commitment to safety by both state and corporations (Haukelid 2008, 419). What the exhibition at the museum tells and Haukelid’s analysis confirms is a narrative that the early days of oil extraction might have been careless and dangerous, but the caring and responsible Norwegian welfare state, and to a certain extent caring corporations, has corrected these wrongs by developing sound health and safety regulations.

Safety is not only about the concrete safety measures that the welfare state contributed to install, but also a trope employed to underscore the connection between the oil industry and the welfare state that signifies security of jobs and tax income. This is tellingly exemplified in the slogan of the regional Rogaland branch of Fremskridtspartiet – the Progress party – which was the region’s third largest party at the 2021 national election (NRK n.d.). The slogan states: “Oil is for Rogaland, what water is to the body,” with the subtitle “security for oil jobs is security for welfare” and can for example be seen on the Facebook page of Rogaland Frp (@Rogaland FrP n.d. my translation from Norwegian) (see Figure 8). This underlines both the local and national significance of the oil and gas industry and how safety and security are not only about concrete safety equipment and policy, but also larger regional and national labour market and economic politics.



Figure 8 - screenshot from the facebook page of Rogaland FrP which states the slogan : “Oil is for Rogaland, what water is to the body.”

2014 is a year everybody remembers in Stavanger

Personally, I had never checked the price of oil before I began my fieldwork in Stavanger. When the price of oil occurred in conversations, at first, I did not pay much attention to it. However, during my first weeks in the city, I gradually began to wonder why even the young climate activists would from time to time casually speak about the price of oil. As I came to understand, people’s lives in Stavanger are closely tied to the oil price. The Norwegian public intellectual Aslak Sira Myhre describes how, when he grew up during Stavanger’s oil boom in the 70’s, everyone checked the price of oil and the exchange rate for dollars on a daily

basis because the social and economic life in the city fluctuated with it (Myhre 2010, 7–8). Though no longer as all-encompassing as Myhre describes, the price of oil still figures as an important backdrop for social life in Stavanger. Therefore, 2014 is a year everybody remembers. Despite troubles following drops in oil prices over the years, Stavanger kept progressing relatively smoothly until 2014 when the oil price dropped dramatically. Several oil companies cancelled their Christmas parties in 2014 and 2015 due to the tight financial situation, something that would have been unthinkable only a few years before for an industry in seemingly perpetual growth (Kongsnes and Seglem 2015). Unemployment rates reached unprecedented heights as oil companies faced vast layoffs and the local department of the national unemployment insurance program, NAV, introduced relaxation and yoga courses for unemployed people to help reduce the stress of a labour market in free fall (Håland 2015). At the University of Stavanger, people would tell me stories about the graduates of 2014 who were in shock to not have a guaranteed job after graduation. They had grown up used to seeing their older peers headhunted by the industry for well-paid jobs well before securing their diplomas.

Though the labour market has since stabilised, Stavanger was never the same again. My friend, who moved to Stavanger with her partner in the 2010's because her partner got a job in an oil company, told me stories about how there was more money in the city back then. Her partner would always be at work parties with fancy dinners and expensive champagne. You could go out partying without paying for a single drink because the oil people would happily pay for everyone. My friend in contrast to her partner worked in a welfare profession and reflected that it might be a good thing that things had slowed down a little bit so that people working in other sectors were not completely left behind financially due to the vast pay gap between oil industry and non-oil industry work.

Whichever way the people of Stavanger reflect on the 2014 oil crisis, the significance of this event for their self-perception was clear. The seemingly perpetual growth of Stavanger reached a limit. As such, I understand the stories people tell about Stavanger now as deeply formed by this experience of limitation. What the stories about 2014 tell is that the possibility of change for the worse then entered the social reality of Stavanger and has not left since. Alongside the pride, joy and excitement of the golden days of Stavanger, the narrative begins to have an undertone of anxiety. A fear that maybe the party is over without a new party in sight. This fear suggests and propels a need for the community to continuously emphasise the importance and significance of oil for Stavanger.

Though Stavanger is still labelled the oil capital by most of the people I got to know there, the city is officially trying to rebrand itself as Norway's energy capital. This position was challenged in 2021 when Oslo, the Norwegian capital, tried to claim the title. However, after opposition from both local politicians and the Stavanger-based newspaper, *Stavanger Aftenblad*, the Norwegian minister for energy confirmed Stavanger as the energy capital upon insisting requests from a journalist from *Stavanger Aftenblad* (Søndeland 2021). The shift from oil to energy capital mirrors the Norwegian state oil company's shift from oil company to a broad energy company which culminated in 2018 with the name change from Statoil to Equinor. At the University of Stavanger, one can also no longer study petro-engineering but energy engineering, though petroleum extraction still plays a large part in the curriculum. Norwegian politics focuses on harnessing the oil companies' capital and expertise from subsea oil extraction to create new ventures in renewable energy and carbon capture technologies, and the shift from oil capital to energy capital needs to be understood in this light. Rather than a break away from oil companies, the green transition in Norway is often seen as going through the oil companies. Considering the significance of becoming the oil capital, it

is not hard to understand Stavanger's desire to stay capital, if not of oil, then of energy. Being the oil capital has meant an influx of activities, resources and national political significance. The quest for remaining the capital of energy production in a time when oil and gas is supplemented by new forms of energy is another telling example of the anxious premonition the 2014 crisis initiated.

During my fieldwork, yet another crisis occurred in the industry when the oil price dropped to a historic low. The combined forces of a price war between Russia and OPEC and the halt of most heavy transport due to the pandemic had the cost for so-called futures of American crude oil in collapse. Rather than paying for the oil, buyers were offered almost 38 dollars for taking the oil off the hands of the sellers (Elster 2020). Though the price drop for North Sea Oil were not as dramatic, Stavanger was heavily affected. Tellingly, the importance of the industry for the region was underlined further by the website of Stavanger Aftenblad in March 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic caused a lockdown in Norway. The website had a banner showing the number of people infected³² regionally in Rogaland, nationally in Norway and worldwide³³ with the noteworthy addition of the number of people sent home without pay³⁴ and the number of people who have been laid off³⁵ in the oil industry specifically³⁶ (see Figure 9).



Figure 9 Screenshot from the website of Stavanger Aftenblad

A piece of street art in central Stavanger shows pallbearers carrying a barrel of oil in a funeral-like procession (see Figure 10). The pallbearers are dressed in business attire and look like they are grieving the loss of a loved one. Are the pallbearers grieving the loss of the golden pre-2014 era signified? Do they carry a sense that the party might be over without a new party in sight? A bouquet of pink and red flowers in a sea of green branches lies on top of the oil barrel providing a colourful contrast to the otherwise black and white picture. The flowers might suggest a different scenario. Maybe the pallbearers are in the process of putting the era of oil behind them to avoid the catastrophic consequences of the climate crisis? Enabling new flowers to sprout in the wake of oil. Whichever way one might interpret the piece of street art, it is

32 Norwegian Bokmål: "Smittede"

33 Norwegian Bokmål: "Verden"

34 Norwegian Bokmål: "Permitterte"

35 Norwegian Bokmål: "Oppsagte"

36 Norwegian Bokmål: "Oljebransjen"

not possible to overlook the sense of grief its prospect produces. The future of oil in Stavanger still seems indeterminate. However, as Une suggested during our drive together, oil remains significant for the current way of life in Stavanger.



Figure 10 Streetart piece in central Stavanger showing pallbearers carrying an oil barrel in a funeral like scenario.

As I write these pages in the summer of 2022, the war in Ukraine and the following efforts to avoid purchasing Russian oil and gas has Norwegian crude oil going for over 100 dollars a barrel, bringing back past profitability to an industry who only recently was on its knees. New geopolitical safety considerations have made Norwegian oil and gas take on a renewed importance in securing an energy supply independent of Russian oil and gas. With consequently skyrocketing oil prices, a burial of oil due to lost profitability is highly unlikely in the immediate future. During a trip back to Stavanger in the summer of 2022, the bustling sense of activity and renewed prosperity was hard to overlook in the city.

Oil as the main driver of positive change

Throughout this section, I have tried to unfold what my teammate meant when she told me that the oil has changed a lot in Stavanger and continues to hold great significance in the city. I have laid out the story about oil in Stavanger as I came to know it through my time in the city supplemented by historical literature and newspaper articles. The main point I want to draw focus on across the stories is that oil is understood as an immense luck akin to winning the lottery, and that oil is understood to be the main driver behind the vast changes that Stavanger has seen over the past 50 years. A change that is largely narrated as a change for the better. However, the oil crisis in 2014 introduced a fear of losing this change for the better, which in turn seems to create a need to emphasise the significance of oil and what might be lost if oil is phased out.

I now turn to how the story about oil not only features luck and their ripple effects, but also skill, hard work and insight that enabled this luck which in turn brings me to the welfare state.

The common good and the national regime of goodness

Stavanger celebrated its 50-year anniversary as Norway's oil capital on June 14, 2022. On the anniversary, a series of opinion pieces were published in local and national newspapers. "June 14, 1972: 50 years with the world's best oil model?"³⁷ is the headline of one such piece by two leading figures at the Norwegian Petroleum Museum. The authors write that "no other country in the world has harvested as much resource rent from its oil and gas resources – on behalf of the national community"³⁸ (Krogh and Lindberg 2022, my translation from Norwegian). In another opinion piece titled "The oil history builds the future,"³⁹ the Director General of the Petroleum Directorate writes that the directorate "has contributed to making the Norwegian oil industry as good as possible – maybe the best in the world – for the common good of the national community"⁴⁰ (Sølvberg 2022, my translation from Norwegian). The two pieces celebrate the Norwegian model as, perhaps, the best in the world by emphasising "the common good" and "the national community."

The pieces reflect a common understanding I met during my time in Stavanger: not only has the oil been a great stroke of luck to Norway and Stavanger in particular, but Norwegians have also shown a particular skill in their governance of the oil which has enabled it to benefit the entire national community. This skilfulness is perceived as an asset that can be mobilised in new directions to drive a green transition and oil companies are seen to be leading actors in this potential green transition as the title of the Director General's opinion piece suggests.

The welfare state is a central component of what enables the social redistribution of oil "for the common good of the national community" and I label this way of valuing oil as an oil-as-welfare register of valuing.

But what is this national community and what are its boundaries? Common across generations, people often told me how oil has been a blessing to Norway, but that oil can also be a curse too, which comparisons to other oil states served to prove. Demarcations through similarity and differences in relation to other oil-producing nations are a central feature of defining Norway's success as an oil state. For example, my acquaintance Svein, who works as a teacher, told me about a Norwegian journalist who had travelled to different oil states to examine the development the oil had led to in different places. To Svein, this book forcefully showed how lucky Norway was compared to, for example, Nigeria, where oil have led to massive resource exploitation by transnational companies with little concern for the local population and

37 Norwegian Bokmål: "14.juni 1972: 50 år med verdens beste oljemodell"

38 Norwegian bokmål: "Ingen andre land i verden har høstet like mye grunnrente ut av sine olje- og gassressurser – på vegne av fellesskapet". I want to make a note on my choice of "national community". In English "community" tends to refer to a smaller, more local community, while I understand "fellesskapet" in this and the following Norwegian opinion pieces to refer to the community of all of Norway. I emphasise this through adding "national" to "community" in my translation from Norwegian to English.

39 Norwegian Bokmål: "Oljehistorien bygger framtiden"

40 Norwegian Bokmål: "OD har bidratt til å gjøre norsk petroleumsnæring så god som mulig – kanskje den beste i verden – til det beste for fellesskapet".

environment and here the wealth from the oil only benefits a small, corrupt elite, not the whole country. Interestingly, Svein did not mention the Norwegian state-owned energy company Equinor's direct involvement in oil extraction in Nigeria.

Demarcations through similarities and difference is a central component of defining the internal boundaries of the national community. Scandinavia is renowned for egalitarian societies with strong welfare states of a universalist orientation emphasising equal access to services rather than means testing (Vike 2018, 2). The universalist orientation of the Norwegian welfare state has been a defining factor in the high level of trust in the state amongst Norwegians (Vike 2018, 2). However, as much excellent critical scholarship points out, there are important nuances to the egalitarian ethos of Scandinavia and its boundaries (Gullestad 1989; 2006; Abram 2018; Eriksen 2002; Loftsdóttir and Jensen 2021; Vike 2018). In Norway, the welfare state emerged in the period following the second world war and a post-war discourse of unification across class and rural-urban divides (Gullestad 2006, 77). This unification also entailed the need to demarcate the boundaries of those who did not belong and thereby were not entitled to the welfare state's benefits and services. Entitlement to welfare services largely became defined in terms of belonging to the nation state (Gullestad 2006, 77). The demarcations of belonging increasingly take on a nationalistic discourse conceptualising a Norwegian 'us' as hosts and an immigrant 'them' as guests who do not rightfully belong (Gullestad 2006, 73). The egalitarian ethos of Norway has a shadow side: a difficulty with handling difference and a tendency to conflate equality with sameness⁴¹ (Gullestad 1989; see also Abram 2018; and Loftsdóttir and Jensen 2012; 2021). The national community which the oil is imagined benefitting through the welfare state is thus a debated and contested entity whose boundaries are increasingly articulated through similarity and difference and a neonationalist discourse.

I don't mean to suggest that the violent and environmentally devastating practices of oil extraction in Nigeria is preferable to how oil extraction is practiced in Norway, or that Norwegians should not be fond of the welfare state. I am interested in why comparisons such as Svein's are such a prevalent feature of talk about oil in Stavanger. What do comparisons to other oil states do for the people who make them and why do they put so much emphasis on them?

The comparisons between Norway and other oil states, are, I suggest, deployed to understand Norway's position and responsibility as different from other oil states due to democracy, strong regulative practices as well as the ability to redistribute wealth from oil extraction through the welfare state. Such comparison confirms Norway's success at harnessing oil wealth to the benefit of the national community. The point I want to make here is that these comparisons are not neutral descriptions of the world. Rather they shape and have effects in the world. Such comparisons draw, contest as well as reaffirm connections and relations thereby making reality (Candea 2018; Choy 2011). I am interested in how these comparisons draw up the world through specific connections and relations that position Norway as a success and other oil states as failures. This brings me to what Norwegian scholars have called the national regime of goodness.

41 The anthropologist Marianne Lien (2001) has pointed out that equality as sameness is a more prominent cultural property of Southern Norway and thus does not hold equal significance to all of Norway, however as my research takes place in Southern Norway, I find it a fitting reference.

The national regime of goodness

Norwegian goodness is both critiqued and confirmed in academic scholarship and presented as a national success story that sometimes also verges on a more negatively loaded self-goodness. To further my analysis, I will here attend to the works of the cultural historian Nina Witoszek (2011) and the historians Terje Tvedt (2006; 2003) and Peder Anker (2020).

I start with the critical perspective of the historian Terje Tvedt (2006; 2003), who coined the term the “national regime of goodness,”⁴² which refers to a national consensus project that places Norway in a position of speaking on behalf of what is understood to be “universally good”⁴³ (Tvedt 2006, 67, my translation from Norwegian). Tvedt develops the concept through an analysis of Norwegian foreign policy, especially foreign aid, and defines the national regime of goodness as “a dominant norm-legitimising and norm-producing regime where imaginings and rhetoric about goodness regulates the system’s internal relations and provides the system its foundational external legitimacy”⁴⁴ (Tvedt 2003, 34 my translations from Norwegian). Through the national regime of goodness Norway defines itself as “a moral society in contrast to an evil, cynical world”⁴⁵ (Tvedt 2006, 68 my translation from Norwegian). Tvedt explores what Norway’s ambitions to become a leading global power in foreign aid and peacebuilding has meant for how Norwegians perceive themselves in the world (Tvedt 2006, 59). One of Tvedt’s core arguments is that the national regime of goodness hinders reflection and self-criticism, and that its primary function is to confirm the goodness of the system itself (Tvedt 2003, 35; 2006, 69). I understand Tvedt to be suggesting that the national regime of goodness does not refer to actual good deeds but to a national self-perception.

In contrast, the cultural historian Nina Witoszek (2011) argues that Tvedt’s analysis focuses too much on the shadow side of Norwegian goodness (Witoszek 2011, 14), and by doing so, he misses out on the opportunity to understand what she calls “the Norwegian success story,” a country that is rich, happy and morally sound (Witoszek 2011, 12). In her study of the cultural roots of the regime of goodness, Witoszek sets out to “take Norway’s unique status as a “great and good place on earth” seriously” (Witoszek 2011, 14), and portrays a confirmation of and genuine interest in Norwegian goodness. More recently, in studies of Norwegian goodness is the work of the historian Peder Anker (2020). Anker unfolds the history of Norwegians as what he calls “the world’s green do-gooders” (Anker 2020, 238). Anker argues that the act of doing something good is a central point in Norwegian culture (Anker 2020, 2). Anker locates the foundation of this cultural point in tendencies among Norwegian environmentalists of the 1970’s to glorify pristine Norwegian nature as morally superior to dirty city centres, and by extension “beautiful, peaceful Norway contrasted with the polluted, troubled world” (Anker 2020, 4).

My exploration of Norwegian goodness is also situated in a larger conversation with literature about Nordic and welfare state exceptionalism. This literature embeds the discussions of Norwegian goodness in studies of Nordic self-images that portrays the Nordics as morally good due to what is perceived as non-involvement in the activities of colonialism (Loftsdóttir and Jensen 2012; Jensen and Loftsdóttir

42 Norwegian bokmål: ”det nasjonale godhetsregimet”

43 Norwegian bokmål: ”det universelt gode”

44 Norwegian bokmål: ”et dominant normlegitimerende og normproduserende regime hvor forestillinger og retorikk om godhet regulerer systeminterne relasjoner og gir systemet dets grunnleggende eksterne legitimitet”

45 Norwegian Bokmål: ”et moralsk samfunn i kontrast til en ond, kynisk omverden”

2016; Loftsdóttir and Jensen 2021; see also Habel 2015; Diallo 2019; Khalid 2021). With some literature paying specific attention to the role of the welfare state as a key component of Nordic exceptionalism (Loftsdóttir and Jensen 2021, 77; see also Marklund 2017). The cultural researchers Kristin Loftsdóttir and Lars Jensen argues that the “idea of Nordic Exceptionalism as disconnected from European colonialism has enabled the association of these countries with peace, rationality and progress. It has led to a view of Nordic people as having a particularly elevated moral character that has been interwoven with the association between Nordic countries and the welfare state” (Loftsdóttir and Jensen 2021, 84). By challenging the myth of non-involvement in colonial activities by the Nordic countries, Loftsdóttir and Jensen question “the assumption of a peaceful, innocent European North” (Loftsdóttir and Jensen 2021, 77). So far, studies within the framework of Nordic exceptionalism have done the important work of challenging the “myth of non-involvement” in colonialism by the Nordic countries and connecting these myths to dismissals of racism and difficulty at dealing with cultural difference. I suggest however, that the concept also holds potential for enhancing the understandings of the particularities of green transitions in the Nordics.

My analysis in this chapter rests on the premise that “the assumption of a peaceful, innocent North” (Loftsdóttir and Jensen 2021, 77) expressed in ‘Nordic exceptionalism’ and ‘the national regime of goodness’ can help understand dominant narratives about Norwegian oil production and the disputes over youth climate activists’ desire to phase it out. Whilst in agreement with Anker that goodness is a central cultural point in Norway, I show that consensus on what goodness entails and requires in a time of climate crisis is in flux among the inhabitants of Stavanger. While the meaning of oil has largely been valued by understanding oil in relation to how it benefits the national community through the welfare state, the climate crisis means that the social meaning of oil can no longer be fully contained in an oil-as-welfare register of valuing.

To conceptualise how the shifts between registers of valuing takes place, I use the sociologist of science Michel Callon’s (1998) concepts of frames and overflow. Drawing on the work of the sociologist Goffman, Callon sees a frame as an agreed upon “boundary within which interaction – significance and content of which are self-evident to the protagonists – take place more or less independently of their surrounding context” (Callon 1998, 249). However, the surrounding context is never completely absent and can affect or eventually shift the dominant frame. Callon labels such effects of context on the frame as overflows (Callon 1998, 251). Following Callon, the registers of valuing oil need to comply with an agreed cultural frame in order to legitimately contain oil’s social meaning. I propose that this dominant frame is the regime of goodness. Through Callon’s framework, the negotiations over oil’s social meaning can be understood as a grappling with how to realign with the regime of goodness and either contain the overflow of oil’s social meaning or use this overflow to create new registers of valuing.

One expression of these renegotiations of goodness is the industry narrative of ‘clean’ Norwegian oil, which echoes the comparisons between pristine Norway and “the polluted, troubled world” that Anker outlines. Another is the young climate activists’ proposition that phasing out oil and gas is a prerequisite for realigning with the regime of goodness. I will start with the ‘clean oil’ response and return to the activists’ approaches later in the chapter.

Clean oil to realign with the regime of goodness

'Clean oil' refers to attempts to lower the carbon emissions from oil production, which in Norway largely takes place through electrifying oil platforms by drawing power cables from onshore hydropower or offshore wind power replacing the gas turbines that traditionally fuel the platforms (Equinor n.d.). 'Clean oil' is a contested claim in Norway. The following exchange between the participants in a debate about Norwegian oil policy is a good example of the dynamics and positions regarding 'clean oil,' and how it relates to wider questions of responsibility and justice. The debate took place in a large lecture hall. There were free vegetarian wraps for the audience of about 30 people in a room with space for at least 100 spectators. Most of the audience seemed like university students, happy to have a free lunch. Frida was one of the debaters, the only woman and the youngest, at the time 16 years old and a first year high-school student. Accompanying Frida were two middle-aged men from the Norwegian oil company Equinor and the interest organisation Norwegian Oil and Gas and two other representatives from environmental and climate organisations, one of them a master's student of climate politics at the university.

The debater from one of the environmental organisations argued that Norway has a historical responsibility to cut down on their oil production. "We have become so rich, and we have let out so much CO₂,"⁴⁶ he emphasized as the reason for this historic responsibility. Pushing back against the idea of historic responsibility, the debater from Norwegian Oil and Gas argued that in Norway, the wealth oil generates is distributed fairly. In "countries in the Global South"⁴⁷, he argued, corruption means that oil benefits only a privileged elite. "We're not talking about justice,"⁴⁸ the debater from an oil and gas company interjected. He continued, "we're talking about the climate and in that perspective the oil should be Norwegian. The oil that comes from Norway is good for the climate."⁴⁹ He compared emissions from the production of Norwegian oil to production from Saudi Arabia to prove his point and concluded that Norwegian oil is good for the climate because the production is less carbon intensive.

The argument that Norway has a historic responsibility to phase out oil and gas because of the wealth it has gained from activities that let out "so much CO₂" is countered by two different comparisons. Firstly, a comparison that mobilises Norway's ability to do good nationally through social redistribution of oil wealth, invoking democracy and the welfare state and the absence of corruption. Within this logic, Norway is better than "countries in the global South," where the speaker locates high levels of corruption. The second comparison aims to strip the argument of justice implications by focusing solely on emissions from oil production. Norwegian oil is said to be "good for the climate" due to a less carbon-intensive production than Saudi Arabia. This argument is accompanied by an implicit obligation to produce oil and since Norwegian oil is portrayed as better for the climate than most other oil, an insinuation that it should be those other countries like Saudi Arabia who stop producing oil. Crucially, the example shows how there is often a slippage between goodness through democratic social redistribution, and on the other hand goodness as cleanliness in terms of what is allegedly a low-carbon production.

46 Norwegian Bokmål: "Vi har blitt så rike og vi har slipt ut så mye CO₂"

47 Norwegian Bokmål: "land in det Globale Syd"

48 Norwegian Bokmål: "Vi snakker ikke om rettferdighet"

49 Norwegian Bokmål: "vi snakker om klimaet og i det perspektiv bør oljen være norsk. Den oljen, som kommer fra Norge, er bra for klimaet"

The industry narrative of ‘clean oil’ inscribes itself in broader attempts to purify fossil fuels through practices captured in adjectives with positive connotations like “sustainable mining” or “clean coal.” For example, the anthropologist Stuart Kirsch (2010) explores how “sustainable mining” is used by mining corporations to describe corporate practices that support local economic activity aimed to last longer than the mining activities themselves, but does not include efforts to decrease environmental or climatic impact (Kirsch 2010, 90). Similarly, the anthropologist Michael Watts describes corporate social responsibility activities aimed at human rights compliance by oil companies operating the Global South as attempts to do what he calls “righteous oil” (Watts 2005). More recently, Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in 2022, has sparked new adjectives attributed to energy sources. For example, the German minister of finance labelled renewable energy after the invasion as “energy of freedom,” invoking European and American values of freedom in opposition to an ‘unfree’ or oppressive energy supplied by Russian oil and gas (Reuters 2022a).

‘Clean oil’ can be understood alongside labels like clean coal and sustainable mining as what the anthropologist Stuart Kirsch terms ‘corporate oxymorons’ (Kirsch 2010, 87). Corporate oxymorons are tools for halting critique by invoking two contradictory beliefs and requiring them to be held together without contradiction, intending to conceal their harmful practices (Kirsch 2010, 87–88). In Norway the corporate oxymoron of ‘clean oil’ gains extra weight through the moral imperative to produce clean oil for the benefit of the global climate, suggested when the speaker at the debate states that “the oil that comes from Norway is good for the climate.” The narrative of ‘clean oil’ is contested in Stavanger further among people working in or closely related to the oil industry. Several of my interlocutors from the oil industry itself challenged the idea that Norwegian oil is good for the climate, pointed out that largely onshore oil extraction is less carbon intensive than offshore oil extraction, and ultimately stated that Norwegian oil is good for Norway.

Though contested, I understand the invocation of a ‘clean Norwegian oil’ as an attempt to contain the overflow of oil’s social meaning and realigning it with the regime of goodness by arguing that it is “good for the climate.” To sustain the claim that Norwegian oil and gas is morally superior to oil and gas from Saudi Arabia, Nigeria or Russia, it is no longer enough to invoke how oil in Norway benefits the national community and not just a small elite.

What I find to emerge through the accounts of clean oil is a particular Norwegian self-image as a benign oil state. That Norway is an exception to the rule among other oil states, akin to Nordic exceptionalism’s analysis of the Nordics as an exception based on their perceived non-involvement in colonialism. This exceptionalism is largely mirrored in anthropological literature about oil, particularly when it comes to the so-called resource curse, as I will discuss in the next section.

Exception to the resource curse

Norway often stands out as an exception to the rule of the so-called ‘resource curse’ that predicts a correlation between oil states and totalitarian rule. For example, in the introduction to the anthology *Crude Domination – an Anthropology of Oil*, the anthropologists Stephen P. Reyna and Andrea Behrends ask “if money is a condition of development, and it surely is, why do petro-dollars buy petro-curses rather and petro-utopia?” (Behrends, Reyna, and Schlee 2011, 6). Their question grows out of the paradox that oil wealth tends to lead to “stagnating social development and poverty; high conflict, often violent; and a

tendency towards authoritarian regimes” (Behrends, Reyna, and Schlee 2011, 6). Anthropological analyses however tend to critique and go beyond ideas of the resource curse, often highlighting how the oil industry itself is pivotal to the making and maintenance of the perceived curse (Hannah Appel 2019; Gilberthorpe and Rajak 2017; M. Watts 2004; Weszkalnys 2011; Rogers 2012; Behrends, Reyna, and Schlee 2011), as anthropological fieldwork enables attention to details beyond the so-called curse (Rogers 2015). Within the anthropology of oil the destructive effects that oil companies have on local communities is well documented (Coronil 1997; Sawyer 2004; Behrends, Reyna, and Schlee 2011; Appel 2019; Appel, Mason, and Watts 2015; Rogers 2012). The environmental degradation of oil operations in the Niger Delta (Watts 2004), indigenous struggles against US oil companies in Ecuador (Sawyer 2004), and indigenous-led lawsuits that challenge the operation of oil companies operating on indigenous territories in the Ecuadorian Amazon and in Alberta, Canada (Davidov 2016) are just a few examples of anthropological accounts of oil’s destructive consequences.

Where does Norway sit in these accounts? Closer to a petro-utopia than a petro-curse Norway is often bracketed out of accounts of the detrimental consequences of oil extraction or is mentioned as a counterpoint or exception (see for example Behrends, Reyna, and Schlee 2011; Karl 1997; McNeish and Logan 2012). For example, in her exploration of oil’s ‘paradox of plenty’ across different national oil experiences, the political scientist Terry Lynn Karl (1997) highlights Norway’s oil experience as a positive exception. Karl ascribes Norway’s success as an oil state to the fact that stable state institutions were already in place when oil was first struck, which according to Karl enhanced the state’s ability to harness oil wealth for the good of the nation and population at large (Karl 1997, 220–21). Anthropologists John-Andrew McNeish and Owen Logan (2012) elaborate on this perception as they open their edited volume about oil-producing nations with discussing “the Norwegian Model” – not as an exportable model for success, but as a historically embedded phenomenon resting heavily on Norway’s previous experience in hydropower as well as the Scandinavian labour movement (McNeish and Logan 2012, 2–3; see also Ryggvik 2010). Common across these accounts is the centrality of the Norwegian welfare state and how oil extraction in Norway is deeply embedded in the institutions of the welfare state, setting Norway apart from studies of enclave-style oil extraction that only feed something back to elites and expat workers (Appel 2019; Dalsgaard 2013).

In order to further expand upon the particularities of Norway, I will contrast the narratives of clean Norwegian oil to Hannah Appel’s (2019) work on modularity in offshore oil extraction in Equatorial Guinea. Appel looks at US oil companies’ extractive practices in Equatorial Guinea and explores what she calls “the licit life of capitalism” (Appel 2019, 6). Appel refers to the unjust practices and legal frameworks that distance capitalist practices from local contexts and sites of production to ultimately make products – like oil – appear “*as if* untouched” by the practices and histories of its production (Hannah Appel 2019, 21 original emphasis). Appel argues that offshore oil creates the industry fantasy that extraction and profit moves without friction from extraction site to extraction site (Appel 2019, 20–21). According to Appel, offshore extraction is not only a question of geology, but just as much a deliberate choice of US oil companies that serves extractive practices that work by “the guiding metaphor of apparent distance between corporate and national daily life” (Appel 2019, 20).

Appel’s work draws attention to practices of disembedding and distancing that makes highly unjust contemporary capitalist production possible. I find Appel’s argument especially compelling when trying to think through the narrative of clean Norwegian oil. Upon a first glance, localising oil by emphasising that its

origin makes it better and cleaner seems to run counter to the argument that Appel is building about disembedding products from local sites of production. In Norway, the localisation of oil is significant both in terms of carbon emissions and democracy. The sense of place matters and evokes both the well-established regulation practices of the Norwegian state and the local blood, sweat and tears that has gone into creating the current oil infrastructure and the pride in the national know-how of taming the turbulent North Sea. But upon a closer look, Norwegian clean oil is a narrative resting on a moral architecture akin to what Appel outlines.

In Appel's ethnography, economic theory about 'the resource curse' works to justify continued exploitation of states on the African continent and to bypass the local community in an enclave style of production (Appel 2019, 23–25). In Norway, perceptions about Norway's exception to the resource curse works to justify why Norway should continue to produce oil and gas. 'Clean oil' becomes not only a question of the physical properties of the oil and the amount of energy required to refine it into petrochemical products, but also the capacity of the state to handle oil wealth in a way that benefits the local population and national community. Part of what Appel convincingly shows in her work on Equatorial Guinea and US oil companies is that there is a "mutually beneficial relationship between absolute rule and transnational oil" (Appel 2019, 8–9). This is in the sense that transnational oil companies could not work the way they do and produce the cheap oil they do without the authoritarian regimes that they support and keep in place (see also Mitchell 2013; Ghazvinian 2007). Places like Equatorial Guinea, or more commonly Nigeria or Saudi Arabia, are used in Norway as examples of others where oil is produced in harmful ways that makes Norwegian oil production seem good.

I don't mean to suggest that the relatively safe working conditions, well-paid jobs, positive national and local ripple effects that the oil creates in Norway would not be preferable to the violent extractive practices of transnational oil companies in Equatorial Guinea or Nigeria. As emphasised by Appel who writes in response to similar reflections in the concluding remarks of her work, "*of course*" (Appel 2019, 283). What I do suggest is that Norwegian goodness hinges on the perceived badness of other oil states and that this goodness becomes increasingly difficult to sustain as the global climate crisis challenges the stability of the oil as welfare regime of valuing.

In the following section, I introduce Frida, one of my key activist interlocutors and how the climate activism of Frida and her fellow activists proposes a need to extend the regime of goodness spatially in order to preserve it temporally.

Reframing the regime of goodness

“Do you think that people are just like,”⁵⁰ Frida’s mother stopped talking and put her hands over her eyes to illustrate what people, who don’t want to phase out the Norwegian oil and gas industry, might be like. With her hands placed over her eyes, Frida’s mother said in a mock voice “achhh I can’t be bothered to care.”⁵¹ “Is it like that?”⁵² she asked. It was sunny afternoon in the early autumn, and I was sitting with the 17-year-old climate activist, Frida, and her mother in their home in one of Stavanger’s residential areas. We sat in the garden and discussed Frida’s activism and her mother’s job in consultancy in the oil industry. Frida sighed and said with a serious look on her face that she thinks that some people feel like they can’t be bothered or that they don’t have the energy, but mainly she thinks that people think, “I don’t want us to be the ones who sacrifice ourselves, why should we be the ones to stop producing oil, the other countries will just take over?”⁵³ Frida pointed out that one of the main arguments for continuing Norwegian oil production is that Norway has what is often termed ‘the cleanest oil.’ Frida emphasised that she does not think oil can be clean. Frida agreed that oil can be produced in less carbon-intensive ways, but oil is oil and what matters is the massive climatic pollution that occurs when oil is combusted. “It makes me so mad, that people just close their eyes,”⁵⁴ Frida said, “because I wish that I could also just close my eyes and think oh well, we’ll all die, I hope I can live a nice life before it hits me.”⁵⁵ She sat still for a while looking at the table in front of her.

The first time I met Frida was two years prior when she participated in the debate that I describe in the previous section about clean oil. Clearly the youngest of the debaters and the only female, her strong presence and energetic argument made a lasting impression on me. Frida delivered her points forcefully and shook her head in frustrated disbelief at counter arguments she did not agree with. We had been in contact previously via email to arrange my participation in a meeting in the climate and environmental organisation Frida was part of and met by chance at the debate.

What struck me about Frida when I first met her as well as in the above conversation two years later is the continued force of her sense that something is not how it is supposed to be. Frida’s and her fellow activists’ refusal to close her eyes and not care while remaining committed to the humanity and dignity of their local community is a theme I explore further in Chapter 4. For Frida and her fellow young activists I spent time with in Stavanger, the oil-as-welfare register of valuing understood as how oil benefit of the national community could not contain the social meaning of oil. The undertone of their activities seemed to be ringing with the message that because of climate change, it is not possible to continue to be Norway in the same way as it has until now. They feel like the people of Stavanger are too comfortable in the reassurance of the moral soundness that the oil-as-welfare register of valuing provides. The activists want people to understand the urgency of the climate crisis and they challenge the oil-as-welfare register of valuing through a climate concern register of valuing, which reframes and re-actualises the regime of goodness in new ways.

50 Norwegian bokmål: ”Tror du at folk bare såen”

51 Norwegian bokmål: ”achhh jeg bryr meg ikke”

52 Norwegian bokmål: ”er det såen?”

53 Norwegian bokmål: ”Jeg ville ikke at vi skal være de som ofrer oss selv, hvorfor skal vi være de som stopper med å produsere olje, andre land vil bare ta over”

54 Norwegian bokmål: ”Det gjør meg så sint at folk bare lukker øynene sine”

55 Norwegian bokmål: ”fordi jeg ønsker at jeg også klarte å lukke øynene og tenke nå vi skal alle dø, jeg håper jeg kan ha et fint liv før det rammer meg”

I elaborate on this continuation of the regime of goodness in new forms by going back to the conversation between Frida and her mother. I return to this lengthy conversation throughout the chapters because so many of the themes present in my ethnographic material crystallises in their conversation.

“There is no one better suited than us to take the lead”

Frida leaned forward in her chair and said that not only is Norway economically well-suited to make a change, she also could not possibly imagine other countries like Saudi Arabia, Nigeria or Russia taking the lead on phasing out oil and gas production. Frida’s mother made an affirming facial expression accompanied by a hand gesture and repeated, “there is no one better suited than us to take the lead.”⁵⁶ Frida and her mother were critiquing the current political line of sustaining oil production through electrification of platforms and the production of ‘clean oil’ as well as the offsetting of carbon emissions abroad, as they strongly emphasised that Norway must be the place for Norwegians to start. Frida pointed out that Norway is the world’s seventh largest exporter of carbon emissions and argued that this makes Norway well-placed to make a real impact. This is contrary to popular arguments that Norway is too small to make an impact globally. Frida’s mother nodded and pointed out that Norway is also economically in a strong position to be able to make a change because of the vast wealth that lies in the oil fund, a wealth that continually grows through investments. The last part of the argument was Frida’s point that it is unimaginable that other oil states should take the lead on showing that phasing out oil and gas is possible.

The conversation between Frida and her mother continues the narrative about Norway as an exception to other oil states and that Norway is a country that does, or at least is supposed to do, good and must take the lead. Frida and her mother found it disappointing that Norway does not phase out its oil and gas production given that they are so well-situated to set a good example. This well-suitedness refers both to the economic capacity that the oil fund provides and to the political make-up of Norway in the form of a strong, democratic welfare state. To Frida and her mother, it makes sense that Norway should take the lead on phasing out oil and gas, while it does not make sense that for example Saudi Arabia should do this because it is not a democracy.

The new modes of valuing oil and gas production that the activists suggest deeply challenges the oil-as-welfare register of valuing, while appealing to the regime of goodness and a need to expand the regime of goodness spatially. What I mean by this is that they find the benefit of the nation an insufficient frame for sustaining goodness and an insistence that Norway must claim responsibility over the carbon emitted from Norwegian oil when it is combusted abroad. In order to preserve the regime of goodness over time it needs to be extended beyond the borders of the nation. The sense that the Norwegian welfare state as well as the prosperity and livelihoods of Stavanger is enabled by oil, that people working in oil and gas actively contribute to these goods is no longer enough to comply with goodness as a central cultural point in Norway.

While activists insist that Norway needs to change, their argument is not inherently critical of the state. I understand the idea that Norway is well-suited to take the lead as a problem framing that insists

⁵⁶ Norwegian Bokmål: “der er ingen som er bedre rustet enn oss til å gå foran”

Norway must stay true to its goodness and so it must change its oil and gas policy by beginning to phase it out rather than expanding the oil and gas industry. A similar logic is present in the opening vignette to this thesis, where Nora and her fellow activists celebrate the Norwegian Constitution's Article 112, which emphasises present and future generation's right to a liveable environment. The activists' do not renounce the welfare state, rather they appeal to Norwegian goodness and a need to realign with it by "taking the lead" in showing the oil and gas can be phased out as well as by insisting on the need to comply with Article 112 of the Constitution.

I find it important to note here that the activists have a strong belief in Norwegian democracy. They see protest and civil disobedience as tools for articulating opposition to current policy lines, but mainly they believe that change happens through the democratic system. Affecting people to vote differently is therefore vital. The activists are frustrated by the government's current political line regarding climate and oil, but they see this is a result of the politicians inhabiting the system, not a systemic failure. There is a consensus among the activists that if the right people were elected, things would be different. Who the right people are is often assessed in terms of age. The activists are eager to see more young politicians in parliament and though most of the activists are left-leaning, they take comfort in their perception that most youth political parties are greener than their adult counterparts. I often heard iterations over the argument that young people automatically care more about climate change because it is their future which is at stake. However, most of the activists were not old enough to vote when I first met them in 2019, though some of them reached the age of 18 just in time for the national election in Norway in 2021 at the end of my research. Even though they put their trust in representative democracy, they could not participate in what they saw as its most significant act – that of voting. The political decisions about climate change that are taken now will have dire consequences on the future of young people who are not old enough to vote at the time when these decisions are taken. They saw it as a democratic problem that they could not vote, yet rather than, for example, fighting for lowering the age-based threshold of voter participation, they sought influence through being active in political organizations.

I detail this larger context for the activist's political engagement because it illuminates the character of their relationship to the welfare state. I understand this relationship as marked by a genuine belief in the goodness of the welfare state and that Norway can change for the better. Though the welfare state might no longer be a sufficient frame for thinking about the benefits of oil, the welfare state itself, in the optic of the Stavanger activists, remains a legitimate and trustworthy actor. In Chapter 3, I return to this theme and detail how climate change is however also producing tensions in the activists' trust in the welfare state.

To sum up, the activists' climate concerns suggest that oil overflows the framing of goodness and that new registers of valuing are emerging that seek to either reconcile the oil with being good. As I have outlined previously in the chapter, two prominent way this plays out are through industry narratives that frame Norwegian oil as clean and good for the climate, or like the activists, insisting that oil production and Norwegian goodness are incompatible and that oil needs to be valued in a register informed by climate concerns. The disruption to the narrative of goodness and its renegotiation thus shows contestation over whether the nation is a sufficient frame for practicing goodness.

How do the overflows of the meaning of oil play out socially and relationally among people working in the oil and gas industry in Stavanger? My encounter with Tonje, who works in a leading position in the oil exploration division of an oil company, exemplifies these changes.

“Don’t you know me at all?”

Tonje agreed to meet me for a chat. She seemed a bit reluctant when we first spoke on the phone after I was put in contact through a mutual friend. This friend had mentioned Tonje because of her work in oil exploration. “Some say that is the worst kind of work, looking for new oil,”⁵⁷ my friend told me alluding to a common perception that sustaining the oil industry was okay, but that actively expanding could be considered questionable given the increasing severity of the climate crisis. However, my emphasised, Tonje was really a very sensible person and that I should talk to her. Eventually Tonje and I sat in her garden in one of Stavanger’s residential areas. The late summer sun covered the city in a warm light and we took refuge in a shady corner of the garden. We were each tucked up in a garden chair and we talked about many things, including but not limited to Tonje’s work with oil exploration. Tonje explained that she is proud that her work contributes to the Norwegian welfare state. According to Tonje, Norwegian society has a uniquely high level of equality and a generally high standard of living, which also means that it is a safe place to live.

During our conversation, Tonje told me about a recent uncomfortable encounter when her husband attended a course with other professionals from all over the country. After the course, they all met at Tonje and her husband’s home for dinner. One of the guests asked Tonje what she did for a living. Upon learning that Tonje worked in a leading position in an oil company the guest responded “uf da,” a negatively loaded sound-exclamation similar to the English “ew,” signifying dislike, even disgust. Tonje told me that people often assume that she has certain opinions, such as that she only cares about money and is not concerned about climate change and the environment because she works in an oil company. Especially people who are not from Stavanger. It might have been like this in the 80’s but it is not like that anymore, she pointed out with obvious frustration. Reactions like the one from the guest at the dinner party surprise Tonje because they are so far removed from how she sees herself. Sometimes it also happens with people she knows. It makes her wonder, “don’t you know me at all? Don’t you know that I am a person with a good moral orientation?”⁵⁸.

Tonje’s pride in contributing to the Norwegian welfare state speaks to the regime of goodness. How can oil be bad when it does so much good nationally? For example, enabling the welfare system that alleviates inequality and creates a high degree of safety in society. At the same time, this narrative is also being challenged by the people who think that Tonje’s line of work is morally flawed and must mean that she only cares about money and not the climate or the environment. As Tonje pointed out, she does care about other things than money. She cares about contributing to what she sees as a good welfare society based on equality and she sees her work of locating new oil fields as doing just that. Tonje exemplifies a broader tendency among people working in oil and gas who experience the contestation of the social meaning of oil, that climate change causes a critique of their moral character and a dismissal of their contribution to Norwegian society.

How do people working in the oil industry attempt to contain such overflows of the national as a sufficient boundary for thinking about goodness? How do they attempt to reconcile oil-as-welfare with the climate change induced need to reframe the narrative of goodness beyond the nation? One strategy is

57 Norwegian Bokmål: ”Noen sier, det er den verste jobben å lete etter ny olje”

58 Norwegian Bokmål: ”kjenner du ikke meg i det hele tatt? Vet du ikke at jeg er en person med bra moralsk orientering”

the portrayal of Norwegian oil as clean as explored in the first section of this chapter. I'll end Chapter 1 by showing the role of complexity and simplicity in the oil industry, and activist efforts to contain or expand the meaning of oil and its overflowing of the dominant frame of the narrative of goodness.

Change as a perfect parachute

I met Harald through the local branch of the oil and gas worker's union in Stavanger. Harald told me that there is obviously a need to change, but he thinks it is irresponsible to phase out oil and gas without having a plan for alternatives ready. "You have to sew the parachute before you jump out the helicopter,"⁵⁹ he told me. Harald explained that the parachute refers to two things. Firstly, new technology that can replace the uses of oil that are not yet replaceable on a large enough scale. Secondly, the establishment of new industries that can replace the revenue the oil industry is currently generating.

Harald's metaphor of sewing a parachute before jumping out of a helicopter is remarkable because it is a specific portrayal of the status quo and of change. It portrays the status quo as a fossil fuel enabled helicopter. Within the logic of the metaphor, this helicopter is a safe space to be. Somewhere you can choose to stay while you carry out the meticulously detailed work of sewing the parachute. A work that must be finished completely before you can jump. However, once completed the parachute will support a soft, relatively effortless landing. In contrast, the consequences of failing are immense. If you have done something wrong sewing the parachute the jump will most likely kill you. The parachute metaphor highlights a sense of how much there is to lose if the jump is made without the parachute. The importance of the parachute thus also points to a fear of loss and a sense that this loss will be detrimental, perhaps even fatal.

I linger with Harald's parachute metaphor because it is reflexive of the type of responses I heard when talking to people working in the oil and gas industry about the future of Norwegian oil and gas. As I engaged more with people working in the oil and gas industry, the question of what to do considering the connection between fossil fuels and climate change became more and more complicated. Whereas my engagement with the young activists had a reassuring sense of simplicity in terms of their vision, the oil industry employees all relayed an unnerving sense of a problem that could not be resolved. I found this 'making-things-complicated' that my engagement with industry people produced ethnographically interesting because it resulted in a strong pull towards the status quo and that the complexity seemed to halt taking action. I don't mean to suggest that the question of the future of oil and other fossil fuels is not complex, what I want to convey is that emphasising the complexity seemed to be an essential part of allowing the continuation of things as they are, to stay in the helicopter, whereas the simplicity that the young activists emphasised seemed to be a motor for action.

I see the emphasis on complexity as a strategy for managing the overflows of the meaning of oil that reassert the relevance of the expertise of oil and gas companies in forging solutions to the climate crisis. Such ideas of one big change, one solution, one parachute, is deeply informed by the narratives of how oil changed the social, material, and economic fabric of Stavanger and Norway at large that I have presented in this chapter.

59 Norwegian Bokmål: "Du må sy fallskjermen før enn du hopper ut av helikopteret"

The young activists on the other side don't claim to know everything. In the words of 16-year-old Tiril, "I don't know all the details, I am just 16 years old, but I know we need to do something different." This need to do something comes from the bleak visions of the future the activists hold considering climate change, which I attend to in more detail in the coming chapters. For the activists, the obvious place for Norway to start is to phase out its oil and gas production. These views meet heavy resistance in Stavanger, and as my teammate alluded to while we chatted on the way home from sports practice in my introduction, the activists are often assumed to be too young to really understand what it would mean to phase out oil and gas and that it can't be done without first sewing the parachute of Harald's metaphor. In the following chapters, I explore how the activists manage the dismissals of their claims to knowledge because of their young age by exploring their responses to and uses of facts. Before I do so, I turn to a set of concluding remarks about how this chapter contributes to the understanding of the climate activists of Stavanger's Generations Carbon, the tension between goodness and loss they are marked by, and the theory of change from which they are working.

Concluding remarks

Through an analysis of the social stories people tell about oil in Stavanger, this chapter has contributed to an understanding of Stavanger's Generation Carbon and their window of opportunity to act on oil's carbon polluting qualities through activism.

What are the effects of the stories about what oil changed for Stavanger? What worlds do they make possible and what renderings of change do they contribute to? There is good reason to appreciate the changes that the oil industry brought to Norway, and to Stavanger in particular. However, the ongoing emphasis on how much oil changed Stavanger for the better, continue to frame and limit the visions of the future that can be imagined. People in Stavanger often refer to "all the oil has given,"⁶⁰ and emphasise that it is important to be grateful for all that the oil has allowed them. In Stavanger, this often implies jobs, the welfare state and increased upwards social mobility as well as a sense of global significance through technological know-how about offshore oil extraction. Being grateful for this involves understanding that phasing out oil and gas due to climate concerns will have detrimental consequences for Stavanger. Such renderings of history seem to work to confirm the rightness and goodness of the present. At the same time, reframing the oil through a new regime of valuing based on climate concerns has drastic consequences for the past as it invites a retelling of the past in a negative light. Such retelling risks destroying the pride of a life's work and therefore meets intense resistance. As such, I see this chapter as posing questions about what it means to retell the present with respect to the dignity of the past, while attending to the pertinent need for change in the present. This challenge grows out of the social reality of Stavanger that the young activists need to consider when trying to gain attention and to be perceived as legitimate actors in the city. By laying out and analysing the social environment that the activists inhabit and practice their activism within, the chapter has given the backdrop for understanding the context that the activists' theory of change grows from.

60 Norwegian Bokmål: "alt det oljen har gitt"

The ethnography, I have presented in this chapter, tells a story of a moment when Norwegian oil can no longer be reconciled within the frame of the national regime of goodness that I have identified aided by the scholars Tvedt (2003), Witoszek (2011) and Anker (2020). Norwegian oil represents a different value depending on the regime of valuation used to assess it. The dominant register of valuing oil as good through its contribution to the national community enabled by the welfare state is changing due to the climate crisis, making it difficult to maintain this positive valuation of oil. However, a complete replacement of the old regime of valuing oil has not yet been established. My material shows frictions and interactions between the oil-as-welfare regime of valuing oil and the climate-concern regime of valuing oil. Through the debate and interactions between these two registers of valuing, cracks occur that lead to reformulations of what is valuable and for whom. A central line of friction that this chapter portrays is between the welfare state as the horizon for goodness and the global as a horizon for goodness. What I understand the activists to be asking is, how can it be justified to attend to the national community of the present at the expense of the global community as well as its own future? As such, they are trying to reformulate goodness in the face of the welfare state proving an insufficient frame for thinking about the global climate. To sustain the regime of goodness over time, the activists suggest the need to expand it spatially beyond the boundaries of the nation. This entails that the carbon emitted from Norwegian oil when it is combusted abroad and the harm it causes the global climate is a responsibility Norway need to attend to. The chapter thus engages a central disagreement about the temporal and spatial boundaries of goodness from the vantage point of Stavanger.

In the following chapter, I turn to an analysis of how in the social environment of Stavanger, addressing oil's carbon polluting qualities requires an activism that is both tough and careful.

CHAPTER 2

**‘Getting tougher’
– facts, feelings and the personal⁶¹**

“If you are against oil in a place like Stavanger, then you need to have your facts straight. If you don’t have your facts straight, you will be crushed and ridiculed by people who oppose you,”⁶² the 16-year-old activist Nora told me. Nora’s hair covered her eyes slightly, but her gaze was still direct. I was talking to Nora and her 16-year-old friend Saga, who is also active in climate politics. We stayed behind for a chat after the weekly meeting of the climate and environmental NGO Nora is part of. Saga was leaning in over the fake wooden table in the meeting room. The back wall was decorated with a floor-to-ceiling birch-tree wallpaper. Saga added that the harsh opposition her opinions receive at home, in the public debate in Stavanger and amongst classmates has made her tougher. Nora agreed, nodding enthusiastically.

Intrigued, I asked them to explain what it means to ‘get tougher.’ Nora responded, that when she was younger and talked to people from the oil industry who, for example, said Norway has the cleanest oil in the world, she would not oppose them because she did not dare to talk back to people with more authority than herself. Curious to know more about the relationship between toughness and facts, I asked her to give examples of who these people with authority are. Nora clarified that she refers to all adults, be that oil industry people, politicians, teachers or parents. However, she explained that now she is tougher she dares to call adults out and say “no, but you don’t have the right facts, here are the facts.”⁶³ According to Nora you can’t argue against facts, because “if the facts are correct, then that is what is correct.”⁶⁴ If Nora has good arguments and good facts, then opponents can’t bring her down. If they want to bring her down, then they must make it personal.

61 Part of the work in this chapter overlaps with my book chapter ‘Overcoming abstraction: Affectual states in the efforts to decarbonize energy among young climate activists in Stavanger, Norway’ in *Digitisation and low-carbon energy transitions* edited by Siddharth Sareen and Katja Müller, forthcoming on Palgrave Pivot ultimo 2022.

62 Norwegian Bokmål: “Er du imot olje et sted som Stavanger da må du ha styr på faktaene dine. Har du ikke styr på faktaene dine blir du knust og latterliggjort av de som er imot deg”

63 Norwegian Bokmål: “Nei, men du har feil fakta, her er fakta”

64 Norwegian Bokmål: “om faktaene er korrekte, da har du jo fasit”

For Nora, making something ‘personal’ is where the activists’ arguments and opinions are dismissed because of their age and for female-presenting youth, their gender. Especially older men dismiss their arguments and points of view by saying something like “you are just young and naïve girls who know nothing about how the world really works and who should be grateful for all the oil has given you,”⁶⁵ such as the Norwegian welfare state and a generally high standard of living.

In this chapter, I draw activism to the foreground as I explore what toughness means to the Stavanger activists and why they need this toughness. While working on answering these questions surrounding toughness, I began to think of toughness itself as the answer to which I did not yet know the question. I approach the need for toughness as an answer to something in the activists’ social lives and the premise that toughness cannot be understood without understanding the activists’ social lives. The conversation with Nora and Saga outlines an understanding of facts I met amongst many of the young climate activists in Stavanger that connected being tough to mastering facts with the perception that you can’t argue against facts. Why do the young activists in Stavanger turn to what they call facts with such trust in their truth-telling and transformative potentials? What is it that facts do for them and in what social environment are these facts operating?

My exploration of toughness takes point of departure in the relationship between facts and toughness to get at what facts do *socially*. By firstly mapping the social life of facts internally among the activists, and secondly showing how the activists deploy facts towards the larger social environment of Stavanger, I demonstrate how what a fact is to the activists and why the activists turn to them changes according to the setting in which these facts are used. Through this exploration, the meaning and need for toughness emerges.

I analyse the activists’ mobilisation of facts as a two-way movement, in which the facts do something and that very doing changes what facts are. The two-way movement consists of firstly, an inward-facing, subject-shaping movement in which facts are experienced as deeply personal. I show how for the young Stavanger activists, emotions and affect play a key role in keeping the climate crisis present and urgent. I further argue that the activists’ emotional responses to facts about climate change is how an undesired, climatically changed future is made present as a site of loss alongside a motivation to counter this loss. However, the activists are dismissed for being too young to know about the issues they speak of properly by people in the oil industry. In their struggle to be taken seriously, the activists experience a need to downplay their personal and emotional responses to facts in their interactions with their local oil-dependent social environment. As a result, they deploy facts in an outward-facing, protective movement in which facts are stripped of both the personal and the emotional.

Throughout the chapter, I explore the social life of facts to get to the root of the problem as to why facts are summoned in the first place. As I will show through ethnographic examples, facts work as a way for the young activists to armour themselves, which I argue is the result of an environment heightened with

65 Norwegian Bokmål: “dere er bare unge og naive jenter som ikke vet noen ting om, hvordan verden egentlig fungerer og som burde være takknemlige for alt som oljen har gitt dere”

emotion. In this emotionally intense environment the activists' need to be careful to avoid being misunderstood. The simultaneous need for being tough and being careful illuminates the predicament of Stavanger's Generation Carbon, by portraying how addressing oil as carbon in Stavanger's emotionally intense social environment requires technoscientific armour as protection against age-based dismissals.

Before I move into the analysis, I first outline what I mean by the social life of facts through a comparison to literature in anthropology, sociology and Science and Technology Studies (STS) that attends to facts. I then lay out my analytical approach to facts in which I identify three different meanings of the word 'facts'.

The social life of facts

STS research holds a long tradition in investigating and critiquing the construction and solidification of facts as part of examinations of the social construction of scientific knowledge. Much of the excellent research done in this area focuses on the *production* of scientific facts in a contemporary laboratory setting (Latour and Woolgar 1986), as well as historically (Haraway 1997; Poovey 1998; Daston and Galison 2010; Shapin and Schaffer 2011; Pinch and Bijker 1989). Common across these diverse accounts of the production of scientific facts is the argument that facts are not objective descriptions of the world, but socially and culturally constructed claims. However, as Lindsay Dillon and colleagues (2019) point out in an article that spans the fields of STS, environmental justice and critical data studies, climate change and environmental damage pose the fundamental question of “how to account for the social construction of knowledge when environmental facts and data are also vital to any hope of state and corporate accountability for environmental harms” (Dillon et al. 2019, 548)? In an era where ‘fake news’ and ‘alternative facts’ have entered the popular vocabulary, facts have gained a renewed importance. Yet, this renewed importance does not reduce the need to critically analyse facts and data with the purpose of keeping in view what the conditions of their production leaves out and renders invisible (Dillon et al. 2019, 546).

The media studies scholar Candis Callison (2014) addresses the tension of how climate change simultaneously creates a need for clear, stable facts and for being able to encompass multiple knowledges and experiences. In her book, tellingly titled ‘How Climate Change Comes to Matter – The Communal Life of Facts’ (Callison 2014), Callison addresses this tension as an “inherent double bind” drawing on the work of the anthropologist Kim Fortun (2001). Callison explains that on one side of the bind, climate change is only knowable and governable through the accumulation of scientific facts produced through datafication of the information available. For example, by taking samples from ice cores and coral reefs and subsequently modelling and projecting the data produces from the samples (Callison 2014, 2). At the same time however, and this is the other side of the bind, broad climate engagement and the impactful climate actions that it can lead to requires “that climate change becomes much more than an IPCC-approved fact *and* maintain fidelity to it at the same time” (Callison 2014, 2 original emphasis). Callison thus crucially points to the need to attend to “the ways in which facts are socialized” (Callison 2014, 246) and thereby “how facts and information come to matter beyond and within the scientific contexts in which they first emerge” (Callison 2014, 244). One such ‘beyond’ can be found in Stavanger.

Callison's point about attending to how facts and information about climate change “come to matter” beyond scientific contexts is echoed by the sociologist Kari Norgaard (2011). Norgaard includes the

important addition that the salience of facts in climate change communication often leads to the unfortunate perception that climate inaction is due to a lack of facts and information. This “information deficit” model,” as Norgaard terms it, is unfortunate because it does not take into account the inaction of people who know about climate change (Norgaard 2011, 12). Based on ethnographic research in a rural Norwegian community, Norgaard argues for an approach to climate inaction that sees emotions as key components of what drives inaction. Norgaard portrays how people shy away from the difficult and unpleasant emotions produced both by acknowledging their own implication in global climate change and by a sense of overwhelm at the seeming enormity of a global problem in the face of which they feel powerless (Norgaard 2011, 174, 213–14). Norgaard’s argument about the centrality of emotions for climate action is a key inspiration for my analysis in this chapter.

I draw on the insights of Dillon and colleagues, Callison and Norgaard in exploring what I call the ‘social life of facts’ as it takes place through the Stavanger activists’ practices. I look at how the activists summon different facts in the social context of Stavanger to do certain work. This work, I show, in turn changes what a fact is to the activists, particularly how the personal and emotional figure in relation to facts. In other words, rather than looking in the classical STS sense of what goes into producing a fact in the laboratory, I instead explore what a fact is made to do in the social life of people and how that doing in turn coproduces what facts are to the people using them.

I’ll now move onto defining my understanding of what facts are socially in Stavanger and distinguish them from other meanings of facts.

Socially circulating artefacts

A central analytical challenge I encountered whilst working on this chapter is that the word ‘fact’ has multiple meanings. As an ethnographic observation grounded in the social reality of Stavanger, facts, as the activists speak of them, consists of information that is circulating within society. Or in other words, facts can be described as socially circulating artefacts that are given a particular name by people: Facts. Naming these socially circulating artefacts as facts entails a particular value judgement that cultures facts into incontestable truths.

The concrete artefacts that the facts consist of are comprised of a variety of information. This information is for example posts on social media, bar charts and other data visualisations of present or predicted climate impact as well as numbers from IPCC reports about the concentration of carbon equivalents in the global atmosphere. Facts can also be numbers signifying the amount of carbon emitted yearly from the burning of Norwegian oil worldwide, the ratio of emissions from extracting vs. burning Norwegian oil, or the carbon footprint of a meat-based diet relative to a vegetarian diet. However, facts also encompass less number and datacentric knowledge, such as the Norwegian constitution and its legal status, the main differences between IPCC’s 1.5 degrees and 2 degrees warming scenarios, recent political decisions such as the issuing of new oil drilling licenses, or the content of expert reports on the potential damage of an oil spill in an ecologically vulnerable area. The activists’ access to this information, or these artefacts, stem from and circulates amongst them as the activists follow organisations and influencers on social media, orient themselves in news media, watch documentaries, access educational activities or materials related to

the organisations they are active in, such as seminars, workshops, debate training and written collections of debate arguments.

The constant exposure to and continuous accumulation of these artefacts continuously form and confirm what the activists experience as the biggest overarching fact – that of climate change that will result in an unliveable planet. A horrifying fact which they are living with and attempting to find strategies from which to act upon. Across the pages of this dissertation, I analyse these multiple strategies for action, and in this chapter, I focus in on the protective deployment of facts as one such strategy.

To understand the activists' use of facts, I find it analytically productive to distinguish between three different meanings of 'facts' in my analysis in this chapter. The first two meanings are grounded in my ethnography, whereas the last is grounded in literature. Firstly, facts as an ethnographic observation of socially circulating artefacts labelled as facts by the activists. In the rest of the chapter, I address this meaning of facts as fact₁. Fact₁ denotes both the information the activists meet and emotionally react to in deeply personal ways and the ways in which the activists send this information back into the world, stripped of the personal and emotional. The second definition I term as fact₂, which address the overarching fact of climate change and which the exposure to and accumulation of facts₁ work to confirm. I construct fact₂ based on ethnographic observations. The third definition are facts as they appear in STS literature as socially constructed entities of scientific discourse. I address these as fact₃. These fact₃ don't play a large role in my analysis, however they have been an important part of my process of coming to understand what kind of objects fact₁ and fact₂ are socially in Stavanger through taking a step back and thinking through what the emic term 'fact' refers to and means to the people who use them.

Section 1

The inward facing, subject shaping work of fact₁

To comprehend what the fact₁ are protecting the activists against and why the activists need toughness, we first need to understand the hurt that arises and that toughness is a response to this hurt. Therefore, I outline the internal, subject-shaping work of fact₁, to which hurt is key.

Growing up with fact₁

I begin by going back to the conversation between Frida and her mother. At this point in they were engaged deeply in conversation. They had both turned towards each other in their garden chairs and seemed to have forgotten about me as I sat across the black garden table from them. Instead of answering my questions they had begun to ask each other questions. Frida's mother had just asked Frida if she could do the kind of work she herself does as a consultant for a company that advises oil companies on how to build new oil fields. Frida's mother ran her thin and long gold necklace through her fingers as she asked the question. Frida sat with her right leg tugged up against her chest wearing a washed-out shirt with stripes. Her mother

wore a crisp white shirt. After a moment of silence, Frida responded “no, I would not be able to,”⁶⁶ while slowly shaking her head. Frida looked at her mother and made a small gesture with her shoulders as she said, “but it’s different to grow up with those numbers [about climate change] in your face all the time.”⁶⁷ Her mother responded that the numbers have been there since the 80’s and 90’s. Frida cut her off and said with a new sharpness, “but you do understand that it gets worse and worse and that there is like constant talk about it.”⁶⁸

The constant exposure to information and news about climate change was a recurring theme among the activists I got to know in Stavanger. During our talk in the garden, Frida talked about growing up with “those numbers in your face all the time,” while her mother pointed out that “those numbers” have been available for 30 or 40 decades. Frida and her mother’s different perspectives on “those numbers” points to the different temporal positions they inhabit and what kind of employment they deem morally possible. Frida explained her mother’s ability to work in an oil and gas-related profession was that she had not grown up with the same exposure to information about climate change. Frida on the other hand is growing up with this constant exposure and a lifespan that reaches further into the future than her mother’s. Because of her young age, the predictions that “those numbers” make about a catastrophic future is for Frida, a part of her future. Before getting deeper into this tension, I focus in more detail on the somewhat loosely defined term of “those numbers.”

During the interview, Frida and her mother did not explain what “those numbers” exactly referred to and I did not ask, which I now regret. However, my failure to attend to what “those numbers” referred to in the conversation also testifies to my own embeddedness in the taken-for-grantedness of “those numbers.” I suggest that “those numbers” work as a broad placeholder for knowledge about the climate crisis and its consequences, or to what I in this chapter refer to as the fact₂ of climate change. In this instance given the topic of the conversation, perhaps “those numbers” encompasses the impact of fossil fuels on rising carbon levels in the atmosphere. Though as Frida’s mother states “those numbers” have been there since the 80’s and 90’s, they have not until recently played a prominent role in public discourse. According to the STS scholars Naomi Oreskes and Erik Conway (2010), the delay in public agreement on the connection between fossil fuels and climate change is closely related to strategic communication by major oil companies who have marketed doubt about the connection between fossil fuels and global climate change to advance their business. However, ‘those numbers’ must necessarily also refer to more recent numbers and information about global climate change since Frida experiences them as being in her face all the time.

Based on multiple conversations with the activists, I also take “those numbers” to refer to often used, albeit highly different, numbers in public climate change discourse. What makes up “those numbers” is thus equivalent to what I have labelled as facts₁. Important examples include the IPCC’s 1.5 and 2-degree increase scenarios, significant time benchmarks like 2030 and 2050 used to either account for the number of years left to stay within the IPCC scenarios, or as predictions of expected temperature increases and their consequences, as well as the constantly increasing parts per million of atmospheric carbon. Through print, online news media and social media, the activists are exposed to these numbers, the information conveyed through and around them as well as the scary future worlds they point towards. Additional encounters also

66 Bokmål: ‘Jeg hadde ikke klart det’

67 Bokmål: ‘Men det er jo noe annet å vokse opp med de tallene i fjeset hele tiden’

68 Bokmål: ‘Du forstår jo at det blir verre og verre og det er jo likesom konstant snak om det’

happen through the political organisations they are active in as well as to a certain extent in school. What does this constant exposure to “those numbers,” or facts₁, look and feel like?

As part of the climate diaries, I asked the activists to track when and what they worried about in relation to climate change. The answers provided a good sense of what the constant exposure to facts₁ looks like for the activists and how it affects them. In her climate diary, Nora explained that not a day goes by without information about the climate crisis reaching her through TV, newspapers, online media or social media. Often, the stories have a negative framing and focuses on how the climate crisis is accelerating making action ever more urgent. On bad days such stories and posts make her feel hopeless, sad or like giving up, because she thinks so little is happening that it seems impossible to avoid a complete climate disaster. But on most days, she can turn these feelings around to fuel her motivation to be active in the climate movement.

The answer that the activist Olav gave in his climate diary illuminates this point further. When Olav recently wanted to check the weather forecast through links on the weather forecast app, he ended up reading articles about temperature records in Norway. The heat record of 21,7 degrees on the Arctic Norwegian island Svalbard – the warmest in 41 years (Strøm 2020) - was especially alarming to Olav. The temperature records gave him a numb, physical feeling of defeat because the temperature records to him signified “a confirmation that the climate crisis is coming.”⁶⁹ He found it worrying that global warming hits vulnerable areas like the Arctic hardest and noted that heat records in the Arctic are further scary because they signify melting of otherwise permanent icesheets which contribute to rising sea levels.

What Nora and Olav’s accounts show is that a common action like checking the weather forecast or opening one’s social media feed involves encounters with to facts₁ about climate change, which produces feelings of hopelessness, sadness and worry.

To reflect about the relationship between “those numbers” as an instance of the fact₂ of climate change comprised of multiple facts₁, and I engage with the STS scholar Helen Verran and her work about numbers. Numbers have a powerful effect, even in as undefined a state as “those numbers.” Verran (2015; 2013) attends to the work that numbers do in her analysis of a poster that was produced to support proposed radical changes in the policy governing Australian fisheries (Verran 2013; 2015). Verran argues that “quantitative valuing is a particular form of ordering” (Verran 2013, 24) in her analysis focusing on what she calls the “epistemo-cultural properties” of numbers (Verran 2013, 24) . Verran’s aim is to “focus-up numbers” (Verran 2015, 365). What I understand this to mean, is that Verran wants to go beyond the taken-for-grantedness of numbers and look at how they are situationally enacted. By analysing the epistemo-cultural properties of how numbers are used on the poster, Verran is able to question the numbers not only to find out if they are true or false, but also to analyse the effect these numbers have by being situated on the poster

While Verran analyses what particular numbers are being made to do on a political poster, I am looking at what facts₁ are being made to do by the young climate activists in Stavanger. Inspired by Verran, I suggest there lies rich analytical potential in moving beyond taking facts₁ for granted as a cultural category. Central to Verran’s analysis is a “whole–parts generalizing where the whole remains only vaguely delineated, but where the constitution of the various emergent parts is amenable to precise articulation” (Verran

69 Norwegian Bokmål: “en bekræftelse på at klimakrisen er på vei”

2013, 27). In Verran's case, the policy is the vaguely delineated whole and the numbers on the poster it's emergent parts that can be precisely articulated. Verran's description of "whole-parts generalizing" may sound technical, but when applied to the context of climate change it helps me articulate an important relationship between the fact₂ of climate change and the information, or facts₁, that the activist's meet in their daily lives. Through Verran's analytical perspective, the whole fact₂ of climate change can be understood as a vaguely contoured object, comprised of a variety of "emergent parts" that, for example, a temperature record on Svalbard can be articulated quite precisely and thereby understood to confirm the whole – in this case, global climate change. With inspiration from Verran, I see the ordering that takes place through the activists' use of numbers as a transformation of everyday numbers into evidence that climate change is taking place.

Now let's return to the example where Frida and her mother talks about "those numbers" and working in the oil and gas industry. After having explored in more detail the lived reality that I understand "growing up with those numbers in your face all the time" refer to, I want to explore the significance that Frida attributed to growing up with the numbers – that of not being able to morally justify working in oil and gas because of the climate impact of fossil fuels. In other words, Frida made a connection between growing up in the climate crisis with ethical and moral choices oriented towards a liveable future. Frida did not blame or shame her mother's line of work, but she also did not see herself as being able to do something similar.

The concept of "temporal vulnerability" is useful for understanding Frida's relationship to "those numbers." The feminist philosopher Janna Thompson (Thompson 2014) defines temporal vulnerability as "the vulnerabilities that people possess in respect to their position in time and their relationship to preceding and succeeding generations" (Thompson 2014, 163). Frida's experiences her position in time differently to her mother because her life reaches further into the future. The catastrophic future that those numbers predict Frida experiences as part of her life, her future. I will explore the experience of an impending catastrophic future in further detail in Chapter 3. For now, I want to make the argument that their temporal vulnerability makes "those numbers" speak more clearly to Frida and her fellow activists. By speaking more clearly, I am referring to the emotional responses "those numbers" elicit, in that "growing up with those numbers in your face all the time" hurts because they tells a story of destruction, injustice, and political inaction. This hurt takes the form of feelings like despair, hopelessness, sadness and worry, while also fuelling a motivation for activist action and political engagement.

Though Frida in the interview emphasizes growing up with a constant exposure to information about climate change and how it gets worse and worse, the activists do remember coming to know and care about climate change as a turning point in their childhood or adolescence. Most of the activists were aged between 15 and 19 years old at the time I began fieldwork in late 2019. They have lived a significant part of their childhood in a time when climate change was not on everyone's lips nor in everyone's news and social media feeds. In order to elaborate on the hurt that facts₁ about climate change cause the activists, I'll now turn to their stories and memories about encountering facts₁ and how these encounters have formed the fact₂ of climate change.

“Å bli opplyst”

A lightbulb in a white glass globe illuminated the room. Posters from old campaigns covered the white walls and showed captions like “#OnlyOneEarth,” and “The climate can’t wait.”⁷⁰ Seated in two dark grey sofas around a small white IKEA table, Saga, Olav, Sander, Trygve and I discussed various aspects of the same green youth political organisation activism they all take an active part in. I met Olav and Trygve at the weekly climate strike that, before the COVID-19 pandemic, gathered a small selection of young activists with protest signs at the square in front of Stavanger’s medieval cathedral. Olav and Trygve invited me to a meeting in the climate organisation they are activate in, which led to our chat about their activism and the climate concern that drives it. During the conversation, Sander, Trygve, Olav and Saga kept circling back to the Norwegian Bokmål phrase *å bli opplyst*, which roughly translates to *being made aware of*, while also carrying the meanings *being informed about*, *being illuminated* or *enlightened*. Unsure what *å bli opplyst* meant to the young activists but intrigued by its recurrence in the conversation, I asked them to explain what it meant to them to be *opplyst* and how they experienced being *opplyst*.

19-year-old Sander explained it as a process where he gradually learnt more about the climate crisis. The origin of when Sander really became *opplyst* he recalled was aged 13 or 14 when he was old enough to access social media. Sander grew up in a small village, where he felt very close to the surrounding natural environment of mountains and fjords. Climate change was not something that people talked about in the community and when he began following accounts of green politicians and influencers, a new world opened to him. Sander was able to connect what he learnt from social media directly to his appreciation of nature. He felt personally affected and described understanding that it was both nature, animals and humans who would be affected by climate change. When he was around 15 or 16 years old, it really hit him how serious the climate crisis is. Sander remembered thinking “but it was kind of supposed to be the adults who should protect us from this,”⁷¹ when he realised how little had been done to counter the dangers to what he termed “the climate, the ecosystems, the animals, the extinction that affects all life including humans.”⁷² Sander felt like he had not been made aware of the intersecting crises of global warming and extinction, and he was frustrated with how little the adult generation seemed to care about anything except what he termed “short-sighted economic profit”⁷³ through Norway’s continued oil exporting practices. Sander described his frustration and anger as; “I feel like I am at a casino where the adults are gambling with the future of the young people, and it is all just so absurd.”⁷⁴ Sander clarified that while he is disappointed in the adults, he is angry with the oil companies who have, according to him, knowingly have perused profit at the expense of the global climate.

The room was silent and attentive as Sander told his story. After a small period of silence, Trygve commented on Sander’s point about social media and explained that he felt like he became *opplyst* when he started following green politicians on twitter and information which helped him understand how important the climate crisis is. Trygve explained that it was in early 2019, around the time when the IPCC released another climate report, that the climate sceptic Jair Bolsonaro had just been elected president in Brazil and

70 Norwegian Bokmål: ”klimaet kan ikke vente”

71 Bokmål: ’Oi, men det var jo på en måte de voksne som skulle beskytte oss fra det her’

72 Norwegian Bokmål: “klimaet, økosystemene dyrene, masseutryddelsen som påvirker alt liv inklusiv mennesker”

73 Norwegian Bokmål: “kortsiktig økonomisk profit”

74 Norwegian Bokmål: ”jeg føler jeg er på kasino hvor de voksne de bare gambler med ungdommen sin fremtid, og det er alt sammen så absurd”

according to Trygve “it did not look so good.”⁷⁵ It was also the time when the Swedish climate activist icon Greta Thunberg really started gaining popularity and fame, and the Fridays for Future climate strikes started to attract more protestors. Trygve recalled that he wanted to start a climate strike in Stavanger inspired by Greta Thunberg but he did not have the courage to start one. At the time, he did not dare to get involved in climate activism because his parents work in the oil sector and were sceptical towards the environmental movement. Later in 2019, others initiated weekly climate strikes in Stavanger and at that point Trygve was ready to join the strike. He explained that he still struggles to find common ground with his family. He feels like they just make fun of his climate engagement. He experiences it as if they only ask him questions about his activism to either find something he can't answer or make fun of the environmental movement. But usually, he has an answer for everything he stated with a small grin, though he added that he does not think his ready-supply of answers will make his family change their mind.

Saga then explained that she learnt about climate change in school but didn't really become *opplyst* until she started following people on social media. She emphasised it as a turning point when she began to experience climate anxiety, which she describes as the realisation that “it can go terribly wrong.”⁷⁶ While scary and uncomfortable, for Saga that feeling was also a spark that made her want to do something. She began adopting a vegan diet which has not been very popular among her family and peers. Sometimes Saga listens to some of Greta Thunberg's speeches to gain strength and power of action. Referring to the youth climate movement, Saga argued that “if we don't do anything, no one will. It is us who must do something about it.”⁷⁷

I share these accounts of coming to know the climate crisis via social media in some length here because they show how access to social media for many of the activists opened new channels of information, especially Instagram and Facebook and to some extent, Twitter. This is particularly the case for those activists who, like Trygve, have grown up in families with very different opinions to their own. The information the activists access via the accounts of green politicians and influencers became formative for their understanding of the climate crisis and continue to have the effect of fostering a need to act. This information accumulated from social media speaks to a disagreement about how serious the climate crisis is. Whether the climate crisis is a distant problem that does not really concern the everyday lives of Norwegians, or if it is an immediate problem that Norway and Norwegians urgently need to act upon.

My material does not cover posts that were formative for the activists. However, from their explanations of getting access to social media in their early teens, I got the impression that what is important is an cumulative sense of coming to know the fact₂ of climate change rather than a specific number or piece of information. A forming sense that something is deeply wrong in the world and, particularly clear in Sander's account, that the nature they love and cherish is endangered. In Chapter 3 I will further explore the cultural significance of nature and spending time outdoors in Norway. What I want to draw focus on here is that the environment of social media becomes a way for the activists to access new knowledge and reassess their social reality. How the fact₂ of climate change, comprised of the accumulation of posts on social media as well as other encounters with information about climate change, produce emotions like anger, frustration, anxiety and disappointment in the activists. Anxiety about the future sparks a fear that

75 Norwegian Bokmål: ”Det så ikke så bra ut”

76 Norwegian Bokmål: ” Det kan gå virkelig galt”

77 Norwegian Bokmål: ”Om ikke vi gjør noe, da er det ingen som gjør det. Det er oss som må gjøre noe med det”

something could go terribly wrong. Frustration and disappointment in the adults who were supposed to protect young people's future. Anger at oil companies. Together, these emotional responses tell of the hurt produced when coming to know about climate change and how what the activists most cherish in the world stands to be destroyed. Through the activists' emotional responses the future thus comes into the present as a site of loss.

As Saga also points out, these emotions spark motivation for doing something. The reassessment of the activist's social reality is based largely on their emotional responses to online information. The horror and surprise upon understanding how serious the climate crisis is, the anxiety produced by realising something could go seriously wrong, but also the hope that comes with connecting to a community of others who are equally concerned and willing to act. The emotional responses that facts₁ elicit thus become an entry point into a social movement. Facts₁ are part of fuelling interest in the climate movement and motivation for action and allow for people to gather around them to create a movement, which in turn fosters friendship, connection and collaboration.

Facts and emotions

My ethnography portrays facts₁ as deeply personal and emotional entities. The relationship between facts and emotions in relation to the climate crisis has increasing attention in both scholarly and activist settings. For example, during her speech which opened the international climate conference of COP26 in Glasgow 2021, the Kenyan climate activist Elizabeth Wathuti brought emotions to the audience's minds as she implored the political delegates "please open your hearts," followed by 15 seconds of "compassionate silence" for the people living with the detrimental impact of climate change yet "whose suffering is not being felt" (Wathuti 2021). When breaking the silence, Wathuti continued with "if you allow yourself to feel it, the heartbreak – and the injustice – is hard to bear" (Wathuti 2021). What Wathuti suggests is that knowing is not enough, to act in proportion with the harm caused by the unequal effects of the climate crisis, you also need to feel.

Emotions are the core content of Britt Wray's work within the scholarly fields of science communication and mental health in the climate crisis. In her book 'Generation Dread – finding purpose in an age of climate crisis' (Wray 2022), Wray forcefully argues for the importance of attending to the emotional responses that the outlook of living in an increasingly warm and hostile world produces, particularly for the people who do not yet experience the consequences because of their geographical location. The reason for the importance of attending to emotion is that the climate crisis, according to Wray, fundamentally disturbs a basic sense of security and stability, which can lead to despair and inaction, while also holding profoundly transformational potential (Wray 2022, 4). Similarly, one of Kari Norgaard's main findings in her study about climate is that cultural norms of emotion enable people to keep climate change at a distance (Norgaard 2011). Norgaard convincingly shows all the emotional work that goes into containing climate change as something that is not present and too complicated to act upon.

Drawing inspiration from both Wathuti, Wray and Norgaard, the main argument I craft based on the above section is that the activists' internal, subject-shaping engagement with facts₁ tells an important story about how it also requires continuous emotional work to keep the climate crisis present and alarming

in a geographical part of the world where the geophysical consequences cannot yet be felt. However, the activists' emotional responses make a disastrously climate changed future affectually present for the activists and produces the future as a site of loss, which needs to be counteracted in the present through activism. Chapter 3 elaborates further on the future as a site of loss and in Chapter 4, I pick up again on this point about the work that goes into experiencing the climate crisis as present and alarming as part of discussions about abstraction and concreteness, proximity and distance.

Facts₁, as they are practiced and engaged with in the stories I have shared, are deeply personal and have the capacity to shape subjects through emotional responses. Facts₁ elicit hurt, anger, anxiety, worry and despair. When I say shape subjects, I mean that facts₁ actively *do* something to the young activists. Coming to know facts₁ fundamentally changes the activists' perspective on the world and once changed, facts₁ continue to confirm the sense that something is wrong in the world and that action needs to be taken to right this wrong. Facts₁ about climate change hurt these young activists because they tell stories about a destroyed world and an imperilled future in the face of which they witness adults responding with inaction. This pain is crucial, because it speaks to the need for toughness which I expand upon further in this chapter. Without hurt, there is no need for toughness.

Section 2

The outwards facing, protective deployment of facts₁

In this section, I turn to the outward-facing, protective deployment of facts₁ that the activists engage in as one of their strategies for action. Through the accounts that follow I elaborate on the need for toughness as it occurs in the social environment of Stavanger.

Loving a bar chart

Rain was cascading onto the windows of the first-floor room where I sat alongside 15 local youths taking part in a meeting for new members of the local branch of a youth climate organisation. The local activist Kaja was giving a presentation about the dangers of the climate crisis and how it can be acted on politically from Norway. After speaking about how the world faces more violent weather and that wildfires and floods are already having deadly effects across the planet accompanied by vivid pictures on a slideshow, Kaja asked what the dangers of the climate crisis meant for Norway. She added that young people care so much about the climate because it is their future which is at stake and that an important part of taking care of that future is to phase out oil and gas in Norway. Kaja continued that it hinges on madness that there is still exploration taking place to discover new oil and gas fields. Kaja then showed a slide portraying a bar chart comparing the carbon emissions that will be caused by burning the available reserves of coal, oil and gas to the carbon budget that will need to be held to comply with the Paris Agreement (see Figure 11). The chart showed that not all the available fossil fuel reserves can be used in neither the 1.5-degree scenario or the 2 degree scenario. Kaja concluded that it makes no sense to look for even more oil if the goal is to comply with the Paris Agreement.

The data visualisations that Kaja presented are exemplary of how facts₁ are mobilised outwardly towards people outside the environmental movement, particularly those deeply invested in the continuation of the oil and gas industry. Though the meeting was internal to the organisation, the presentation Kaja gave and the use of the data visualisations is characteristic of facts₁ that the activists subsequently go on to mobilise in discussions and public debates with people external to their organisations. Therefore, I understand the meeting as a sort of ‘schooling’ in how to mobilise facts₁.

The relationship between the carbon contained in the existing fossil fuel reserves and the carbon budget that must be held to reach the Paris Agreement were repeatedly mobilised by the activists. This information is some of the most salient facts₁ that they use both internally and externally. Nora, for instance had a picture of the same bar chart portraying fossil fuels reserves related to the carbon budget stored on her computer and liked to look at it from time to time. On one occasion, Nora jokingly told me that she loves the bar chart so much that she would like to marry it. She explained that her love for the bar chart comes from the clarity it relays about the vast climate impact of fossil fuels and the impossibility of searching for more oil and maintaining a liveable planet. Despite its grave message about the incompatibility between the profitable world of oil and gas and the liveable world of radical carbon emission reductions, the bar chart seemed to be comforting. How can a bar chart elicit comfort, joy and even love as is does for Nora albeit jokingly? With its alarming message about the degree of warming the world is headed towards with the available reserves of fossil fuels alone, one could argue that love and joy are hard to comprehend.

Nora identifies joy from the graph as the clarity it gives her about the need to stop looking for more fossil fuels. To understand this clarity in relation to the joy and comfort it helps Nora feel, and the overarching need for toughness that this chapter engages with, I now turn to the social environment of Stavanger in which the activists deploy facts₁ outwardly.

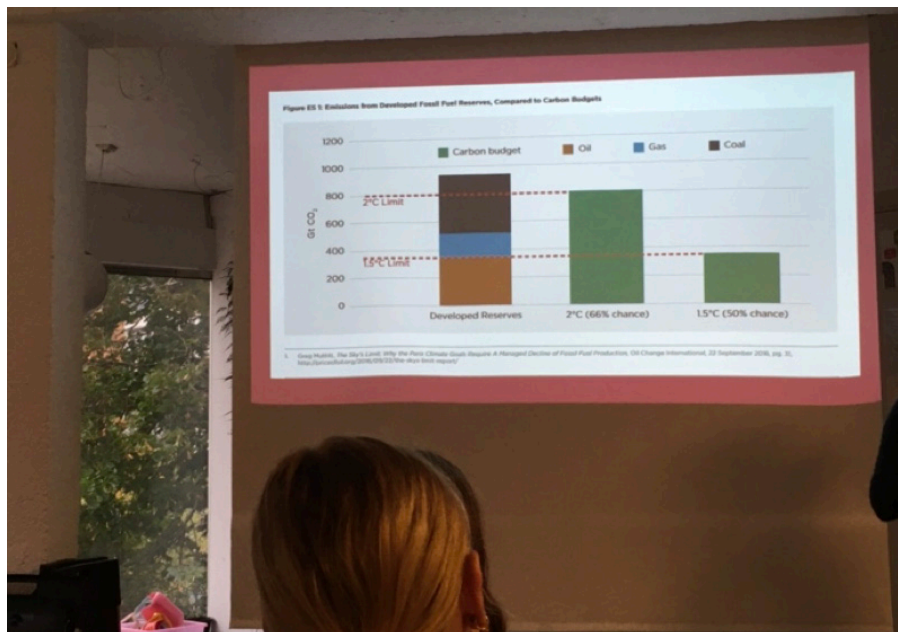


Figure 11 – a slide showing existing reserves of oil, gas and coal compared to the carbon budget for respectively a 2 degree and a 1.5 degree warming scenario.

“It is more personal here”

As I have outlined in Chapter 1, the dominant sentiments towards oil and gas in Stavanger are formed by its significance as the main source of income and backbone of the Norwegian welfare state. The intimate entanglements between fossil fuels, people’s livelihoods and the ideal of the welfare state means that discussions about fossil fuels and their relationship to climate change take on a specific character in Stavanger, often termed as “personal.”⁷⁸

The personal character of conversations about oil and gas is exemplified through a conversation I had with the climate activist Tiril and her father. Tiril’s father has for most of his life worked for the Norwegian oil company Equinor, formerly known as Statoil. When I interviewed Tiril and her father together at the kitchen table in their home in Stavanger, Tiril commented that the conflict around phasing out oil is closer and more personal in Stavanger than for example in Oslo. Tiril’s father nodded in agreement and added that a lot of people lost their jobs when the oil price fell dramatically a few years ago. He explained that “it is personal because people are afraid to lose their jobs,”⁷⁹ which he thinks affects people’s perception of the climate and environmental movement. “It is more personal here. You must take that into account,”⁸⁰ he argued while turning to Tiril as if she were a representative for the whole climate movement.

Propelled by the personal dependency on the oil and gas industry, there is a general scepticism towards the climate and environmental movement in Stavanger. According to the activists, this means that misunderstandings can easily arise especially if people from the environmental movement are too radical or not precise enough when explaining their opinions. There is one example in particular the activists kept referring to.

At a big climate strike in Stavanger in 2019, one of the signs attracted a huge amount of attention. “Fuck Equinor” was painted in large black letters on a brown cardboard background. The media coverage of the strike, as well as the public debate following it, primarily focused on this individual sign which was taken as a confirmation that the environmental movement hate all oil workers. The activists felt like the message of the strike and the demand for politicians to take climate action was drowned out by the conflict around the sign. The activists reflected about how the sign was supposed to mean fuck Equinor’s executive management who keep expanding their business in unsustainable ways. However, they concluded the sign had been too radical and not precise enough since it was interpreted as saying fuck everyone working in Equinor, thus conforming the public understanding that the environmental movement hate all oil workers.

The claim itself that the climate movement hate oil workers was a big source of frustration to the Stavanger-based activists. Frida, for example, explained that she would like people to listen and understand that when she argues that oil is an industry Norway must gradually phase out because of the impact on the climate, it does not mean that she has a problem with oil workers or think it is shameful to work in oil and gas. Frida is sure that most people working in the oil industry care about the climate, because they are parents and want their children to have a future, just like she herself wants to have a future and wants her potential future children to have one. Frida along with most of the other young activists were generally

78 Norwegian Bokmål: ”personlig”

79 Norwegian Bokmål: “det er personlig her fordi folk er redde for å miste jobben sin”

80 Norwegian Bokmål: “det er mere personlig her. Du må ta det med i betraktning”

frustrated by always having to start a conversation about oil by making disclaimers such as “I don’t want us to stop overnight; I don’t want everybody should lose their jobs, but I do think we need to find a better solution.”⁸¹

Through the above example emerges a notion of misunderstandings as the result of being too radical or not precise enough and hence that misunderstandings can also be avoided through a combination of being precise and being careful. Misunderstandings are deeply personal situations entailing strong emotions like hate, shame, frustration and care. These emotions are part of any discussions about oil and gas and are termed “personal” in Stavanger. How does this emotional intensity require toughness on the activists’ part? And how do facts₁ provide this toughness?

Deploying facts₁ devoid of feeling

Saga comes from a family where many work in the oil and gas industry or its local supply industry. She does not like to discuss politics with her family, especially her father, as things get what she terms “so personal.”⁸² In Saga’s experience, her father often wants to provoke her. In her own words, she has the feeling that “he does not think I know what I am talking about. He sees me as a young and naïve girl, who does not know how the world really works.”⁸³ Saga’s father used to put her down completely when they discussed politics – especially oil related politics – and use various “domination techniques”⁸⁴ to shut her down. For instance, if she tried to make an argument, he would cut her off and say, “no that is not how it works”⁸⁵, without explanation or claiming that she would not be able to understand if he tried. As a result, Saga would feel stupid and uncertain of herself and question if she had really got things right.

Saga kept it a secret from her father when she first became active in the youth climate movement because she knew it would cause trouble to mention it. On a skiing trip with her extended family, she mentioned that she was going on a seminar about climate activism at a time when her father was not around. Saga’s uncle, who works in the oil industry, overheard her and to Saga’s surprise he got really angry. Saga describes the situation as very uncomfortable. Her uncle told her that the climate movement want to destroy Norway, that they have no idea what they are talking about and that they are ungrateful and don’t understand what the oil has given them. Every time Saga tried to explain her worries and what she liked about the climate movement, her uncle would tell her that she was wrong and point out that what Saga was explaining was not at all what the climate movement is about. He would, however, not give examples of how he understood the climate movement. Saga had very recently become active. As her uncle kept telling her that she was wrong, she became more and more unsure of herself, felt stupid and became afraid that she had misunderstood or misrepresented something. Saga described the whole situation as a big shock.

81 Norwegian Bokmål: “jeg vil ikke vi skal stoppe over natten, jeg vil ikke at alle skal miste jobben sin, men jeg mener at vi må finne en bedre løsning.”

82 Norwegian Bokmål: “Så personlig”

83 Norwegian Bokmål: “han tror ikke jeg vet hva jeg snakker om. Han ser meg som en ung naiv jente som ikke vet hvordan verden egentlig fungerer”

84 Norwegian Bokmål: “hersketeknikker”

85 Norwegian Bokmål: “Nei, det er ikke såen det funker”

One thing these examples show is that the 'personal' is what Saga wants to avoid and that it is quite literally about her as a person. The personal characteristics of her gender and her age can be used against her to dismiss her knowledge claims. Such dismissals reflect how the authority of facts₁ shift as they move between people. To illuminate the relationship between facts₁ about climate change and who uses these facts₁ I return to a comparison with Callison's (2014) work about how climate change comes to matter for diverse communities. Callison attends to what she calls the "communal life of facts" among climate-concerned evangelical Christians in the US. Scientific facts are a mistrusted entity among the church communities that Callison engages with because of the strained relationship between science and the church due to conflicting stories about the origin of human beings. Therefore, a trusted Christian messenger needs to "bless the facts" in order for the facts to be trustworthy and thus something worth acting upon (Callison 2014, 137–38). Callison's articulation of the relationship between facts and authority are illuminating for my case because in comparison, the activists can be seen as "unblessing" the facts₁ due to being too young to know how the world works. The activists provide a negative blessing of facts₁ by being untrustworthy messengers. Why then, do the activists keep turning to facts₁ despite the dismissals they encounter? What is it that facts₁ enable them to do in the social environment of Stavanger?

According to Saga, learning more facts₁ has also made her tougher and enabled her to discuss climate issues with her father and other family members. Saga underlines that she is very fond of her father, but that they have very different worldviews and opinions. Gradually, as she has learned more facts₁ she now has the experience of knowing more than her father. She describes it as a "really great feeling"⁸⁶ to know that even though her father is an adult she has more knowledge than him. This gives her the courage to set boundaries and tell her father not to talk over her, but instead listen to her facts₁ and arguments. Sometimes her father can't win an argument anymore and that gives Saga a feeling of victory. She feels surer of herself and what her opinions are.

The main difference between the encounter with Saga's uncle and her subsequent discussions with her father is Saga's feeling of being tougher. This toughness, I suggest, comes from deploying facts₁ as if they are devoid of the personal. The deeply personal nature of facts₁ as something that affects the activists and make them feel hurt must be stripped away, facts₁ then serve to offer protection against both the anger of Saga's uncle and father and the dismissal of Saga's knowledge claims based on her gender and age. The facts₁ that make Saga tougher are not personal or emotional, but impersonal truths that are performed as disentangled from both Saga and her family members' identities.

In the above example, transforming facts₁ into impersonal entities enables Saga to deflect the dismissal of her knowledge claims based on aspects of her identity. Deploying facts₁ as if they are impersonal allow Saga to gain a voice of her own, giving her the confidence to assert herself in relation to her father, uncle and other family members. Her father positions Saga as a child by scolding her and telling her how she is wrong and not able to understand. Yet Saga can now position herself as an equal to her father as she learns more facts₁ that enable her knowledge and perspective. In this way facts₁ give the activists voice and agency in their own lives.

86 Norwegian Bokmål: "skikkelig god følelse"

Detachment and witnessing

To understand why repositioning facts as impersonal entities devoid of emotion is necessary for the activists, a look into the STS literature about the history of science is useful. In particular, the role of witnesses helps to further illuminate my case. The feminist STS scholar Donna Haraway (1997) argues that modern science came into being through a technique of ‘modest witnessing,’ where a specific kind of depersonalised witnesses testified to the truth of a scientific experiment, where such witnessing could be disseminated through detached, impersonal writing (Haraway 1997, 26). Haraway makes her argument through critically reading and elaborating on historians of science Steven Shapin and Simon Schaeffer’s ([1985] 2011) work about a 17th century controversy between Thomas Hobbes and Robert Boyle over the role of experimental science. David Boyle’s mid-17th century air-pump experiments are of particular interest to Haraway. For Boyle, to produce scientific facts it was necessary to have witnesses present who could testify to the working of his air-pump, yet not everybody could be a witness. The witnesses needed to be so-called gentlemen of the upper classes. These witnesses Haraway calls “modest witnesses” because their honour was understood to allow them to set themselves aside and act in the interest of science and truth (Haraway 1997, 26–27). However, Haraway argues, the process of witnessing did not only create scientific facts about air, it also created new modes of masculinity based on detachment, restraint and unbiased knowledge (Haraway 1997, 28–29).

Haraway’s analysis of the relationship between knowledge and detachment illuminates how the ideas at play in Stavanger that knowledge is best when spoken from a position of impersonal detachment, can be understood as a contemporary inheritance and internalisation of the validity of modest, detached witnessing pretending to be located outside culture and dynamics of power (see also Haraway 1988; and Daston 1992). The kind of seemingly detached witnessing and knowing still largely hegemonic dominant (see also Choy 2011). It is such still prevalent ideas that the activists are captured in and reproduce when deploying facts₁ in their discussions removed from their personal investment in these facts₁.

Just as Callison helps depict the potential for activists’ to be seen as bad messengers who ‘unbless’ the facts₁. Haraway’s analysis of the modest witness suggests that the activists are flawed witnesses because of their age, and for the female-presenting youth, their gender. However, inspired by feminist and anti-racist science studies, Haraway further proposes to reclaim the modest witness and thereby rethink what witnessing entails. To Haraway, the proper witness is the witness that situates itself, where it is placed within social hierarchies and explicates its own stakes in the knowledge (Haraway 1988, 35). Haraway’s suggestion to reclaim the modest witness is useful because it enables me to think about the activists’ insistence on using facts₁ as a refusal to be dismissed as bad witnesses. Yet, their refusal takes place in a social context where the idea that knowledge is best when spoken from a detached position. By deploying facts₁ devoid of the personal and emotional, the activists refuse to be dismissed, yet at the same time they cannot reclaim themselves as proper witnesses by the standards of situatedness because such a move will leave them too vulnerable in the social environment of Stavanger. To navigate the emotional intensity at stake in relation to oil and gas in Stavanger, the activists downplay their own situatedness and the way facts₁ affect them personally and emotionally. By doing so, they can avoid the emotionally dense and explosive nature of their social environment and protect themselves from dismissals based on their age and gender.

Retaining control over interpretations of what facts₁ mean

To further explore the dynamics between facts₁ and action, I return to the debate that Frida participated in about Norwegian oil policy, which I introduced in Chapter 1. The debate featured representatives from the Norwegian energy company Equinor and the interest organisation Norwegian Oil and Gas, as well as two other representatives from environmental and climate organisations, one of them a master's student of climate politics at the university.

During the round of introductions Frida explained that she got engaged in climate activism “because I got scared about the climate. I realised that we will not meet the Paris Agreement. The adults are talking, but if we don't do anything, then the consequences are on us [the young people]. We have to meet the Paris Agreement!⁸⁷”. Frida mobilised the fact₁ that not all existing fossil fuel reserves can be combusted if global carbon emissions are not to exceed the targets set by the Paris Agreement to support her claim that it is harmful to explore for more oil and gas. This point led the debaters into a discussion about what the priority is for the future.

The representative from Equinor argued that the challenge is to produce oil and gas in the most climate-friendly way. To him it was not a question about whether to stop oil production. Rather, he saw the challenge as finding what he called “the best way”⁸⁸ to supply an inevitable need for fossil fuels by locating oil fields that require little energy to develop and contain oil that requires little energy to refine. Frida and the young master's student argued that liveable lives on a liveable planet is the top priority. The representative from Equinor asked what he termed “the young people”⁸⁹ to be realistic and think about where the energy would come from. Frida responded that priority number one is a habitable planet, where energy comes from is surely a second priority. “But everything comes from energy,”⁹⁰ the Equinor representative fired back and added “that is priority number one,” while enthusiastically moving his index finger up and down. He elaborated that there is no replacement for oil, especially in powering heavy transport like airplanes and trucks. “We have to say yes to everything, we can't find enough oil,”⁹¹ he exclaimed and ended with “everybody to the pumps!”⁹². A person in the audience commented that they found it provoking that there is not more effort made to find alternatives to oil and asked why there is not more investment in renewable alternatives to heavy transport. The representative from Norwegian Oil and Gas responded. He explained that oil cannot be replaced by renewable energy and according to him, the challenge is not to phase out oil, but to phase out the carbon emissions from oil. “Oil is not the problem. Oil is a wonderful product,”⁹³ he said, “the problem is that when oil is combusted, it emits CO₂.”⁹⁴

I find it noteworthy that the portrayal of the harm to the future focuses on CO₂ premised on a separation between oil as a product and the carbon that the combustion of oil produce. The separation of oil from the carbon it emits allowed the industry representatives to take the position of caring about the future

87 Norwegian Bokmål: ”fordi jeg blev red over klimaet. Jeg innså at vi ikke kommer til å nå Parisavtalen. De voksne snakker, men om ikke vi gjør noe da er konsekvensene på oss. Vi må nå Parisavtalen”

88 Norwegian Bokmål: ”den beste måten”

89 Norwegian Bokmål: ”ungdommene”

90 Norwegian Bokmål: ”Men alt kommer fra energi”

91 Norwegian Bokmål: ”Vi må si ja til alt, vi finner ikke nok olje”

92 Norwegian Bokmål: ”Alle mann til kranene”

93 Norwegian Bokmål: ”Olje er ikke problemet. Olje er et herlig produkt”

94 Norwegian Bokmål: ”Problemet er at når olje brennes da utleder det CO₂”

in a time of a changing climate, while at the same time arguing for continued oil exploration. The anthropologist Gökçe Günel's (2019) concept 'technical adjustments' is illuminating for understanding what the separation between oil and carbon emissions entails. 'Technical adjustments' refers to a type of response to climate change and energy scarcity that point towards interventions that are technical while excluding and avoiding interventions of an ethical, moral and political order (Günel 2019, 10). I understand the argument that 'CO₂, not oil, is the problem' to be doing exactly this – dismissing changes of an ethical, moral and political nature related to phasing out oil and gas and instead focus on the technical problem of what to do about CO₂.

According to Günel the effect of this avoidance is that the technological adjustments approach obscures that wide-ranging changes in consumption and lifestyle are necessary to counter global climate change. This approach makes climate change seem like a problem that can be managed on a purely technical level and driven by market values rather than a problem that human beings need to discuss and address politically (Günel 2019, 11; see also Lohmann 2011; 2005; Knox 2015; 2014). As such, technical adjustments work to preserve the status quo based on the premise that the values of the present can be projected into the future with technological assistance, and that a rethinking and re-evaluation of values and ways of life can be avoided (Günel 2019, 11, 31). I see the separation of oil from the carbon its production and combustion emit as part of an attempt to retain control over what kind of action and change facts₁ about climate change calls for in Stavanger. Technical adjustments or changes to values and ways of life? The representatives from the oil and gas sector argues that energy from oil and gas is indispensable, and that the problem really is figuring out what to do with the CO₂, not to phase out oil and gas. Following Günel this can be understood as a way to preserve the status quo by attending to the problem, not of oil but of carbon emissions with technological assistance.

Ultimately, the activists and the industry representatives in the debate interpret what the rising levels of carbon in the atmosphere asks of them. When the Equinor representative addresses Frida and the other activist as "the young people" and ask them to be realistic, he is using a type of dismissal like Saga's father and uncle, implying that the activists are too young to be realistic about how the world really works. The dismissal of the young activists' use of facts₁ can be understood as an attempt from industry-dependent people to retain control over interpretations of what facts₁ mean, how facts₁ relate to the fact₂ of climate change, and the action they require. I understand such arguments as examples of the industry wanting a different type of change to that of the activists, and that to the industry, the facts₂ of climate change calls for 'technologically adjusting' the status quo by finding ways of managing carbon rather than phasing out oil and gas. The strategy they deploy for retaining control over this interpretation is to dismiss the activists' as too young to know properly. The activists on the other hand refuse such dismissals through their insistence on becoming tougher through learning more facts₁ and deploying them in a way that reproduces the modern discourse of detached witnessing. The activists are not against technological solutions in themselves, but they continuously argue that technological solutions cannot stand alone, particularly since such technology is often not mature enough to be implemented on a large enough scale to sufficiently lower emissions. Further, they reason that trusting the future development of not-yet-mature technology means that they or their peers are the ones who will eventually have to make this technology work on a sufficiently large scale or live with the detrimental consequences of its failure.

Protective toughness and comfort

As Nora and Saga pointed out in the beginning of this chapter, the activists must be tough to dare to say what they mean. However, I have shown that the activists also need to be careful not to turn people against them and their cause. The activists cultivate precision and carefulness and use facts₁ act as an antidote to what they perceive as misunderstandings. I suggest that the importance of facts₁ for the activists needs to be understood in relation to the dynamic between being tough and being careful in an environment where questions about oil and gas are characterised as “personal.” Through the examples, the personal emerges as something to be considered in order to be avoided because it causes resistance. As Nora put it on another occasion, “if you keep referring to facts₁ and the general case and don’t mention singular individuals, then it becomes much easier to get the point across because it is not about singular individuals, it is about a global problem [of climate change] that needs to be solved.”⁹⁵

Returning to Nora’s beloved bar chart, the joy and clarity it produces for Nora can be understood in relation to the need to avoid misunderstandings and resistance. If something speaks as clearly as the bar chart, then it enables side-stepping the messiness and conflictual nature of the personal. I suggest that the comfort that a fact₁ like the bar chart provides Nora is that it works as a supportive back-up for her worldview. By collecting an armour of facts₁ that can protect them against dismissals from an environment that do not want the same climate action, Nora and the other activists find a way to stay in relation to their local environment without giving up on what they believe in. Despite the grim premonitions about the future that facts₁ relay, there is comfort in the back-up they provide.

Concluding remarks

I began this chapter by inquiring about the activists’ need for toughness. My exploration of the need for toughness illuminates why facts₁ have the particular social life in Stavanger that I have laid out in this chapter as a two-way movement between an internal, subject-shaping capacity and an external deployment devoid of feeling and detached from the personal. Through these movements, facts₁ remain comprised of the same artefacts such as social media posts, reports, numbers and bar charts, but their relationship to the personal and emotional shift. Throughout the chapter, the activists’ need for toughness emerges as a response to three key factors, which I comment on here.

Firstly, the activists’ need for toughness is a response to the hurt they experience when faced with the predictions of a climate-changed world that the facts₁ indicate, and the lack of action to prevent these predictions from coming true. In section 1 of this chapter, I argued that the activists are shaped by facts₁ about climate change. These facts₁ hurt, because they tell of a world and a future being destroyed. Hereby, the future is made affectually present as a site of loss for the activists. Whilst doing their internal, subject-shaping

95 Bokmål Norwegian. “henviser du hele tiden til fakta og den generelle saken og ikke går inn på enkeltindivider, da bliver det mye enklere og få frem poenget for det handler jo ikke om enkeltindivider, det handler om et globalt problem som må løses”

work, facts₁ are deeply personal and create feelings like hurt, anxiety, despair and anger, whilst also fuelling motivation for action. My engagement with the importance of emotions for how facts gain meaning to the activists relays essential information about the continuous emotional work that it requires to keep climate change present as something that urgently needs to be acted upon. I emphasise the hurt of the prospect of a climate-changed future and the inaction in the face of this grim prospect as central to the activists' need for facts₁, because there is no need to be tough if it does not hurt. At the same time, facts₁ are comforting as much as they are terrifying because they allow for a back-up to the world view of the activists in face of conflict within their social environment. The argument that for the activists' the future is already affectually present as a site loss, through their emotional responses to facts about climate change, lays some of the groundwork for Chapter 4's discussion of the activist's theory of change and the relationship between activism and the future.

Secondly, toughness is a response to an environment with high emotional intensity in which activists and industry people struggle for control over what kind of action facts₁ ask of them. In section 2, I argued that when mobilised outwardly towards the larger social environment of Stavanger, facts₁ allow the activists to translate something that really hurts and feels bad into something they can use. The activists reposition and narrate facts₁ outwardly as something absent of feeling, and in this form the facts₁ provide toughness and protection. What lies at stake in getting tougher is thus a need to find a way to protect themselves from the explosiveness of the emotionally intense social environment they inhabit. Facts₁ offer this protection when they are deployed as impersonal, unemotional truths about the world that can keep the personal at a distance. However, toughness is accompanied by a need to be careful in order to avoid misunderstandings. Whilst in this chapter I have explored the avoidance of the personal using facts₁, I return to the personal in Chapter 4 and how the activists attend to and care for the personal by avoiding certain topics and practices.

Thirdly, the need for toughness is also a response to the relationship between facts₁, authority and age, and how the struggles to gain control over the interpretation of facts₁ result in dismissals of the young activists as naïve and too young to know properly. The activist's refuse this dismissal through their use of facts₁ as objective truths about the world imploring immediate climate action to retain a liveable planet. The toughness that facts₁ afford the activists not only protect them, but also offers them a way of staying true to their understanding of climate change as demanding urgent change, whilst remaining in relation to their local environment. Hereby the chapter illuminates the predicament of Stavanger's Generation Carbon as one in which addressing oil's carbon polluting qualities is a highly emotional endeavour requiring technoscientific armour as protection.

In the following chapter, I return to the activists' relationship to goodness and substantiate what it is the activists' experience losing in a world heading for climate disaster.

CHAPTER 3

A climate changed world is no place for children – child figures, loss and the future

During the rather long interview with Frida and her mother in the garden of their home, they served me Grandiosa pizza – a specific brand of frozen pizza that according to Frida and her mother, is an essential part of Norwegian culture they insisted I tried. In between bites, Frida explained that she and her activist friends often talk about how when they were younger they thought about the future “without a filter, without limits.”⁹⁶ Now, because of the climate crisis they feel like “a huge barrier”⁹⁷ has been introduced to their thoughts. Frida described this barrier as “not knowing what it [the future] will be like,”⁹⁸ and she wondered “if it will be a complete disaster or if we will manage to do something about it [climate change]?”⁹⁹. For Frida, the scariest thing about climate change is that “we know so little about how it will be handled and how bad it may actually be when we become adults.”¹⁰⁰ She explained that this uncertainty had sparked discussions between her activist friends about having children. “Should I actually have children, if there is somehow not a proper place for them to grow up in a way? I think that is a fair question,”¹⁰¹ Frida articulated. This prompted a silent exchange between Frida and her mother. Her mother looked at Frida closely, made an affirming sound and nodded. Looking a bit uneasy, her mother fidgeted with the golden necklace around her neck. Frida looked at her mom for a few seconds, then at me and finally said: “it is really nasty to think about the future. Two years, I can do that. 20 years, that is scary!”¹⁰².

Frida’s mother used to be active in the same climate and environmental youth organisation that Frida now takes an active role in. Frida’s mother, who now works as a consultant for oil and gas companies, explained that she thinks it is a difficult balancing act to have oil companies as customers while at the same

96 Norwegian Bokmål: ”uten et filter, uten begrensninger”

97 Norwegian Bokmål: “en diger bom”

98 Norwegian Bokmål: ”ikke å vite hvordan det kommer til å bli”

99 Norwegian Bokmål: ”om det blir helt katastrofe eller om vi klarer å gjøre noe med det”

100 Norwegian Bokmål: ”vi vet så sykt lite om hvordan det faktisk kommer til å bli håndtert hvor galt det faktisk kommer til å bli når vi blir voksne”

101 Norwegian Bokmål: ”Skal jeg egentlig få barn, hvis der ikke er et ordentlig sted for de og vokse opp på en måte. Det er et fair spørsmål synes jeg”

102 Norwegian Bokmål: ”det er skikkelig ekkelt å tenke på framtiden. 2 år det klarer jeg. 20 år det er skummelt!”

time struggling with an apprehension on behalf of her children. “Do I think they should bring my future grandchildren into this world? How will it be for them? How will the future be for my daughters?”¹⁰³ she asked. Frida looked at her and said in a gentle tone of voice, “but it is also your job.”¹⁰⁴ Frida’s mother took a deep breath and said “and then it is also my job and things do happen, but they are happening too late, right?”¹⁰⁵ gesturing towards Frida. They explained that they discuss the changes in policy and industry a lot and that Frida’s mother is eager to show Frida that things are changing even if the pace is slow. For example, the company that Frida’s mother works for had begun prioritising customers based on the customers’ willingness to participate in the green transition. But still, large oil and gas companies are in the top category which Frida did not find impressive saying “I find it hard to be positive about the future. When I see what the parliament, the government does then it all seems so incredibly hopeless. Every time a new report from the UN comes...”¹⁰⁶ Frida paused here and made a sad and frustrated sound. “It is all so heart-breaking.”¹⁰⁷ We all sat there in the garden for a while in silence, listening to the sound of the neighbour mowing the lawn.

In this example, Frida reflected about whether to have children not as a climate adaption strategy but as a response to a future catastrophically changed by the climate crisis. What do these reflections about not reproducing mean if they are not about making a smaller carbon footprint in the world through contributing to making it less populated? In this chapter, I attend to the activists’ questions about whether to have children to make sense of their feelings that there is something deeply wrong with the dominant way of life they are part of. A way of life that takes place in a welfare state fuelled by the oil industry, yet one in which they belong and struggle to dislocate their own investment in.

Paraphrasing the scholar of anticolonial and feminist STS Michelle Murphy (2017), I wonder what is reproduced in the name of reproduction – and what is further questioned by approaching reproduction with unease and hesitation as the activists do? Addressing the Norwegian people in her 2019 new year’s speech, the Norwegian Prime Minister, Erna Solberg, implored Norwegians to have more children arguing that “Norway needs more children”¹⁰⁸ to sustain the current level of welfare (NRK 2019). Solberg argued that society functions because parents take care of their children and because people who are able to work enable care for the elderly through tax payments (NRK 2019). Solberg’s request portrays the centrality of having children as paramount for the reproduction of the welfare state and the state’s expectation that its citizens need to reproduce to sustain it. If there are not enough young people to take on caring and tax-paying responsibilities the balance will tip. I suggest that in the activists’ unease about bringing children into a world heading for climate disaster lies not only a questioning of individual reproductive choices, but also a questioning of the welfare state’s expectations that its citizens must reproduce.

103 Norwegian Bokmål: ”synes jeg at de skal bringe barnebarn inn i denne verden? Hvordan skal bli for de? Hvordan skal framtiden bli for døtrene mine?”

104 Norwegian Bokmål: ”og så er det jobben din også”

105 Norwegian Bokmål: ”og så er det jobben min og ting skjer, men de skjer jo for sent ikke sant?”

106 Norwegian Bokmål: ”det er vanskelig for meg og se veldig lyst på framtiden. Når jeg ser hva stortinget gjør, hva regjeringen gjør, da virker det så syndsykt håpløst. Hver gang en ny rapport fra FN kommer”

107 Norwegian Bokmål: ”Det er helt hjerteknusende”

108 Norwegian Bokmål: ”Norge trenger fler barn”

As Solberg's speech exemplifies, the child is a powerful trope for talking about the future. When the people I got to know in Stavanger talked about the future, they would almost always talk about children - themselves as children in the present whose future is compromised by global climate change, their actual or potential future children and what the world would look like for them, or simply future generations. As children kept coming up in my conversations and observations about climate change and the future, I began to think of 'the child' as a technique for making connections between the past, present and the future. Borrowing from queer theory scholar Lee Edelman, I label these mobilisations of children as "figures of the child" (Edelman 2004).

The vulnerable, innocent child is the central object of Edelman's (2004) polemic work about queerness as the future-negating opposition to what he terms 'reproductive futurism.' According to Edelman, politics works through a "reproductive futurism" where the child is the "phantasmic beneficiary of every political intervention," as politics are always framed as being for the future generations of children (Edelman 2004, 3). Essential to Edelman's argument is the normative portrayal of the child as innocent and in need of protection, a protection that politics offers by being for the future child. The child figure that crystallises from Edelman's work is thus an innocent, vulnerable child in need of protection and management, a figure that stands in for the future framed to be similarly exposed and therefore in need of care and governance.

Edelman's critique of reproductive futurism is the central analytical optic that I apply in this chapter to explore the relationship between reproduction and social reproduction. I see figures of the child as distinct from actual living children (Castañeda 2002). Figurative children are rather a device through which relations between the past, the present and the future are ordered and how certain actions are justified (Sheldon 2016; Edelman 2004).

My analysis contributes to the literature about child figures and reproductive futurism that have emerged in response to Edelman's argument (Sheldon 2016; Kverndokk 2020; Gill-Peterson, Sheldon, and Stockton 2016; Muñoz 2019). While the existing literature about child figures draws upon important aspects of my ethnographic material, they do not account for the role of nature in Norwegian conceptions of what makes a good childhood and how spending time in nature is understood to be formative for a person. The importance of the natural environment for forming good people raises the question as to how to raise the next generations of Norwegians in the face of losing this environment due to climate change's impact on the natural environment. This question inspires me to identify a novel child figure: the child as loss. I unfold this contribution in two sections in the chapter. The first section explores child figures in relation to the welfare state's expectation that its citizens should reproduce, while the second section unfolds the cultural specificity of what the child as loss entails in Norway. Through focusing on the activists' experience of loss, I articulate their investments in the present, the tensions of this investment and how they struggle to imagine a different society. The chapter shows that despite the activists' trust in the state and appeals to Norwegian goodness and the welfare state as I outline in Chapter 1, there are also points of tension in their relationship with this goodness. This chapter illuminates how the activists of Stavanger's Generation Carbon are also marked by an apprehension that the goodness of the welfare state might not fulfil its promise of a good life, particularly when it comes to counteracting the risk that climate change will destructively alter Norwegian nature.

Queer theory and expectations towards how a life is supposed to unfold

In the conversation between Frida and her mother, questioning if it is a good idea to have children in a world heading towards climate disaster seems to be an ultimate disruption to the imagination about how life was supposed to unfold. In the example, children come to represent an undisrupted future, a future without barriers, and the absence of children is the loss of this certain future (Sheldon 2016). Within this logic, reproduction used to appear as the natural and desirable situation yet is now being disrupted by an unnatural nature in the form of climate change. The barrier that climate change introduces to the future takes the form of uncertainty. The future is to some extent always unknowable, but there is something about climate change that introduces uncharted territory that is particularly unnerving to the young activists.

To help me explore this uncertainty I engage with queer theory due to the critical attention this scholarship pays to the connections between time and expectations towards how a life is supposed to unfold. Expectations that queer lives and identities often disrupt (Edelman 2004; Halberstam 2005; Cosenza 2014; Freeman 2010; Muñoz 2019). I draw from queer theory specifically for its focus on the temporal dimensions of social and cultural expectations and normativity and to the power effects of what is considered normal. As the opening vignette shows, the young activists in Stavanger are struggling with disruptions to both their own and their parents' expectations as to how their lives were presumed to play out. What scholarship about queer futurity and queer time so eminently displays is how family and reproduction are central structuring principles of what is seen as desirable in society (see for example Ahmed 2010). This scholarship, I suggest, has something significant to say about the activists' experience of disruptions to how life is supposed to unfold. However, these disruptions do not primarily stem from queer lives or identities. Instead, the main disruption to the sense of what the future is supposed to look like originates in the changed outlook on the future that global climate change represents to the activists. Precisely the activists' position within the norm is important, because literature about queer futures often think with point of departure in marginalised positions (see for example Halberstam 2005; Edelman 2004; Cosenza 2014). In contrast, the activists have access to the support and resources that normativity provides to those who comply, yet climate change introduces an uncertainty that deeply disturbs the prospect of continuing this access.

What draws me to the literature about queer futurity and temporality is its sensitivity to disruptions to norms of the good life. Both in what is made other and undesirable up against what is seen as desirable, and how what is perceived as undesirable can also be reclaimed, uplifted and made meaningful by community building and collective political action. I am looking at changes to norms for what is valuable and what a good life is as it is expressed in child figures and ideas about the future. These changes are currently happening in Stavanger and negotiated presently prompted by climate change. What is a good life? Which temporal and relational horizons is this good life constituted in relation to? Throughout the chapter, I explore these questions through paying detailed ethnographic attention to child figures, how and from which position they are invoked and what they mean in different contexts.

Section 1

Child figures and the expectation to reproduce

In this section I attend to three different ways in which child figures are invoked - by activists, parents and people from the oil and gas industry helping to contextualise these child figures in relation to the welfare state's expectation on its citizens to reproduce. Firstly, I explore contestations over what it means to take care of the future. Secondly, I explore the child figure in relation to parental responsibility. Thirdly, I explore class-based expectations towards continuous upwards social mobility. Growing from the activists' visions of how climate change will lead to a broken world, I end by proposing a new child figure: 'the child as loss'.

Taking care of future children

During a trip back to Stavanger in the late summer of 2021, I shared my initial findings with some of the young activists I had been collaborating with. While we discussed my interest in patterns about children, youth and future generations in relation to climate change, the young activist Linn remarked that it made her think about the Government Pension Fund of Norway, often dubbed 'the Oil Fund.' Linn explained that the fund was created with the purpose of ensuring that the wealth from oil would benefit future generations. "That is being turned upside down now, when we know that the oil contributes to the destruction of children's future on earth,"¹⁰⁹ Linn reflected referring to the global climate emergency. Later, while writing up my reflections about the interview, I googled the Oil Fund. On the landing page of the fund's official website was a picture of a young child looking over the shoulder of an adult. The child's long, blond hair was touching the chequered shirt of the adult, whose back was turned towards the viewer. They were standing at the cusp of the sea. Next to the child and the adult was a large number. The last 5-6 digits of the number was constantly shifting. A short text stated that the number reflected the current market value of the Oil Fund. Below the number was the text: "For you and future generations"¹¹⁰ (see Figure 12).



Figure 12 Screenshot from the landing page of Norges Bank Invest Management (Norges Bank Investment Management n.d.)

109 Norwegian Bokmål: "det blir snut opp og ned nå, hvor vi vet at oljen bidrar til å ødelegge barna sin fremtid på kloden"

110 Norwegian Bokmål Bokmål: "For deg og fremtidige generasjoner"

Linn's observation about the Oil Fund points to a central shift in what it means to take care of future generations of children. The Oil Fund webpage portrays the logic behind the establishment of the fund: to take care of future generations by preserving economic wealth through transforming natural resources into financial assets. The image of the child on the shoulder of the adult next to the shifting number is a powerful visual representation of this type of taking care. What Linn was drawing attention to when we met to discuss my research is that what it entails to take care of future generations is radically shifting because of the climate crisis. In the opening vignette of this chapter, Frida explained how the future seems unsafe because of the uncertainty climate change causes. In contrast, in his essay 'Oil Kid,'¹¹¹ the Norwegian public intellectual and essayist Aslak Sira Myhre (2010) writes about growing up in Stavanger during the arrival of the oil industry in the 1970's:

"Where I grew up, we checked the oil price and the exchange rate for the dollar in the newspaper every day. Not because we dreamed about becoming stockbrokers and millionaires, but to reassure ourselves that the future was safe. A high oil price and a high exchange rate for the dollar meant that the oil industry in the North Sea would be built out further. New platforms would be dragged out to sea and positioned on new fields. When the platforms required building it increased the chances that my dad and two thousand other dads [working] at Rosenberg Shipyard in Stavanger had work the coming two to three years"¹¹²

(Myhre 2010, 7 my translation from Norwegian).

Myhre outlines a wholly different perspective on what makes the future safe: the immediate continuation of the oil industry and the work it brings. While the local labour market is still intimately tied to the oil and gas industry, what used to make the future safe is now the locus point of concern, apprehension, and anxiety for the young activists. To them, taking care of future generations as well as their own future is no longer just a question of gaining or preserving economic wealth, but a more pressing consideration of taking measures that will ensure a liveable planet. They understand this is a paradoxical endeavour since these two visions of taking care of the future are in conflict, in that the wealth that is supposed to benefit future generations stems from an enterprise that contributes to the destruction of a liveable planet.

As Frida and her mother were discussing, the oil industry provides the jobs that enable parents to take care of their children in the present. Paying attention to the type of child figure at play in Linn's reflections about the Oil Fund has potential to unfold the significance of this dilemma. It offers an analytical perspective attuned to tease out the complex interplay between reproduction, social reproduction, and the future.

In the activist's reflections about the oil fund, children function as a symbol of the future and as something that needs to be taken care of. The vulnerable child in need of protection akin to Lee Edelman's child figure (2004). Edelman explores the figure of the child in North American context in relation to what he calls reproductive futurism. The child for Edelman is a figure that allows for the replication of the social norms of the present by projecting them into the future in the name of the child (Edelman 2004, 2–3).

111 Original in Bokmål Norwegian titled: 'Oljeunge'

112 Norwegian Bokmål: "Der jeg vokste opp, sjekka vi oljeprisene og dollarkursen i avisa hver dag. Ikke fordi vi drømte om å bli børsmeglere og millionærer, men for å forsikre oss om at framtida var trygg. Høy oljepris og høy dollarkurs betydde videre utbygging av oljeindustrien i Nordsjøen. Nye plattformer ville bli slept ut i havet og satt på nye felt. Når plattformene skulle bygges, var sjansen stor for at min far og to tusen andre fedre på Rosenberg Verft i Stavanger hadde arbeid de neste to-tre årene."

For Edelman, politics work to reaffirm social order and transfer it to the future through the figure of the child (Edelman 2004, 2). Essential to Edelman's argument is the portrayal of the child as innocent and in need of protection, a protection that politics offers by being for the child to come. Within this logic that Edelman critiques, protecting and managing the child becomes the means through which it is possible to also protect and manage the future.

What Edelman aids in understanding about the dilemma of contemporary oil production in Norway is that the figural child works as a vessel for projecting the dominant ideas about what is good in the present into the future. Ideas about what constitute goodness that are being projected into the future through, for example, the oil fund, centre on the preservation of wealth with the purpose of sustaining future generations of citizens in the Norwegian welfare state. However, the activists are questioning these norms by pointing out that the climate crisis demands a readjustment to offer protection to the vulnerable child. They thus point to that the values of the present are incongruous to the predicament of living in the climate crisis.

However, the child does not exist in a vacuum. As a figure, the child is deeply embedded in the family and the middle classes. I'll elaborate on the importance of family and class in the following two sections, before I move deeper into the disruptions that climate change installs on the activists' temporal horizon.

The child figure and parental responsibility

Children and narratives of parental responsibility also plays a role among industry people, which the following example is a telling instance of. During a chat after one of the weekly meetings in the climate organisation they are active in, Frida and Nora told me about a debate they had participated in at the local library. The debate was about the climate impact of oil. The oil and gas representative argued that the world needs oil and that Norway should keep producing oil because it does so in a good way, where the production is not carbon intensive – reminiscent of the 'clean oil' argument in Chapter 1. Nora and Frida challenged the oil industry representatives to explain how he could justify looking for more new oil and gas given the severity of the climate emergency. In response he told them that "sometimes I feel like I am being framed as the super-villain in an action movie. But I have two kids! Nothing is more important to me than my kids and their future."¹¹³ Nora and Frida experienced this as if the oil and gas representative put himself in the position of being the one to define what is good for the future, by highlighting himself as a father who cares deeply about the future of his children. How could what he and his company do contribute to the destruction of the future when he is a parent who cares deeply about the future of his own children? To Frida and Nora, this oil and gas representative annulled their concerns by installing a hierarchy where he knew better than them about taking care of the future because he was a parent. It was however, they contended, their future which was at stake not his. Why exactly was it that being a parent enabled the Equinor representative to place himself in a position to define what is good for the future?

The cultural studies scholar Kyrre Kverndokk's (2020) work is useful for exploring this question. Kverndokk argues that child figures play an important role in climate change discourse where images

¹¹³ Norwegian Bokmål: "noen ganger føler jeg at jeg blir gjort til skurken i en aksjon film. Men jeg har to barn. Ingenting er mer viktig for meg enn barna mine og fremtiden deres"

such as “our children” and “future generations” work to produce privileged positions of enunciation in the present (Kverndokk 2020, 153). I understand this to refer to the authority and agency that defines what should be done in the present to take care of the future. Kverndokk builds his argument on a narrative analysis of the climate scientist and activist James Hansens’ book “The Storms of my Grandchildren,” a speech Barack Obama gave at COP15 in Paris and a newspaper article about the Norwegian branch of Grand Parents’ Climate Campaign. Across these three sources, the actors talk about their own children and grandchildren as well as the less specific “our children.” Kverndokk argues that the use of children across these materials imply an active “we” working to save the future, whereas the child both in the present and future becomes a passive placeholder for a future to be saved. According to Kverndokk, this active “we” grants a privileged position of enunciation to the speaker as a parent or grandparent in climate change discourse. The agency and authority of the active “we,” Kverndokk argues, is produced by invoking a specific temporal logic, where time is ordered based on the family. In such ‘family time’ (Hareven 1977), time is a function of relations, of generation following generation rather than year following year (Kverndokk 2020, 149). Within family time, heteronormative life scripts structure how parents perceive the future of their children (Kverndokk 2020, 150). However, Kverndokk argues, the predictability of the future as family time is threatened by climate disaster (Kverndokk 2020, 150). This chaos is managed through child figures that function to dramatise the future through family tropes of care and responsibility that centre around recreating the predictability of heteronormative family time (Kverndokk 2020, 155). In Kverndokk’s use, the child thus works to make the future manageable and relatable by reinstalling familiar logics of predictability and responsibility based on the family.

Kverndokk assists in the understanding that predictable scripts of family life and family time are used to manage the uncertainty about the future that climate change produces in the present. Through Kverndokk’s analysis, it is possible to understand the oil and gas representative’s invocation of his position as a parent as an attempt to reinstall comfortable family logics of predictability, responsibility and trust when faced with the critique that oil and gas companies contribute to a future marked by climate change disaster. While Frida in the opening section to the chapter questioned the usefulness of heteronormative life plans in a climate changed world through her questioning of having children, the oil and gas representative uses the predictability of such order to tame climate change disaster chaos and reinstall his own authority. The example suggests that not only the welfare state, but also the family is integral as to how climate-related risk and danger is being articulated in Stavanger. I now turn towards the social position from which the activists experience risk, danger, loss and expectations towards the future by exploring a parent’s perspective and their hopes for what the future holds for their children.

“Once an oil kid, always an oil kid”

Gerd works in an oil-related profession and is a parent to two children. Both of her children are in their mid-late teens and her youngest child is very articulate about her climate concerns, though not an active climate activist. During an interview, Gerd told me that she felt very lucky to have been born “exactly here

in Norway, exactly at this time.”¹¹⁴ She elaborated by telling me that “us who were born in Norway in the 60’s and 70’s, for us everything just kept getting better and better, everything has just gone up, up, up.”¹¹⁵ Gerd reflected that this might not be the case for her own children, but she would like it to be. At the same time, she also found it difficult to grasp that her children might not experience the same relatively unbroken increase in prosperity in society. To explain why it is hard to comprehend, Gerd told me about the TV show “Lykkeland,” named State of Happiness for an English-speaking audience.

The TV drama *Lykkeland* shows over two seasons the establishment of the oil industry in Stavanger and is a good example of what “up, up, up” means. *Lykkeland* is the first major commercial narrative version of the establishment of the oil industry in Norway. Season 1 portrays Stavanger as a city with a dying fishing and canning industry and depicts the immense societal changes the city undergoes when the American company Philips Petroleum finds a huge oil field in 1969. The show’s main protagonist, Anna, works as a secretary for the mayor of Stavanger. This brings the viewer close to the people and events that made Stavanger Norway’s Oil Capital. Anna’s boyfriend, Christian, works as a diver for an oil company and experiences the dangerous working conditions offshore but also the potential to start his own company. Christian’s father transforms the family business from fishing and canning to supplying the oil platforms. Anna’s brother struggles to take over the small family farm with no formal education but is eventually able to earn a very good living by working offshore on an oil platform. The story of how Stavanger became Norway’s oil capital intersects with a series of love stories, as Anna falls in love with a cowboy-hat-wearing American in town because of the booming oil industry. The main narrative of the series is the new opportunities the oil industry brings to Stavanger, and Norway at large, both socially and economically and a portrayal of happiness and affluence as intimately intertwined (see also Torkaman 2022).

Gerd told me, that at the premiere of *Lykkeland*, the CEO of the public Norwegian broadcasting service, NRK, gave a speech where he said that the Norwegian generation who has grown up with oil is the only generation in the world who has experienced so much ascent from all levels in society. His emphasis on the uniqueness of that experience resonated with Gerd. She wondered if it will be the same for her children. If it is possible for things to keep going “up, up, up”? Gerd explained that she wants the best possible future for her children when it comes to the climate but just as much when it comes to welfare and the possibilities to have a good job. She turned towards her bookshelf and picked out a book with a text by the Norwegian author, Tore Renberg (2009), about growing up during the time when oil came to Stavanger. She ran her fingers over the pages until she found what she is looking for. Then she read aloud, “once an oil kid, always an oil kid,”¹¹⁶ and explained that to her that means “once you have tried to have all that we have, then you cannot imagine not having it.”¹¹⁷

In the example, the future of Gerd’s children became an occasion for Gerd to reflect on the significance of growing up during a time when the oil so radically changed Norwegian society and economy. Gerd outlined a tension between the national socioeconomic context she grew up in and the one in which her own children will grow up. Though Gerd very concretely talked about her own children, I found that she was

114 Norwegian Bokmål: “født presis her i Norge, presis på denne tid”

115 Norwegian Bokmål: “oss som er født i Norge på 60 tallet og 70 tallet for oss har alt bare blitt bedre og bedre, alt har bare gått opp, opp, opp”

116 Norwegian Bokmål: “en gang oljeunge, alltid oljeunge”

117 Norwegian Bokmål: “når du en gang har prøvet å ha alt det vi har, da kan du ikke forestille deg og ikke ha det”

also talking about the kind of continuities she hopes to preserve for the future. When Gerd said that she wants the best possible future for her children, she expressed a wish to project her own experience of relatively unbroken socioeconomic opportunities into the future. A future with a stable climate, a supportive welfare system and good job opportunities. Children in this example ultimately become a placeholder for talking about what a good life is, and a projection of past versions of this life onto a future imagined to be stable. Gerd is reflective about the conditions that formed her perception of the good life and that maybe she is not quite capable of imagining something different, to imagine not having “all that we have,” or to imagine having something else equally valuable.

Climate change is not the first occasion through which the middle class ideal that children will automatically be better-off than their parents has been challenged (see for example Ortner 1998). What is significant is that what Gerd defines as the best possible future is one in which middle-class values of a good job, the possibility of social mobility, a strong welfare state coexists with a stable climate. This projection of the present into the future can be understood as an instance of Edelman’s reproductive futurism. However, the distinct middle-class values also reflect the performance studies scholar José Muñoz’s (2019) critique of Edelman. Muñoz argues that the figural child which Edelman presents as the imperilled object that reproductive futurism needs to protect, is not a universal child, but a specific white, middle-class child (Muñoz 2019, 95). Muñoz highlights how ideas of innocence and protection afforded to children run along race and class distinctions. Muñoz points out that cultural context and social norms are important aspects of the specificities of a child figure and that leaving out such specificities misses important aspects of the functions and usages of child figures. Gerd’s hope for the future is exemplary of the type of narratives about the future the activists have grown up with and in relation to which they articulate their worries about the future. This context, I suggest, is important for understanding their articulations of the loss an unstable future entail. Following Muñoz, I understand the activists to be speaking from a position where they have a future that can be disrupted. In contrast the futures of other children and youth of less privileged circumstances are already disturbed due to a lack of access to basic resources. I don’t intend to relativise the activists’ struggle by pointing out that others are worse off, instead I find it important to articulate that their sense of loss is expressed and gains meaning through being in a position of affluence and being inside the norm. They are deeply invested in the scenario of a society that keeps going “up, up, up,” and the prospect of losing that scenario causes them a deep sense of loss. As Gerd exemplifies, it is difficult to imagine a radically different point of departure. The activists have begun undertaking the task of this shift in imagination. A loss arises from this exercise. The loss of their investment in the world they were supposed to have, a world, to some extent, they hope to still be able to preserve. With this situation in mind, I now turn to the activist’s reflections about having or not having children in a world that is changing due to the climate crisis and what the changes they imagine could look like.

Children and broken worlds

“I dream about a future where I can bring my children with me out in nature and show them the beauty the earth has to offer. I dream about a future where I can have children without worrying that the world will be uninhabitable after my lifetime, to know the world will also be ok 50 years from now.”¹¹⁸ The quote is an excerpt from the answer Nora gave when I asked her to describe what her dream future looked like. Unlike Frida, Nora does not explicitly question if she wants to have children, but she does question what kind of world she wants children to be able to grow up in. In my reading, children in this quote represent a future where “the world is okay” and “inhabitable,” and a place where natural beauty is still found and possible to experience.

Nora’s continues, the “short-sighted dream that I fight for is the day when politicians and world leaders will open their eyes and understand that our time is now and that if we do not seize the opportunity, then parts of the world will change and come to be unrecognisable.”¹¹⁹ Nora’s words centre on a wish to preserve things that she wants to be able to share with her children rather than on what she would like to see change in the world. Change becomes a question of the measures needed to enable this preservation to avoid seeing such a loss of natural beauty. The opportunity to have good experiences in nature rather than the world becoming unrecognisable for the worse.

The notion of an unrecognisable world, or what the activists also often referred to as the world being broken or destroyed, is an important way to understand the relationship between futurity and children in the context of climate change. The following conversation with Frida about how she thinks of the future provides a good entry into what a broken world means to the activists. Frida explained what she fears is not that the planet will disappear, “it’s not like we’ll blow up the planet,”¹²⁰ she said, “that’s not the problem!”¹²¹. It’s human beings and animals that Frida worries about. She envisions a future where the water is too acidic to drink, where brutal storms and violent weather changes will be everyday occurrences and where the oceans will rise and flood vast areas. In that future, humans and animals will not survive. “Sure, there’ll be some form of life on earth again at one point, but we’ll kill everything else before that,”¹²² Frida pointed out, her hands falling to her sides like drumsticks, underlining her rhythmic pronunciation of the words “everything else.”¹²³

In elaborating what a broken world looks like, I draw on multiple conversations with Frida, Nora and other young activists about what they envision when they say that they fear what the world will look like in the future. Some of the imagery they draw upon is darkness, fog, lack of daylight, barren landscapes and what they themselves characterise as almost cartoon-like images. As an example, here is one such image conjured by Nora: a lake that has turned green where the surface bubbles and a dead fish emerges next to the relics of what was once a car. In this world, breathing is difficult and potentially toxic. The young

118 Norwegian Bokmål: ”Jeg drømmer om en framtid hvor jeg kan ta barna mine med ut i naturen og vise dem det vakre kloden har å by på. Jeg drømmer om en framtid hvor jeg kan få barn uten å være bekymret om verden er beboelig etter min levetid, det å vite at verden er ok om 50 år også.”

119 Norwegian Bokmål: ”Den kortsiktige drømmen jeg kjemper for er dagen politikerne og verdenslederne åpner øynene og forstår at vår tid er nå, og om vi ikke griper sjansen vil deler av verden endres til det ugjenkjennelige.”

120 Norwegian Bokmål: ”det er ikke såen at vi kommer til å sprengte kloden”

121 Norwegian Bokmål: ”det er ikke det som er problemet”

122 Norwegian Bokmål: ”klart, der kommer til å komme liv på kloden igjen, men vi kommer til drepe alt annet innen det”

123 Norwegian Bokmål: ”alt annet”

activists emphasise that they know such apocalyptic visions aren't precise, at least not for a long time to come, but that's what most of them see for the future if climate change is not curbed.

The weather can also create a sense of unease about the future. Dry and warm summers, storms and massive rainfalls, all an ominous signalling of something that could become increasingly common. Though rain and wind are no strangers to people who live in Stavanger, occurrences of more extreme versions of this type of weather gives an idea about what 'normal' weather could be in the broken world of the future – more extreme and with less everyday variation. Either long periods of dryness and warmth or rain, storms, and absence of sun.

In addition to the more generic images of change to the natural landscape described above, the activists also think about changes to specific places that matter to them. This can be places where their family have had a cabin for generations and where they have spent vacations throughout their lives. These types of visions are less cartoon-like, but also less specific as they usually centre on the absence and loss of a loved place. For example, a valley where a family cabin is situated, or where they have fond memories of camping and hiking, that will no longer be existing in the future because the land will have flooded due to melting ice or changed weather patterns. In these visions, attachment to specific landscapes and the character of the natural environment in these places is central and the concern is for their disappearance rather than the appearance of something undesirable like the green, bubbly lake.

The negative changes that the activists envision created by climate change are accompanied by an uneasy feeling that when these changes do occur, it will be too late to do anything about them. In the words of the young activists Tiril:

“I know there is always uncertainty about what will happen in the future, but I feel that climate change is scarier. Conflict and war have been going on for a long time and it is difficult to imagine an end to it, but still, it is something that human beings can decide. You cannot have peace negotiations with climate gases and say they need to stop. There is nothing we can do if the planet reaches a limit.”¹²⁴

The notion that you “cannot negotiate with climate gases” is reflective of an understanding amongst the activists that climate change implies an uneasy animation of the natural environment spinning out of control. A shift from a safe and peaceful environment that sustains and supports life to one that threatens life. This danger is different to how they see war. In the view of the activists a war can be stopped by people not only before it begins but during its continuation through negotiation, whereas the climate is beyond any human control.

Another concern I often heard expressed was that climate change will cause political unrest due to the devastation that will happen in the short term. The activists worry about the current harsh restrictions on refugee mobility of Norway and other European countries. They imagine that more people will be forced to flee their homes because climate change will make it impossible to live. Based on the way refugee policies

124 Bokmål Norwegian: ”Jeg vet at der alltid er usikkerhet rundt hva som kommer skje i fremtida, men jeg føler at klimaendringer er mer skumle. Konflikt og krig har gått på lenge og det er vanskelig å forestille seg en ende på det, men det er fortsatt noe mennesker kan bestemme. Man kan ikke ha fredsforhandlinger med klimagasser og si de må stoppe. Der er ingen ting vi kan gjøre hvis planeten når en grense.”

are currently formed, the activists expect that fewer nation states will be willing to receive climate refugees. The activists find this unjust and they worry about the consequences if national governments continue to try to keep out large streams of climate refugees.

The child as loss

With this imagery of a broken world in mind, I'll now return to Nora's version of the dream future. In this future, the child seems to represent a counterpoint to the broken world. The child is accompanied by the hope that the world will stay the same, particularly when it comes to the ability to experience natural beauty and have good experiences in nature. When Nora is speaking of wanting to have children, I interpret her as also wanting the world to remain the same. Just as Gerd finds it challenging to imagine "not having all that we have," the activists also struggle to imagine a different world. They have vivid ideas about the scary world climate change will cause but struggle to imagine a radically different present that will prevent the unfolding of this frightening vision. The activists have grown up with specific narrations of their own position in society and the kind of future they could expect and rely on – a future where they have access to resources like education and well-paying jobs enabling an upward social mobility in a society that would keep going "up, up, up."

At first glance, Edelman's vulnerable child figure seems to be able to explain this relationship between the child and the future. The projection of social norms of the present into the future through the figure of the vulnerable child. However, as Sheldon also argues, Edelman's analysis is largely ahistorical and thus makes claims that are so general they also miss important specificities of the predicament of living in the climate crisis at a specific time and within a certain cultural milieu (Sheldon 2016, 4–5). Sheldon adds to Edelman's analysis by situating the child figure squarely in the climate crisis. She argues that though the figural child is still "freighted with expectations and anxieties about the future," the future can no longer be taken for granted "in an age riven between unprecedented technoscientific control and equally unprecedented ecological disaster" (Sheldon 2016, 2–3). Climate change thus entails a shift in temporal horizon since the future no longer lies inevitably ahead due to impending perils like extinction, ocean acidification, extreme weather, melting ice and rising seas. This altered temporal horizon has, according to Sheldon, enacted a "slide from the child in need of saving to the child who saves," which happens in parallel with nascent discussions about the Anthropocene as a new geological era (Sheldon 2016, 6). Non-human entities impact the future as rising carbon levels animate and activate agential forces beyond the human realm, though as the term the Anthropocene suggests, these activities stem from the impact of increased human activity propelled by a growth-centred, capitalist consumer society.¹²⁵

The altered futurity that Sheldon outlines impacts social life in the present. If the future lay ahead as an unquestionable backdrop for the social life of the young activists, they might not be as preoccupied with

125 I agree with scholars like Donna Haraway (2016), Andreas Malm and Alf Hornborg (2014) as well as Jason Moore (2015), who each in their way argue that the focus on an undifferentiated 'human', which the term the Anthropocene implies, collapse important distinctions between humans that run along raced, classed and gendered lines. Human beings do not carry equal responsibility for the climate crisis. However, for the purpose of this argument I find the entanglement between the human and the non-human realm to be the most salient.

their reproductive futures at such a relatively young age. Sheldon helps me make this point. She points out that that “the child, the foetus, and the reproductive woman became subjects of intense discursive investment under conditions of planetary threat” (Sheldon 2016, 6), and argues that the child’s promise of human survival and generational continuity is the reason behind this investment (Sheldon 2016, 5). This is an important point, and I agree with Sheldon. If the future lay ahead of the young activists with relative safety and predictability about the state of the planet, would reproduction be questions of such salience for them in the present? Might not these questions be instead taken for granted expectations that the activists might or might not come to divert from depending on their life choices?

Yet the sense of loss that the young activists I came to know in Stavanger expressed seem to exceed the explanatory capacities of Sheldon’s ‘child who saves.’ To the activists, there are hopes of continuity and rescue invested in the child as Nora’s dream future serves as a prime example, yet there is also a very real sense of loss that futurity’s child cannot save. Both Nora and Frida share a profound sense of loss through their reflections about reproduction. The loss of how life was supposed to be under conditions of a stable future. A life with children and a place for these children to grow up with a high degree of proximity to the Norwegian mountains, fjords, rivers and forests. Here we see the contours that the activists’ investment in the welfare state’s promise of a good life might not be able to deliver the kind of life the activists want.

To capture this aspect of the child figure as it is expressed among young climate activists in contemporary Norway, I propose a novel child figure, ‘the child as loss.’ What the child as loss figure highlights is the importance not just of the child, but the child within an environment and how that environment is intimately tied to ideas about the good life in Norway. Life as it is ‘supposed to be’ in Norway, is not just about having children, preserving oil wealth and continuing upwards social mobility. It is also about those children growing up with access to a special natural environment. And, by consequence, about maintaining a world in which children can grow up in that landscape in which as Nora articulated “I can bring my children with me out in nature and show them the beauty the earth has to offer.” The child as loss thus crucially grows out of a specific, Norwegian setting.

In the following section I unfold in further detail the local and cultural specificity of what the loss of the child as loss figure entails, and how it is intimately tied to Norwegian perceptions of nature and the significance of nature for cultural ideals about forming a good childhood and good people.

Section 2

Norwegian nature perceptions and the child as loss

I see two main ways in which the child is made into a figure of loss in contemporary Norway as it is expressed from the vantage point of Stavanger. Firstly, and most importantly, the loss of nature and by consequence of the subject-shaping affordances of spending time in nature through outdoor activities central to Norwegian culture. Secondly, the loss of a good childhood, understood as requiring a certain closeness to nature. In the following, I describe these expressions of loss and the salience of the Norwegian context to them. I close by summing up two distinct aspects of the figural child as loss: the future that is lost to the child and the child that is lost to the future and the position from which such loss is articulated and gains meaning.

Norwegian “friluftsliv”

The significance that outdoor recreational activities such as hiking, skiing, and camping holds for Norwegian national identity is an important context for understanding what the activists risk losing as climate change intensifies. Recreational outdoor activities are called “friluftsliv” in Norwegian bokmål, which translates literally to ‘free air life.’ The term sits well with the sense of freedom and happiness widely associated among Norwegians with spending time in the picturesque natural environment Norway offers. These scenic sites are an essential part of the images used to relay Norway and Norwegian identity, both nationally and internationally. The official tourist webpage of Norway, visitnorway.com, features a plethora of pictures of stunning fjords, sublime sunsets over snow-clad mountain highlands and people in colourful hiking equipment enjoying the breath-taking terrain. The tagline of the webpage reads “Norway - Powered by Nature,” which seems to refer to the scenic places one can experience rather than the fact that Norway’s domestic electricity consumption comes from hydropower (Visit Norway n.d.). The Norwegian government also seeks to promote “friluftsliv” wanting as many people in Norway as possible to practice outdoor activities on a regular basis. Friluftsliv “gives us increased quality of life and better health, and it is a living and central aspect of the Norwegian cultural heritage and national identity,”¹²⁶ as former Minister of the Climate and Environment, Ola Elvestuen, stated in the foreword to the national action plan for “friluftsliv” from 2018 (Klima- og Miljødepartementet 2018, 3 my translation from Norwegian). The action plan was tellingly called “Action plan for friluftsliv – nature as a source of health and quality of life,” thus underscoring the national perception of the benefits of spending time outdoors as well as an institutionalisation of the importance of such activities for national identity and wellbeing.

I became acquainted with hiking and camping during my time in Stavanger. My best weekends during fieldwork were spent on camping trips or day trips with new friends in the many outstandingly beautiful places surrounding Stavanger. Most famous is Lysefjorden, home of the Pulpit Rock, a dramatic rock formation with a platform extending out of the mountainside over the fjord, resembling a gigantic pulpit. During these trips I would marvel at the views, the freshness of the water and the clean air. I’ve never slept better than during naps in a hammock strung between two trees on a lakeshore or riverbank, exhausted after a steep ascent and following a hearty lunch. Conversations usually flowed easily during these days and long silences felt kind and inhabitable, like silently sharing something beyond words. My only worry would be putting one leg in front of the other and an occasional fear of falling off a cliff – a fear my Norwegian friends never seemed to be bothered by. I sometimes went hiking alone in easy terrain to improve my skills for tougher trips with friends. On these solo excursions, my pride suffered frequent blows when small children overtook me on the paths with their parents following behind, sometimes carrying a baby in a special carrier on their backs. Bringing kids on hiking trips from an early age is a common way to teach them about the joy of spending time outdoors, while also helping them develop a sense of humility in the face of nature and the ability to compose themselves well with respect for the natural environment. The people I went hiking with would explain how spending time in the mountains made them feel connected to themselves. It would provide a sense of perspective on their problems, relieve stress as well as provide what they saw as

126 Norwegian Bokmål: “gir oss økt livskvalitet og bedre helse, og er en levende og sentral del av den norske kulturarven og nasjonale identiteten”

healthy exercise. It would make them feel good about themselves and part of the larger whole with a sense of wonder for nature. They also saw learning to move through a challenging landscape as a part of character development. The applause I received from Norwegian friends following my hiking endeavours showed the importance of doing so. In their view hiking would make me understand Norway and Norwegians better.

In Norway, outdoor life is enabled by the Act on Free Air – “Friluftsløven” in Norwegian bokmål. The act grants an “*Allemannsrett*,” which translates into ‘everyone’s right,’ entitling one and all to hike, camp, ski, harvest berries, collect firewood etc. even on private land (Miljødirektoratet n.d.).¹²⁷ The national action plan for friluftsliv states that *Allemannsretten* “is an important part of the Norwegian culture and the foundation of the friluftsliv we have in Norway”¹²⁸(Klima- og Miljødepartementet 2018 my translation from Norwegian). The Norwegian historian Peder Anker writes about *Allemannsretten*, that “it has a status of an untouchable holy grail in Norwegian political culture,” and that “the freedom to roam, walk, cross-county ski, and set up a tent wherever you want is as ingrained in Norwegians as, say, the right to freedom of speech is among people from the United States” (Anker 2020, 10). Anker argues that to Norwegians, nature as understood as the natural environment and spending time in, for example, the mountains, represents the “the source of all things good,” and that this is where people go to solve problems, deal with that which represses them and reconnect with themselves (Anker 2020, 10).

Outdoor activities in Norway are not only a pastime or a hobby, but it is also linked to ideas about mental wellbeing and national identity. Through an analysis of the Norwegian Trekking association, the anthropologists Gro Ween and Simone Abram (2012) “examine trekking practices themselves as performances of larger ideological concepts,” which leads them to conclude that trekking in Norway sustains “an ideology of nature and wilderness as well as a banal everyday nationalism” (Ween and Abram 2012, 168). The sociologist Kari Norgaard (2011), also explores Norwegians’ relationship to the outdoors in her monograph about reactions and nonreactions to climate change in a small Norwegian community during the early 2000’s. In Norgaard’s work, I see Norwegians’ emphasis on their close relationship to nature serving three main functions.

Firstly, Norgaard analyses the avid skiing and hiking practices of the community she studies as “not only recreational activities, but practices loaded with cultural meanings,” and that spending time in nature is a national ritual that creates a sense of national belonging and continuity (Norgaard 2011, 148). This ritual recreates a sense of Norwegians as morally good through their closeness to and respect for nature (Norgaard 2011, 148). Spending time outdoors will teach people to value what they call nature and take care of it, while at the same time be humble in the face of the power and danger of a rough terrain and swiftly changing weather. Norgaard writes, “in the face of the fears that community members have about global climate change, the state of the world, and what the future might bring, being in the mountains provides a sense of reassurance that all is well” (Norgaard 2011, 148). Norgaard thus highlights how spending time in nature, knowing how to walk on a steep mountain side, how to find one’s way, knowing what to bring and how to compose oneself with care and responsibility is an essential part of inscribing oneself in

127 The law includes minor restrictions such as that tents cannot be set up within 150 meters from private homes and commercial harvesting is not allowed. Fishing and hunting on private land is not allowed, while on government owned land, which is most land in Norway, fishing requires paying a fee and to hunt one needs an official license (Miljødirektoratet n.d.; Anker 2020, 10).

128 Norwegian Bokmål: “er en viktig del av norsk kultur og selve grunnlaget for det friluftslivet vi har i Norge”

a longstanding national tradition that creates a sense of continuity and that enables an ability to tame fear and anxieties about the future.

Secondly, awareness about their own contribution to the problem of climate change was a central concern to the people of Norgaard's study. She argues that by affirming their closeness to nature through the rituals of outdoor activities, people implied that "despite their rising materialism, petroleum development, and wealth, they too are pure, naturally good, even, "natural environmentalists"" (Norgaard 2011, 149). Such uses of romantic notions of nature where closeness to nature reassures innocence is an essential part of the Norwegian relationship to outdoor activities (Norgaard 2011, 150). The people of Norgaard's study made explicit connections between spending time in the mountains with becoming a better person because it helps a person develop traits like humility, being in the moment, endurance, leadership and being part of a whole (Norgaard 2011, 150–51).

Thirdly, Norgaard argues that participating in the national ritual of outdoor activity "re-creates a sense of moral order and ontological security" in the face of uncertainty (Norgaard 2011, 148). Ontological security is a term Norgaard borrows from the sociologist Anthony Giddens and it refers to "the confidence that most human beings have in the continuity of their self-identity and the constancy of the surrounding social and material environments of action" (Giddens in Norgaard 2011, 81–82). A way to affirm ontological security is through "moral order" which refers to the norms and rhythms of society that works to affirm that all is well (Norgaard 2011, 37, 148). In Norgaard's use, moral order and ontological security are powerful concepts that illuminates the work that goes into sustaining a social reality in which all is well, and I add, where fear of loss is kept at bay.

During my time in Stavanger, I experienced similar cultural ideas about the value of spending time outdoors as I have outlined above. However, some 20 years after Norgaard carried out her study, "being in the mountains" no longer provides the "reassurance that all is well," at least not to the young people in Stavanger. Their sense of ontological security, the taken-for-grantedness of a continuation of a way of life is so deeply troubled by the prospects of climate change that spending time outdoors to them no longer affirms moral order nor provides a sense of innocence that relieves personal and national implication in global climate change. While hiking and camping can still be considered a national ritual that enacts moral goodness through closeness to and respect for nature, what young people like Nora, Frida, Linn and Tiril are left with is a not reassurance that all is well, but an alarming concern that this central component of what makes you into a good person will be there neither for their children nor for future generations. This concern begs the question, how do you form the next generation of Norwegians if you don't have the outdoors to make them into good people?

Returning to Sheldon's argument about the child that saves, my contribution is to point out that though the child might promise generational continuation of the species, central cultural components of what it means to be a good person in Norway might be lost. In Norway, this loss plays out through the formative significance of spending time in nature and the apprehension that climate change will alter the natural environment in such a way that the subject-shaping affordances of the natural environment will no longer be available. Therefore, it does not suffice to see the child as a resource or as salvation through continuation. When the environment in which future children will grow up is radically altered, the people that these future children will grow into will also be different. They will lose the possibilities of developing the humility and sense of ability that spending time outdoors is understood to provide. Put differently, the

risks and dangers that climate change pose are not only about the future that is lost to the child, but also the child that is lost to the future.

In the following section, I will attend in more detail to the idea that the child is lost to the future by relating this point to how ideas about the good childhood figures ethnographically as well as in literature about Nordic child perceptions.

The loss of a good childhood

Spending time in nature and learning to take care of the natural environment as well as how to take care of oneself in this environment is a central element of dominant ideas about what a good childhood is in Norway. For example, a goal in the national action plan for “friluftsliv” is to ensure that children and youth have access to outdoor activities (Klima- og Miljødepartementet 2018, 42–43). As part of this goal, the Norwegian Institute for Nature Research (NINA) has produced a report on the “friluftsliv” of children and youth (Wold, Skår, and Øian 2020). The introduction to the report states that there are many positive effects on children and youth when spending time in nature. Among the benefits listed are the development of place-based identity, physical activity and health, reduction in stress and the ability to handle risk (Wold, Skår, and Øian 2020, 8).

My friend who worked in a kindergarten would take the children on a small trip at least once a week and would emphasise how much the children enjoyed spending time outdoors and how good it was for them as opposed to being indoors. When people shared childhood memories with me, they were almost always ripe with stories of spending time outdoors, marvelling at the wonders of nature, making friends with squirrels, finding a beautiful stone, or catching a fish for the first time. The subtext would often be that children have a special, intuitive connection to and appreciation of nature that it is important to cultivate, while also teaching children how to care for and respect nature.

Respect for and closeness to nature has been a central component of Nora’s childhood. When I asked her about her climate engagement during an online interview, she pointed out her window and told me a story about a small beach right next to her house. When Nora was a small child, she used to call the beach the trash-beach.¹²⁹ Due to the way the current flows, plastic and other kinds of trash would wash up on the beach regularly. As a small child, Nora had fun treasure hunting on the beach to see if she could find interesting objects like a message in a bottle. Nora explained that at the time she did not understand that the trash on the beach was a bad thing and the result of something larger that was wrong in the world. During her time in school, learning about spending time in nature in a respectful way was an important part of the educational activities. She learned about the importance of taking care of nature and understood that people in the world generally do not. The trash on the beach gained a new meaning when Nora began to understand that you’re not supposed to throw trash on the beach or in the sea because it can kill animals. Nora did not want animals to die and this caught her attention. From being a wonderful place for play and treasure hunting, the trash beach began to represent something that was amiss in the world. Nora was able to connect what she learned in school to the situation on the beach outside her window which made

129 Norwegian bokmål: “Søppelstranden”

her feel personally affected. Her current climate engagement, Nora describes, was a development from this first environmental engagement and attention to what she could do to prevent plastic in the sea. From these very local concerns, Nora has come to understand global concerns and works towards preventing a global catastrophe in the form of global climate change.

While memories of growing up with this kind of closeness to nature certainly does not apply to everyone, these memories and ideas do say something about the norm of a good childhood in Norway. Such norms are naturalised in a double sense. Firstly, childhood is naturalised in that childhood implies a special relationship to nature marked by an intuitive closeness and innocence. Secondly, this understanding of the relationship between childhood and nature is in turn naturalised as a taken for granted component of what a good childhood should entail.

My observations resonate with literature concerned with ideals of a good childhood in the Nordic countries which emphasise childhood as a state of “naturalness” (Wagner and Einarsdottir 2008, 265; Halldén 2009). For example, this naturalness involves a glorification of closeness to nature, understood as a playful openness and innocence which is an educational ideal particularly in early childhood education (Jørgensen, Madsen, and Husted 2020, 28). However, the centrality of closeness to nature for the ideal of the good childhood also generates a certain ambivalence, as children also need to be socialised and civilised into society (Gulløv 2012). Therefore, the naturalness of the child is both a source of admiration and a state the child needs to leave to enter into culture (Gulløv 2012, 72). In the words of anthropologist Eva Gulløv, “the soiled child must learn to wash and appreciate cleanliness, but the mud on the hands is also an expression of authenticity in relation to the earth that the grown adult has lost through civilisation” (Gulløv 2012, 69 my translation from Danish). Romantic ideas about childhood innocence and closeness to nature are still informing contemporary practices and ideals in Scandinavian children’s institutions like kindergartens and schools (Halldén 2009). Similarly, the articulations of risks and dangers in the face of the climate crisis, which I have ethnographically explored above, are informed by the cultural understanding of a good childhood in which children’s innocence and intuitive closeness to nature play a key role.

The cultural perception of the connections between childhood, nature and innocence and the importance of spending time in nature for a good childhood stand in sharp opposition to the type of broken world that the young activists conjure. These dark, foggy and barren worlds are not appropriate places for children to grow up in and seemingly incompatible with Norwegian notions of a good childhood. Put differently, a climate changed world is no place for children.

The potential of loss

In this section, I discuss the implications of the double way the child is made to figure as loss and the position from which this double figure is articulated and gain meaning.

Through my ethnographic material, I present two main ways that the child is made to figure loss: the future that is lost to the child and the child that is lost to the future. In the first, the future is lost to the child since climate change if not prevented will ultimately, paraphrasing Frida, result in the killing of all living creatures but the rock and stone of the planet. In this figuration, the child loses their future since the future will ultimately cease to exist from a human survival point of view. What changes is thus the future, while

the child that loses this future remains unchanged. This is crucially different in the second figuration of the child as loss, where it is the child that is lost to the future. Since the environment in which good people are made in Norway will be lost, the future children cannot form in the same way as previous Norwegian children. The children whose childhood is lived in a climate-changed environment will be radically different children. By consequence, the child becomes a site of loss because the environment is a site of loss. This latter point grows out of the specificity of Norway, where the natural environment is understood to participate significantly in the making of a person, whereas the first point about the loss of the future has a general ring to it that resonates more largely with the global youth climate movement.

Crucially, these two different aspects of the child as loss propels different fears and different responses. The silence that occurs between Frida and her mother in the opening of this chapter is a good example of the type of response, ‘the future that is lost to the child’ evokes. A numb and terrifying silence in the face of thinking that everything will be gone. Nora’s story about the trash beach is a different kind of response, one that relates to ‘the child that is lost to the future’ aspect of the child as loss. This fear is not as numbing, nor does it produce silence. Rather it prompts Nora to act, firstly by paying attention to that you are not supposed to throw plastic into the sea, and later by becoming active in the climate movement.

To contextualise the double figure of the future that is lost to the child and the child that is lost to the future, I now turn to a discussion of the significance of the position the activists experience loss from.

Both iterations of the child as loss are articulated from a closeness to and investment in Norwegian goodness and the Norwegian welfare state, or what I call a position ‘from inside the norm.’ The activists’ articulations of loss propel questions about what it means to lose a privileged access to resources and a particular way of spending time in and relating to nature. While Gerd hopes that things can keep going “up, up, up” for her children, the young activists are struggling with what to do with the realisation that the climate crisis installs a limit to the resources they can access while retaining a liveable planet. Accompanying this realisation is an experience of loss. The magnitude of this sense of loss tells of how deep the activists’ investments in Norwegian goodness and the Norwegian welfare state is. At the same time, the activist’s experience unease and hesitation towards fulfilling their role as reproductive citizens in the welfare state given the unresponsiveness of politicians when it comes to making policy to prevent the gloomy climate future they envision.

I find it noteworthy that the young activists think about their reproductive choices in relation to if there will be a suitable world to grow up in, but do not mention the climate impact of having a child as a consideration. Encouragement to give up having children as a climate adaption strategy are plenty. The STS scholar Donna Haraway (2016), for example, has proposed “make kin not babies” (Haraway 2016, 5–6) as an appropriate response to the current climatic and environmental problems. What I understand Haraway to propose is not population control or to limit people’s reproductive choices, but rather to rethink how care and relatedness is thought, articulated, and practiced. This rethinking implies expanding family and relatedness beyond the boundaries of species. At the same time, I see Haraway as making a critique of having children as a fundamental right, particularly for the white middle class, and having children as something that society should organise itself around and fully support. This stands in sharp contrast to Erna Solberg’s call for more children to sustain the welfare state. I understand Haraway as making a proposition for a radically altered framework of relatedness, kinship, care and solidarity which is more attuned to the predicament of inhabiting the climate crisis. However, Haraway has been criticised for flirting with harmful

population control in her argument. For example, while deeply appreciative of Haraway's larger scholarship, the scholar of feminist theory Sophie Lewis (2017) argues that the 'make kin not babies' proposition draws on a white, middle-class fantasy that being fewer people on earth will alleviate the destructive force of the climate crisis (Lewis 2017, 8–9). Lewis calls this fantasy anti-humanist rather than post-humanist as Haraway proposes. Lewis importantly suggests that focusing on making kin not babies fails to build what she sees as the necessary counterpower to address structural issues of injustice in the causes and consequences of the climate crisis (Lewis 2017, 9).

Haraway and Lewis' critique of Haraway helps me unfold what the activists' unease and hesitation towards having children mean. I do not see the activists as proposing new expansive kinship structures in the vein of Haraway. Rather, I understand them to be reflecting on what kind of world they imagine their children may grow up in and to contemplate if their visions are a place that one should bring children into. Perhaps their hesitation and unease also hold potential for a more structural critique. The hopelessness they experience in relation to the future in large parts stems from what they perceive as the inability of Norwegian politicians to craft, implement and enforce policies that adequately addresses the magnitude of the problem of the climate crisis. Given this frustration with those in power, I interpret the activists' reflections about having or not having children as more than individual reproductive choices. As I laid out in Chapter 1, the activists operate within and appeal to Norwegian goodness in their efforts to phase out Norwegian oil and gas. The welfare state promises the activists a good life where things can keep going "up, up, up." Their investment in the Norwegian welfare state, and the life it promises them, make it difficult to "not imagine all that we have," as Gerd put it. The activists are invested in this promise as their hopes of preservation tells. Yet, the welfare state's expectation that they reproduce because, as Erna Solberg put it "Norway needs more children," causes a tension in the activists' relationship to the welfare state. Particularly the stories about wanting to take their future children with them out to enjoy the Norwegian mountains, fjords and valleys shows that there are some things their investment in the welfare state might not be able to give them if climate change remains unrestrained. However, they struggle to imagine something new. The activists' uneasiness towards reproduction can thus be understood as a grappling with a sense that their investment in the welfare state might in fact not be able to provide the kind of life they want for themselves and their future children. Therefore, I suggest the loss that fuels the tension found in the activists' hesitation and unease towards reproducing holds an opening for more far-reaching questions and visions of alternative futures, or put differently, of the counterpower that Lewis calls for. Because exactly their unease and hesitation hold the potential for expanding the imagination of what the relationship between individual and society is and how and what to reproduce on a societal level in the context of the climate crisis.

Concluding remarks

In this chapter, I have explored the activists' unease and hesitation towards having children and argued that their questioning of whether to bring a child into a world headed for climate disaster can be understood as much more than individual reproductive choices. Through their unease and hesitation, the activists also question the welfare state's expectation that its citizens are reproductive citizens, propelled by a nascent

realisation that the welfare state might not be able to provide the life they want both in terms of a stable future and the preservation of a proper place for their children to grow up close to the Norwegian mountains, fjords and rivers. Therefore, this chapter has shown what is specific to the experiences of loss of Stavanger's Generation Carbon, particularly the loss of the natural environment that a changing climate entails to them and which in turn is creating cracks in their trust in the goodness of the welfare state.

To analytically expand upon the relationship between time, the child and what is considered normal and desirable I have engaged with queer theory about child figures (Edelman 2004; Sheldon 2016; Kverndokk 2020). Paying attention to child figures is important because such figures relay essential information about social norms and cultural expectations about how life is meant to play out and what is desired for the future (see also Nguyen 2021). These norms and expectations are disrupted because of how the climate crisis changes the outlook on the future. Paraphrasing Sheldon (2016), the future in the climate crisis is no longer a stable backdrop for the social and political realm, but a force in itself as the natural environment gains increasing agency propelled by rising levels of carbon in the atmosphere. A hazard that fossil fuels, including Norwegian oil and gas, are one of the main culprits behind.

Exploring my ethnography through Edelman's 'child in need of saving,' Sheldon's 'child that saves,' and Kverndokk's analysis of the relationship between child figures and heteronormative life scripts, left me with a novel child figure to add: the 'child as loss.' This figure grows from a localisation of the child figure in the Norwegian context where the natural environment plays an important role in conceptions of both a good life and a good childhood (Gulløv 2012; Wagner and Einarsdottir 2008; Jørgensen, Madsen, and Husted 2020). Through the figure of the child as loss, I laid out the risks and dangers that the young activists perceive when it comes to climate change - the future that is lost to the child and the child that is lost to the future. Further, I argued that the activists experience these losses from a position within the norm, from where they are used to having access to resources and where they have grown up expecting the future to be stable. Their experience of loss illuminates their investments in Norwegian goodness and the Norwegian welfare state. This investment however is proving to have certain limits. The unease and hesitation the activists express towards fulfilling their role as reproductive citizens in the welfare state tells of a continuous reflection on and negotiation of whether the welfare state can fulfil its promise of a good life given its current inability to counter global climate change. Through a reading of my material with Haraway's proposition to "make kin not babies" (Haraway 2016, 5–6) and Lewis' (2017) critique of Haraway, I have argued that the activists' investment in the welfare state makes it hard for the activists to imagine radically different kinds of kinship and relatedness, while simultaneously holding a potential for counter power. The limits to the activists' imaginations in turn outline the contours of the limitations to the activists' theory of change which I elaborate further upon in Chapter 4.

Following this chapter's exploration of the tensions in the activists' relationship to the welfare state and Norwegian goodness and their sense of loss, the final chapter turns to the theory of change through which the activists try to address the multiple losses they face. This theory of change is premised on an implicated and caring activism shaped by the limitation that the social environment of Stavanger poses to activist action.

CHAPTER 4

“It is something you could not really do in Stavanger” – conflict, care and loss¹³⁰

“It is something you could not really do in Stavanger,”¹³¹ Nora said. A series of recent civil disobedience actions by the climate organization Extinction Rebellion (XR) were the topic of the conversation between Nora, the two other young activists Sara and Jonas and I. The event had taken place in Oslo as part of a so-called protest week. It was only the three of us at this meeting. As a result, there was plenty of room for spontaneous discussions about the XR activists who had captured the attention of the media by dressing up in fish-costumes and gluing themselves to the Department of Trade, Industry and Fisheries. The Oslo-based activists had also chained themselves to heavy iron pipes on a busy road to stop the traffic. They had set up a performance of a man dressed in a suit and tie pouring oil over the naked upper body of a young activist in front of the Ministry of Petroleum and Energy. And they had paraded a pink elephant, with the written statement “tell the truth”¹³² around the town. In the words of one activist interviewed by the newspaper VG, the elephant was supposed to draw attention to that “we have a big elephant in the room here in Norway and that is our oil policy”¹³³ (Elgaaen et al. 2020).

The protest week had not gone unnoticed in Stavanger where the local activists followed the actions through news media coverage as well as their social media feed. The activist Ada, who I met during my first stay in Stavanger, had since moved to Oslo and took part in the protest week. On this Tuesday evening, the Stavanger activists, who all followed Ada on social media, discussed that prior to the protest week Ada had shared a story saying that people did not know what was in store for them. “She was right about that,”¹³⁴ Sara commented with a sense of awe shining through her energetic confidence. Jonas, who was

130 Part of the work in this chapter overlaps with my book chapter ‘Overcoming abstraction: Affectual states in the efforts to decarbonize energy among young climate activists in Stavanger, Norway’ in *Digitisation and low-carbon energy transitions* edited by Siddharth Sareen and Katja Müller, forthcoming on Palgrave Pivot ultimo 2022

131 Norwegian Bokmål “Det er noe du ikke riktig kan gjøre I Stavanger”

132 Norwegian Bokmål: ”fortell sannheten”

133 Norwegian Bokmål: ”vi har en stor elefant i rommet her i Norge, og det er oljepolitikken vår”

134 Norwegian Bokmål: ”Hun hadde rett i det”

sitting laid back on his chair fiddling with his messy hair leaned forward over the table at Sara's comment. "It is so cool,"¹³⁵ he said excitedly about the protests, "and necessary,"¹³⁶ Sara added while enthusiastically elaborating that she had heard there had also been another event in front of the Norwegian parliament where activists had performed their own death by hanging. "It was cool, but also a bit extreme,"¹³⁷ Nora added and that she would never have dared to do something like it herself. "They must have had so much adrenaline in their bodies,"¹³⁸ Sara said excitedly and began imagining the kind of meetings the XR activists could have had up towards the protest week. Nora pointed out that XR's protest week almost only received negative attention in media coverage and Jonas commented that he had read an article where someone was cited for calling the activists "rich kids,"¹³⁹ who Jonas whilst paraphrasing the article described as "unable to understand anything and ruining it for everyone who had made proper and orderly climate protests."¹⁴⁰ "We've tried that,"¹⁴¹ Sara snorted with reference to proper and orderly climate protests and elaborated that "last year there were 40,000 young people in front of the Parliament and no one listened,"¹⁴² alluding to a large Fridays for Future climate strike in Oslo in 2019. Sara, Nora and Jonas discussed their frustration about the political inaction in response to the mobilisation of the youth climate movement and agreed that sometimes confrontational protests like the ones in Oslo were the right response to this inaction. "It wouldn't really do in Stavanger though,"¹⁴³ Nora reflected, a sentiment that Sara and Jonas also seemed to share based on their affirmative gestures and the period of silence that followed.

Nora used the Norwegian phrase *ikke gå an* which refers to that *something will not work* or *will not be respectable*. During the meeting, the activists discussed that some things you really cannot do in Stavanger – and if you want to do such things you will need to go somewhere else like Ada who went to Oslo. This discussion conveys the key message that the activists' Stavanger context sets certain boundaries. In Oslo you have a freedom of action that is out of reach in Stavanger because of ties to the local setting. This poses the question: what types of climate activism do the young activists experience as possible in Stavanger? What would *gå an* here? And by extension how does the local context shape the possibilities for activism? It is these questions I engage with in this chapter and through answering them, I attempt to articulate the theory of change from which the activists of Stavanger's Generation Carbon are working.

While Chapter 3 mapped and analysed the activists' sense of loss and the cracks this created in their trust in the welfare state and Norwegian goodness, this chapter focuses on their attempts to address the multiple losses they face through their activist practices. These practices firstly, include a balancing act between the proximity and distance in experiencing and articulating the risk and dangers of the climate crisis.

135 Norwegian Bokmål: "Det er så kult"

136 Norwegian Bokmål: "og nødvendig"

137 Norwegian Bokmål: "Det var også lidt ekstremt"

138 Norwegian Bokmål: "De må have hatt så mye adrenalin i koppen"

139 Norwegian Bokmål: "rike unger"

140 Norwegian Bokmål: "som ikke kan forstå noen ting og som ødelegger det for alle som har avhold ordentlige klimaprottester"

141 Norwegian Bokmål: "det har vi forsøkt"

142 Norwegian Bokmål: "I fjor år var der 40.000 ungdommer foran Stortinget og ingen hørte på de"

143 Norwegian Bokmål: "Det ville ikke riktig gå an i Stavanger da"

They secondly include different modes of caring for their parents and local community aimed at creating global change while avoiding local harm. As the opening example to this chapter shows, the young activists in Stavanger admire XR's actions in Oslo whilst also being fully aware that they must take a very different approach in Stavanger and they grapple with the ways in which they can create impact locally. An internal conflict marks their activism due to their intimate implication in climate change through ties to their community. A community whose livelihood largely depends on oil and gas, and where personal history, identity and oil history are closely entangled as described in Chapter 1. The activists are struggling with how to be knowledgeable and what to do in a situation where both their future and their ties to their community are at stake. If Norway phases out oil and gas production due to climate concerns along the lines of the hopes of the activists, it will have severe consequences for the how their local community can thrive. This oil-dependent community stands to lose the wealth and significance the oil industry's placement has provided them. By trying to improve what the activists see wrong in the world they also face substantial local dilemmas of loss. These dilemmas currently plays out through relational and familial disagreement about what the risks and dangers are and what the community stands to lose.

Unlike the activists in Oslo that the Stavanger activists admire, they are concretely and directly implicated in the environment which they seek to change. This, I argue, is a defining feature of the Stavanger activists. In Stavanger, the relationships to people working in oil and gas provide both nuances and obstacles to the way activism is carried out. This crucially points to the relationship between activism and that which activism seeks to change and the place in which activism takes place. The left radical activists that feature on the pages on several anthropological accounts of activism in the Global North (see for example Maeckelbergh 2009; Juris 2008; Krøijer 2020; Graeber 2009) are characterised by an antagonistic approach to that which they seek to change. These activists largely articulate and practice their critique and alternatives from a position of being outside the context and social environment they oppose. In contrast, the young climate activists in Stavanger cannot renounce their implication in that which they are trying to change and so they cannot articulate their critiques or offer alternatives from a position of being outside.

In this chapter, I demonstrate how the activism of the young Stavanger activists is characterised by implication and care. I unfold how the activists attempt to navigate the tension between the risk of losing the future altogether as outlined in Chapter 3, with the risk of losing their community, all the while striving for action in a way that does not compromise the humanity and dignity of their community. I suggest that the context of Stavanger has something to add to the anthropological literature about activism by illuminating what activism both looks like and entails in a context characterised by figuring out how to live in direct disagreement with a community rather than seeking to create change from a position of outside antagonistic opposition. Across the main two sections of this chapter, I argue that the activists' attempts at balancing proximity and distance to the climate crisis and their hard work to maintain and care for kin relations despite radical disagreement tell of an implicated and caring activism informed by the dilemmas of loss. In other words, their activism is not only careful, but also full of care. Building on this point, I end the chapter by articulating the activists' theory of change and the relationship between activism and the future I understand them to be working from.

The particularities of care

The concept of care is central to how I expand upon the kind of activism that grows from the position of being implicated. Drawing on feminist STS scholarship, Maria Puig de la Bellacasa, takes up the concept of care in relation to contemporary challenges like climate change and what she sees as a tendency to respond to such challenges solely through technological solutions (Puig de la Bellacasa 2011, 85). Puig de la Bellacasa proposes the concept of care as a way to stay attentive to the multiple layers and knowledge-politics of problems like, for example, climate change (Puig de la Bellacasa 2011, 86). Puig de la Bellacasa argues the case for thinking about care as “an affective state, a material vital doing, and an ethico-political obligation” (Puig de la Bellacasa 2011, 90). Over the following pages, I explore each part of this threefold definition as I attend to different aspects of the Stavanger activists’ practices.

Puig de la Bellacasa further suggests the need to foster “caring relations” that “maintain and repair a world so that humans *and non-humans* can live in it as well as possible in a complex life-sustaining web” (Puig de la Bellacasa 2011, 97 original emphasis). While largely aimed at a discussion of how researchers come to care for that which they study, I find that Puig de la Bellacasa’s attention to how affect, relations, maintenance and repair are intertwined in practices of care to be a generative framework for understanding the Stavanger activists’ caring activism informed by the dilemmas of loss.

Puig de la Bellacasa further points out that what care entails is context-specific and cannot be confined to one theoretical formula (Puig de la Bellacasa 2011, 96). Following this encouragement to attend to the particularities of care, I am particularly interested in what caring means in the specific context of Stavanger. This is further informed by the larger regional context of Scandinavia where the anthropological literature emphasises equality as sameness and conflict-avoidance as central cultural locus points (Gullestad 1989; 1992; Gopal 2004; Linnet 2011; Jöhncke 2011). To sum up, care offers an analytical lens that enables me to pay attention to how the activists practice care for their local community as an integral way of perusing their desires for change, while staying attentive to what care might also neutralise or gloss over. As I discuss towards the end of the chapter, care is not an innocent endeavour and there are also darker sides to care (Martin, Myers, and Viseu 2015; see also Murphy 2015; Papazu 2022).

Confrontational or nice activism

The caring and implicated activism of the Stavanger activists stands in sharp contrast to Norway’s rich traditions of youth environmental activism that since the early 70’s has been characterised by provocative acts of civil disobedience akin to the XR events in Oslo (see e.g. Kielland 2017). In her organisational history of Norway’s largest environmental youth organisation, the journalist Ingrid Røise Kielland (2017) portrays instances where young activists “burst the bubble of nice youth engagement,”¹⁴⁴ because “these actions mark moments when the conflict tightens and much is at stake”¹⁴⁵ (Kielland 2017, 13 my translation

144 Norwegian Bokmål: “sprenger seg ut av boblen med snilt ungdomsengasjement”. The original Norwegian Bokmål word is ‘snil’ which could in this context could also be translated to an innocent or cute activism. I have chosen the translation ‘nice’ to emphasise the connotation of respectability and kindness that ‘snil’ entails.

145 Norwegian Bokmål: “disse aksjonene markerer øyeblikk da konflikten skrur til og mye star på spill”

from Norwegian). Kielland provides a telling example of how young activists are often positioned in the category of ‘nice youth engagement.’ In 2015, a group of young climate activists demonstrated in front of a seminar on oil and gas in a small village in Northern Norway. “We want climate action, leave the oil in the ground,”¹⁴⁶ they shouted repeatedly in unison as people passed by into the building hosting the seminar (Kielland 2017, 9 my translation from Norwegian). However, one passing oil seminar participant took the time to stop and greet the activists. “Great that you are engaged. Really great,”¹⁴⁷ the CEO of the Norwegian interest organisation Norwegian Oil and Gas said convivially as he passed them (Kielland 2017, 9 my translation from Norwegian). A greeting that one of the activists later described as a “nasty hug,”¹⁴⁸ because it felt condescending to be applauded for engagement but not listened to and because in her experience the statement is usually followed by a “but,”¹⁴⁹ and a message that signifies the activists are too young to properly understand the state of affairs (Kielland 2017, 10 my translations from Norwegian). In this case the “but” went like this, “it is super great that you are engaged, but remember that oil is also important for Norway’s prosperity”¹⁵⁰ (Kielland 2017, 10, my translation from Norwegian). According to Kielland, the effect of such statements are that the young activists are made to appear non-threatening and their political claims are categorised as cute wishes akin to, in the words of Kielland “a miss Universe finalist preoccupied by peace on Earth”¹⁵¹ (Kielland 2017, 10–11, my translation from Norwegian). However, Kielland argues sometimes the climate and environmental activism of young people cannot only be confined to the category of nice. In 2002, several young activists chained themselves to the construction machines that were supposed to enable Statoil’s newest fossil fuel development project (Kielland 2017, 15). They occupied the machines for several days until Statoil lost their patience and threatened to sue the youth for the vast financial cost caused by the delay of the construction work (Kielland 2017, 15).

Whilst Kielland is interested in the transgressions of ‘nice youth activism’ as the place where conflict thickens and what is at stake is given further clarity, I argue that there is also a lot to learn about what is at stake from youth climate activism that navigates conflict through avoidance or silence rather than intensification. In Chapter 2, I detailed the use of facts as a strategy for managing radical disagreements, and in this chapter, I expand on this analysis by adding other avenues of action the activists pursue in their attempts to deal with conflict and disagreement.

Section 1

Balancing acts between proximity and distance

In this section, I detail the activists’ balancing acts between proximity and distance in relation to experiencing and articulating the risks and dangers of the climate crisis. To understand this balance, I start by detailing the activists’ efforts to make the climate crisis feel close to home and tangible to residents of Stavanger with the purpose of making it feel concrete and urgent. Elaborating on Chapter 2’s emphasis on

146 Norwegian Bokmål: “Vi vil ha klimahandling, la olja ligge“

147 Norwegian Bokmål: “Det er flott at dere er engasjert. Kjempebra“

148 Norwegian Bokmål: “klam klem“

149 Norwegian Bokmål: “men“

150 Norwegian Bokmål: “Det er kjempeflott at dere engasjerer dere, men husk at oljen også er viktig for Norges velstand“

151 Norwegian Bokmål: “en miss Universe finalist som er opptatt av fred på jorda“

the emotional aspect of information about climate change, I connect this desired concreteness to affective responses and the body. I connect the activists' practices to the part of Puig de la Bellocasa's definition that describes care as an affectual state (Puig de la Bellacasa 2011, 90). I move on to show how the activists struggle to balance the concreteness of proximity with the potential critique and pushback that it is likely to create using the example of a piece of street art about climate change located in central Stavanger.

Feeling the climate crisis in the body

A general pattern in my ethnographic material is that the young climate activists perceive climate change as abstract because they "cannot feel the climate crisis on their skin."¹⁵² The most violent consequences of climate change presently manifest in geographical parts of the world far from Norway, and despite warmer winters, heavier flooding and more powerful landslides, tangible experiences of climate change in Norway are perceived as something that will take place far into the future. This sense of abstraction is also present when it comes to the way climate change is represented in numbers about carbon emissions. Nora told me during an interview, "I feel like I cannot understand the importance of saving the climate based on numbers about CO₂ emissions, and then I need more concrete things,"¹⁵³ prior to which I had asked her to calculate her personal carbon footprint. Nora went on to identify concrete things, for example, natural disasters. She emphasised that it's not because emissions are not important, but that they are just difficult to understand because they are so abstract compared to natural disasters which are both concrete and visible. I understand 'concrete' to refer to something that can be felt "on the skin" or, as I will show in this section, "in the body". As I have argued in Chapter 2, what makes facts about climate change matter to the activists is their ability to elicit emotional responses. In the following section I elaborate on that analysis by connecting emotional responses to bodily sensations.

During my fieldwork a climatic tipping-point occurred. On August 25, 2020, the Economist published a story titled "The Greenlandic ice sheet has melted past the point of no return" with the alarming subtitle "Even if global warming stopped today, the ice would keep shrinking" (The Economist 2020). The activists picked up on the article and both Tiril and Saga described learning about the tipping point as "a nasty feeling in the body."¹⁵⁴ I am drawing attention to this nasty feeling in the body because it shows that though my interlocutors cannot feel the climate crisis *on* their skin, information about its consequences can be felt *in* their bodies equivalent to a lived experience of the importance of phasing out oil and gas. I see this this nasty feeling as an abstraction in its transition to becoming concrete through the bodily feelings of individuals.

I present the above as brief examples that reflect a shared understanding amongst the young activists that the abstract refers to something unembodied, without direct impact on their physical being or something that does not have a visible manifestation. At the same time, they also experience the climate crisis as extremely concrete because of the urgency of countering the violent consequences of a changing climate,

152 Norwegian Bokmål: "merker ikke klimakrisen på huden"

153 Norwegian Bokmål: "... jeg føler, at jeg ikke forstår viktigheten i hvorfor vi må redde klimaet ut fra tal om CO₂ utslipp, og da må jeg ha mere konkrete ting"

154 Norwegian Bokmål: "en ekkel følelse i kroppen"

and as outlined in Chapter 2, the emotional responses that facts elicit. During an interview, the 19-year-old climate activist Sander told me about his motivation for being active in a variety of local climate organisations. Sander spoke of how “the climate crisis is not an abstract concept, it’s not like no, this will not happen until a hundred years. That is in a way what makes me so motivated in the battle to solve climate change, that it happens exactly now and there is very little time.”¹⁵⁵ Sander specified this sense of urgency by referring to the IPCC’s prediction that after 2030, climate change is likely to become irreversible and he added that “it motivates me because it is actually about my life.”¹⁵⁶ Sander’s reflections about motivation is a good example of how the young climate activists also experience the climate crisis as concrete because of its temporal urgency. They sense that the future violent manifestations of climate change in the part of the world where they live is not in some distant, disembodied future, but in a future that is part of their lives – or simply *their* future.

Placing the most serious and violent local manifestations of climate change into the future can be read as if the young activists understand climate change as abstract in the present. However, the young activists have quite vivid visions of the future and these images are far from abstract and tangible to their everyday life. During the interview with Sander, he elaborated on the meaning of his statement that “it is actually about my life.” He explained that he lives close to the shoreline and half-jokingly, half-serious said that he will have to travel by canoe to get around in his neighbourhood when he reaches retirement age. This sense that sea levels rising will have a concrete impact locally in the coastal city of Stavanger and its nearby areas has been a recurring theme among the Stavanger-based young climate activists. Several of them have referred to a workshop they participated in where they drew the future sea levels through the city and realised how much would be underwater if this scenario came true.

I want to suggest that there is something essential at stake in the dynamic between abstraction and concreteness in the activists’ perception of climate change and in their experience that it is easier to relate to climate change through embodied and visual encounters. What is abstract and what is concrete for the climate activists isn’t given to them, but created through their own practices, perceptions and affective responses.

The social psychologist Margareth Wetherell argues that emotion and affect are inseparable and defines affect as “embodied meaning-making” (Wetherell 2012, 4). Similarly, the historian Monique Scheer argues for a Bourdieu-inspired understanding of emotions as practices and argues that emotions are not simply something people have but something they do as they perform and enact emotions through practice (Scheer 2012, 194). Thinking with the concept of emotions as practices alongside embodied meaning-making helps me frame the practices of young activists in Stavanger as concretising and abstracting practices that create certain affectual states. In addition, I take inspiration from the cultural analyst Sara Ahmed, who writes about affect as “whether I perceive something as beneficial or harmful clearly depends upon how I am affected by something. This dependence opens up a gap in the determination of feeling: whether something is beneficial or harmful involves thought and evaluation, at the same time that it is felt

155 Norwegian Bokmål: ”Klimakrisen for eksempel det er ikke sådant et abstrakt konsept, det ikke sådan nei, dette skal skje om hundrede år. Det er det som gjør meg så på en måte motivert i kampen for at løse klimaendringer. Det er at det skjer akkurat nå og der er tale om veldig lite tid”

156 Norwegian Bokmål: ”Det gjør mig motivert, fordi det handler om livet mitt egentlig”

by the body” (Ahmed 2014, 6). I find it useful to connect this double-movement of affect as bodily experience and as cognitive evaluation to how the young activists relate to concreteness and abstraction. They are affected by information like the melting of the Greenlandic Icesheet which creates bodily sensations: a nasty feeling. They also undertake an evaluation of what the information about the ice sheet and the nasty feeling means together in terms of what it asks of them given the current incapability of politicians to act. Combined, the bodily experience and cognitive evaluation create a sense of the melting of the ice shelf as either harmful or beneficial, desirable or undesirable. Following Puig de la Bellacasa I label this ‘sense’ an “affectual state” (Puig de la Bellacasa 2011, 90) consisting of bodily feelings central to producing an experience of caring.

Synthesising from the ethnographic examples, the affectual state associated with concreteness is exemplified by the nasty feeling in the body and a general sense of importance and motivation to, as Nora puts it, ‘save the climate’ - perceived as both beneficial and desirable. The affectual state associated with abstraction on the other hand is one of disconnection and distancing, a numbing and an overwhelm that the young activists see as counterproductive to change. Therefore, they perceive abstraction as harmful and undesirable, something to be overcome through a translation to concreteness.

Seeing affectual and embodied responses as central to meaning-making opens up for reading the youth’s engagement with a piece of information like the melting of the Greenlandic icesheet as a way of making concrete through a certain affectual and bodily reaction.

I want to suggest that a central part of how the young activists try to solve the problem of the climate crisis is through these translations from abstraction to concreteness informed by their experience that climate change is experienced and most meaningful and urgent through affectual bodily encounters that elicit care. Yet, movements between concretising and abstracting practices must be negotiated locally in Stavanger, and the perceived benefits of concretisation are not limitless, as I will show in the following example which in turn brings me to Puig de la Bellacasa’s understanding that care is also a “material vital doing” (Puig de la Bellacasa 2011, 90).

From carbon emissions to polar bears

In the following story the young climate activists navigated abstraction and concreteness alongside proximity and distance whilst they worked on a street art piece. The piece of art was a response to the opening of Arctic areas for oil exploration and a subsequent lawsuit where a coalition of environmental organisations took the Norwegian state to court arguing that the opening was unconstitutional. I took part in the preparatory meeting where the activists discussed the lawsuit, the street art’s content, and in a subsequent meeting where the activists met with the artist, they had commissioned to create the piece together with them.

A set of white tables were placed in the middle of the room. The smell of hand sanitiser lingered in the air. There were no windows so for the duration of the meeting, the rapidly changing weather of Stavanger was not a concern to me and the young activists whose meeting I was joining. One of the topics was the recent verdict in the lawsuit from the Norwegian Court of Appeals and the pending appeal to the Norwegian Supreme Court. A 15-year-old new member of the group raised her hand hesitantly, asking what happens when you win a lawsuit? If you for example win money? She tugged her long, tussled hair behind her

shoulder, revealing a print of what looked like a metal band on her black T-shirt. She laughed apprehensively, adding that she only knew about lawsuits from films. Frida, who led the meeting, replied that they won four out of five claims. With obvious frustration, Frida detailed that they lost the claim which focused on making it illegal to drill for oil in the Barents Sea. Their argument for making it illegal, Frida told us, was based both on the vulnerability of the specific area and the vast contribution from oil and gas to global carbon emissions. Further, the claim was grounded in Article 112 in the Norwegian Constitution which states that everyone has the right to a liveable environment including future generations. Frida elaborated that Article 112 was trialled in court as a right's statute, but the state argued that it is instead to be perceived as a symbolic statute which cannot be used as a specific right.

Frida's assertiveness and proficiency in legal jargon impressed me. At the age of 16, she was fluent in a language of rights and statutes which she easily explained in ways that everyone present could understand. Frida went on to clarify what they wanted to obtain with the lawsuit, "we want the court to recognize that the state has full responsibility for the CO₂ that is emitted when Norwegian oil is burned."¹⁵⁷ Given the way things work now, Frida explained the Norwegian state is only responsible for the CO₂ that is emitted from oil extraction, whereas emissions from subsequent combustion is the responsibility of the country where the combustion takes place. Roughly speaking, she added, 10 percent of total emissions from oil is due to extraction, whereas 90 percent is due to combustion. Frida looked as if she got an idea, then made an eager gesture with her hands towards the person who asked the question about the lawsuit. To explain her point, Frida recalled an example from a workshop at an activist summer camp they recently participated in, "if I sell you a weapon, I am not responsible for what you do with it."¹⁵⁸ Another activist interrupted Frida saying, "no that was not it, it was that it is the same as if I sell you drugs, then I am not responsible if you die from an overdose, I just sold it to you, I did not use it."¹⁵⁹ Frida nodded enthusiastically at the correction then looked across the room as if to round off the discussion, but ended up making a dispirited gesture while exclaiming a frustrated guttural sound. She then said that the fact that they did not win the fifth claim "says a lot about the power of oil companies, which seems to be bigger than the constitution."

At the meeting, the activists touched base about the status of the lawsuit and what they saw as its most important feature, namely the hazards of oil production in terms of both carbon emissions from production and combustion of oil, as well as the potential environmental damage to the Arctic ecosystem. As a result, their work on the street art can be understood as the material vital doing of Puig de la Bellacasa's care definition (Puig de la Bellacasa 2011, 90) – a doing that addresses vital aspects of their care for the climate. What took centre stage at the meeting was their demand that politicians begin to acknowledge Norway's responsibility for exported emissions from Norwegian oil and gas. Their discussions centred around the dangers these emissions pose to future generations through their contribution to global climate change.

However, when the activists at a later meeting presented the issue to the artist with whom they collaborated to make the street art piece, the key message for the artwork shifted. The activists wanted the piece to only depict potential local damage to the species and ecosystems and not mention the global hazard of

157 Norwegian Bokmål: "vi vil at domstolen skal anerkjenne at staten har det fulle ansvaret for den CO₂ som slippes ut når norsk olje brennes"

158 Norwegian Bokmål: "Om jeg selger deg et våpen, da er jeg ikke ansvarlig for hva du gjør med det"

159 Norwegian Bokmål: "Nei, det var ikke det, det var at det er det samme som om jeg selger deg narkotika, da er jeg ikke ansvarlig for om du dør av en overdose, jeg bare solgte det til deg, det var ikke meg som tok det"

carbon emissions. They explained to the artist that “oil is a sensitive discussion in this city,”¹⁶⁰ and that it was important for them that the piece did not come off as if it was against the whole industry. They saw keeping a specific focus on oil extraction in the Arctic rather than the responsibility for global hazards of emissions as the way to achieve this. The sensitivity that accompanied discussions about oil remained unspecified at the meeting, but I understood it to allude to as I have also detailed in Chapter 2 that the activists experience a rather harsh debate environment where industry narratives dominate what counts as knowledge and consequently what claims are seen as worthy of being taken seriously. The activists often experience that people think they are uptight, or that their aim of phasing out the oil and gas industry will hurt people working in the industry including members of their own family. All activists have classmates whose parents work in the oil sector. In discussions, these classmates will for example say, “but my mom works in oil,”¹⁶¹ followed by “do you want my mom to lose her job?”¹⁶² Age also matters for the way this resistance plays out as activists experience that adults appreciate their engagement, but do not really listen to them and in the end dismiss them as naïve youngsters who do not know how the world really works. This dismissal generally refers to appreciating the importance of oil and gas both for Stavanger and Norway as well as for making the world go round by meeting global energy demands, fuelling heavy transport and the wide array of petrochemical products.

At the meeting with the artist, the activists explained that they are afraid people working in the industry would perceive the street art piece as if it exposed the oil industry in a bad way in a public place in the city. The activists expected that this would create resistance rather than support for their cause and could bring negative attention which they wanted to avoid. They agreed that the piece should depict an oil platform, but it should be rather small and that the focus should be on Arctic animals and nature. Some of the images they evoked included a white polar bear on an ice cap in contrast to black oil and a small oil platform from where the oil would be pumped (see Figure 13). Here we see the contours of the activists’ ethico-political commitment of care (Puig de la Bellacasa 2011, 90). They are trying to balance expressing care for the climate through their street art project, however this clash with what I understand to be their ethico-political obligation to care for their local community and to address oil as carbon without alienating this local community.

Throughout the meeting with the artist, the activists struggled to strike a balance where their message was clear while trying to exclude problem framings and imagery that they expected would create resistance from the local oil-dependent community. However, the responsibility for carbon emissions became absent in the conversation with the artist and hence in the actual work of art. Though the message was still clearly against oil in the Arctic, it became a question of local rather than global hazards visualised through Arctic animals, ice and an oil platform. It is important to keep in mind that the Arctic is closer to Norwegian concerns and geography than, for example, the Pacific islands that are losing land to rising seas, Pakistani areas experiencing severe flooding or Australian wildfires – some of the places where these global hazards have recently been manifesting themselves. Though polar bears and ice caps are not local to Stavanger, the complex and fragile sea environment of the Arctic is local to Norway. However, the oil platform which is closest to the geographical position that the activists inhabit they decide to visualise as small.

160 Norwegian Bokmål: “olje er en følsom diskusjon i byen her”

161 Bokmål: ‘Men mamma jobber i olje’

162 Bokmål: ‘Vil du at moren min skal miste jobben sin?’



Figure 13 Pictures of the streetart piece.

Clearly, during the preparatory meeting the activists saw reducing the carbon emissions from the Norwegian oil industry as important for countering the climate crisis. But when it came to a concrete visualisation through a piece of street art in the city, carbon emissions were firstly too abstract and too far away from Stavanger to feel significant. Secondly, emphasising carbon emissions ran the risk of placing too much responsibility on the many people in Stavanger whose livelihoods depend on the oil industry. On the one hand, the abstraction of carbon emissions makes it easier to dismiss local responsibility for contributing to the climate crisis whilst benefitting economically. On the other, carbon emissions are so all-encompassing that they become unspecific and emphasising them can also lead to locals feeling that they are unrightfully blamed for the enormity of the global climate crisis. The young activists navigate the pitfalls of abstraction by focusing on something concrete and relatively close to home, though not too close, thus choosing the fragility of the Arctic ecosystem and the animals that inhabit it. What I take this to mean is that there is also a limit to the perception of concreteness as desirable and beneficial. Concreteness is generally desirable for the young activists, but in the context of the oil city Stavanger concretisation and localisation can create too much resistance as responsibility is placed and accountability required, running counter to the objective of inducing change. Thinking back to the confrontational forms of activism taken by the XR activists in Oslo, this kind of activism seems to work through creating provocative public caricatures such as putting on business attire and pouring oil over the naked body of a young activist. Such public displays of confrontative messages get downplayed in Stavanger as the polar bear and the small oil platform in the street art piece exemplify. This downplaying portrays, I suggest, that activists work from an ethico-political obligation towards not compromising the humanity and dignity their local community and a wish to enact their care for the climate in accordance with this obligation.

Upon a return visit to Stavanger, the small oil platform on one of the walls of the street art piece had vanished. Nora told me it was unclear to her if this disappearance was due to vandalism or if the oil platform had simply been washed off through wear and tear by the rough wind and rain characteristic of Stavanger. The situation was curious as none of the Arctic animals nor the background upon which the platform was painted had vanished. While I can only speculate about the cause for the disappearance of the oil platform, I can't help but think of this disappearance as a telling indicator of the type of environment

the young Stavanger activists must navigate and how deeply ingrained in the social fabric of Stavanger the dilemma of climate change and oil extraction runs.

Awareness about the social environment

Did the activism become toothless when moving from carbon emissions and global climate change to polar bears, ice caps and local environmental hazards? Did their concern for not harming the dignity of locals working in the oil and gas industry result in a missed opportunity for creating impact through a piece of provocative street art? Or did the activists succeed in creating a work of climate communication that portrayed the important message of the hazards of oil exploration in ecologically vulnerable areas in a way that did not undermine the dignity of local people working in the oil and gas industry?

The polar bear is such a popular image of climate change that it has almost become a symbol of climate change itself. Drawing on polar bear imagery in the street art piece hinges on being a cliché. Further, the imagery of the polar bear portrays climate change as a general problem taking place close to no-one specifically in Stavanger. Through their consideration for local oil workers the activists ended up drawing on distancing imagery unlikely to offend anyone.

It is easy to dismiss the young activists' wall of animals as the type of "nice youth activism" that Kielland describes, which fails to get to the core of the problem and unsettle those in power. Still, I wonder what can be learned from taking the activists' choices seriously in the social environment in which they occur. A way to do so, I suggest, is to think about their awareness about their local environment as an expression of care that indicates a particular approach to change from an acknowledgement of implication. This aligns with recent scholarship about the contemporary youth rebellion in the Nordics, which argues that across the Nordic countries, the resistance practices among young people currently have a quiet, pragmatic and humble expression (Sand and Jørgensen 2022b, 6). The education scholars Sand and Jørgensen point towards an awareness of privilege as one of the factors that contribute to the humble, pragmatic and quiet resistance practices. They argue that contemporary youth in the Nordic countries are aware of their privilege relative to youth in other geographical locations. These young people grow up in affluent welfare societies with relatively high degrees of social security, whilst simultaneously showing a keen attention to and awareness about the inequalities and difference between youth in their own societies (Sand and Jørgensen 2022b, 6). I wish to further add that they are largely last in line to experience the geophysical consequences of the climate crisis, creating a need to enact urgency in other ways.

My observations from Stavanger align with these more general observations about practices of resistance of Nordic youth. Yet there are also particularities to Stavanger, especially the dilemmas of loss that prompts the activists to express care for the future through also caring for their local community. In the context of Stavanger, care as a response to loss is an important aspect of the particularities of care that Puig de la Bellacasa encourages attention towards (Puig de la Bellacasa 2011, 96). To further unfold the particularities of the caring and implicated type of activism undertaken by the young Stavanger activists, I now turn towards an exploration of how the activists practice care and balance in relationship to their parents and grandparents.

Section 2

Modes of care for staying in relation

The previous section outlined the stages of navigating dynamics between abstraction and concreteness, proximity and distance, through the example of the activists' involvement in making a piece of street art. In this section, I turn to the dynamics of care and balance in the activists' family relations. In the street art example, it remained unspecific where resistance and push back may come from as it was mainly relayed in general terms like "the oil workers"¹⁶³ or "people in Stavanger,"¹⁶⁴ or as in some of the other chapters simply "the adults."¹⁶⁵ One of the particularly interesting things about Stavanger is that for the activists there is a high degree of slippage between people in the city and people in *their* city, between the adults and *their* adults. Being a climate activist in Stavanger means that differences and conflict play out in personal relationships. Despite the differences of opinion that many of the activists experience in relation to their parents, grandparents and other kin, they all emphasise their love and appreciation for these family members and put a great effort in avoiding damaging these relations over conflict. The aim of staying in relation despite radical disagreement points to the activists' ethico-political obligation to strive for change without compromising the humanity and dignity of their local oil-dependent community.

Implicated versus detached activism

The activists practice care for their community in different ways, but all of them centre on incorporating and addressing the concerns of their family relations in the city. One way that the activists must balance concreteness and abstraction, local and global harm and benefits, is through the question of what would happen to the local labour market without the oil industry. The activists in Stavanger take pride in taking concern about jobs seriously and argue that working in oil and gas is not a secure and stable job. In the words of the activist Linn, "I don't want my mum to come home without a job because people don't want to buy oil anymore."¹⁶⁶ Linn was referring to the big layoffs that usually coincides with drops in the oil price and argues that when demand for oil drops it hits oil workers hard. The activists expect oil price fluctuations to happen more often as they don't believe oil extraction can or will go on forever. Their position is that the sooner politicians take responsibility for creating new jobs in other sectors the better. They see state investment in creating alternative job opportunities for people currently employed in oil and gas as an important part of easing Norway's transition away from oil and gas.

It is significant that the activists focus on the local labour market because it shows how the activists seek to resonate with local concerns. Their attention to the future and welfare of oil workers sometimes brings the youth activists into conflict with fellow activists from places in Norway where the oil industry is not as present as in Stavanger as the following story exemplifies.

163 Norwegian Bokmål: "oljearbeiderne"

164 Norwegian Bokmål: "folk i Stavanger"

165 Norwegian Bokmål: "de voksne"

166 Norwegian Bokmål: "Jeg vil ikke at mamma skal komme hjem uten jobb, fordi folk ikke vil kjøpe olje lengere"

“We shall crush the oil workers,”¹⁶⁷ a young activist from Oslo said from the speaker podium at a national meeting in the organisation Frida, Nora and many of the other young activists are active in locally in Stavanger. The statement activated something in Frida which prompted her to get up and walk to the speaker podium where she said, “no, we shall not crush the oil workers,”¹⁶⁸ and continued to explain why, “top management in fossil companies and politicians are the ones who keep making choices to continue fossil extraction, whereas oil workers just work in the job available to them.”¹⁶⁹ Frida explained that her own mother works in an oil-related sector and emphasised that this line of work does not mean her mother is a bad person. Frida argued that to target oil workers will create unnecessary resistance to the important goal of phasing out Norwegian oil and gas production and then left the podium.

I was not present at the meeting where Frida stepped on to the podium, but I can vividly imagine her there arguing in her characteristically lively and energetic style. Both Frida and several of her fellow activists told me the story about how she intervened at the meeting in Oslo. They wanted to underline that growing up in Stavanger had provided them with what they often called “a nuanced perspective on oil and gas.”¹⁷⁰

This nuanced perspective I understand as referring to their sense of caring for local concerns and from being implicated in climate change through their direct ties to their community. What the activists speak of as nuance comes from this implication in that which they want to change through own activism and the double-loss of both standing to lose their future and their community. The activist in Oslo who suggested to “crush the oil workers” seems detached from the actual consequences this action would create locally and while this activist equally stands to lose the future, the risk of losing a local community does not seem to be of concern. While, as Kielland (2017) notes about the Norwegian youth environmental movement at large, there is capacity for change in uncompromising and confrontational messages, demands and practices, such confrontation is not what fuels the Stavanger activists’ practices. Their situated claim to making a difference takes place through what they call a nuanced perspective on maintaining a liveable world for themselves and future generations. Relations to their local community is key to what nuance entails for the young activists. What enable the activists to attend to and strive for the ethico-political obligation to building change while acknowledging difference, I suggest, is their insistence on caring and being in relation.

I have identified three main modes of caring for staying in relation with their community. Firstly, agreeing to disagree, secondly, deflection through humour, and thirdly, displacing responsibility. I elaborate on the different strategies in the following section and return to them in the discussion section where I discuss them in relation to anthropological literature about activism.

Agreeing to disagree

On several occasions, Nora told me about her grandfather who took part in establishing the oil industry in Stavanger. Intrigued, I wanted to set up an interview with the two of them together. At first Nora said yes, but then she changed her mind telling me that she was afraid to disturb what she perceived as their

167 Norwegian Bokmål: “Vi skal knuse oljearbeiderne”

168 Norwegian Bokmål: “Nei, vi skal ikke knuse oljearbeiderne”

169 Norwegian Bokmål: “den øverste ledelsen i fossile selskaper og politikerne er de som holder på med å ta beslutninger om å fortsette fossil utvinning, oljearbeiderne de bare jobber i den jobb som er tilgjengelige for de”

170 Norwegian Bokmål: “et nyansert perspektiv på olje og gass”

tacit agreement: to agree to disagree. The last time this agreement had been broken was during the national conflict about issuing new oil drilling licenses in the ecologically vulnerable Lofoten, Vesterålen and Senja – popularly dubbed LoVeSe in the campaigns to either oppose or support oil exploration in the area. An archipelago of outstanding natural beauty, LoVeSe is one of Norway's main tourist destinations with dramatic peaks that dip right into the sea. The area is also the main spawning ground for Atlantic cod and a potential oil spill could have devastating consequences for the fishing industries on top of the hazards caused by emissions from the increased oil production from new oil and gas fields.

As part of her continuous climate and environmental engagement, Nora took part in local mobilisations in Stavanger to oppose oil in the LoVeSe area. Though her grandfather disagrees with Nora about the future of the Norwegian oil industry, he is usually proud of Nora's engagement and the fact that she writes opinion pieces for local newspapers. During the conflict over LoVeSe, Nora went to Oslo to participate in a big demonstration against oil exploration in the area. Upon hearing her plans to join the Oslo demonstration, her grandfather explicitly told her that he fundamentally believes oil is a good thing for Norway because of the wealth and welfare state and that he could not support Nora in working against new oil exploration. The double-loss that the activists are trying to navigate is apparent in Nora's rejection of my suggestion to do an interview with her grandfather as well as in her decision to participate in the Oslo demonstration. Nora is simultaneously afraid to harm or even lose her relationship with her grandfather, yet also afraid to lose the nature she loves and on which she perceives the thriving and flourishing of herself and future generations to depend on.

When sharing earlier iterations of this chapter at seminars and conferences, I have often visualised the disagreement between Nora and her grandfather and the different positions they inhabit by using two pictures which I will briefly describe here. One picture (see t) is a screenshot from an Instagram story that a friend and fellow activists of Nora's posted during a digital climate strike in the spring of 2020 when in-person protests were not possible due to the coronavirus pandemic. The picture portrays her holding a cardboard sign showing a bright green and blue drawing of Earth in the form a globe with the European and the African continents at its centre. At the bottom of the picture, a dash of white indicates Antarctica. There is no equivalent at the top of the globe to indicate the Arctic, because black oil is running down the globe, covering the top third of green and blue. The oil comes from a large, black oil platform placed on top of the globe. Below large capital letters in black territorialise the platform and bring home the point by spelling out: "Norwegian oil is boiling the globe."¹⁷¹

The other image (see Figure 15) is a photograph portraying a family outing to view a platform being towed to sea. The image was exhibited at the Petroleum Museum as part of a temporary show about private photographs of the oil industry and is composed by different shades of blue and green colours. An oil platform is positioned in about the same place as on the cardboard sign. However, this platform is not leaking black oil. Majestically throning over the small mountain, Lifjellet, and its foothill, Lihalsen, at the mouth of the Gandsfjord in Stavanger, the platform is being towed to sea by a series of tugboats that appear minuscule compared to the vastness of the structure. The journey of the platform probably started at Jättåvågen a bit further into the fjord, where big concrete foundations for the platforms used to be moulded. It is a sunny day and a small child wearing only a diaper is playing in the grass among the adults who look towards the platform and the tugboats.

171 Norwegian Bokmål: "norsk olje koker kloden"



Figure 14 screenshot of an activist's Instagram post



Figure 15 A photograph exhibited at the Norwegian Petroleum Museum as part of the 'Fotografisk Hukommelse' (Photographic Memory) exhibition in 2021

I show and describe the screenshot and the family photograph because they provide telling visual comparisons into the lived experiences that form Nora and her grandfather's relationship to the oil industry and the risks and dangers they perceive amid climate activism which fuels their disagreements. Like the adults portrayed on the family photo, Nora's grandfather could have been at a family outing to watch the platform being towed to sea. Nora's parents could have been the toddler playing in the grass. The oil industry forms part of the history and the identity of the people of Stavanger, and thus climate change and youth activism cuts deeply into this intricate entanglement.

As I have discussed in Chapter 1, the oil industry's arrival in Stavanger in the early 70's created unprecedented wealth and social mobility. Watching a platform being towed to sea was well worth a family outing. When the construction of a platform was completed it was cause for celebration and pride for the whole city and it became a custom that people would gather to wave goodbye to the platforms when they were towed to sea (Myhre 2010, 8–9). Nora's grandfather, who thinks that oil is fundamentally a good thing for Norway has contributed to and lived through all that the oil industry changed in Stavanger and Norway at large. He has probably waved at several platforms, constructed or worked on them and appreciating their ability to shield him from the storms and waves in the North Sea. He has seen how his own and other people's lives gained more opportunities and how Norway went from being the poorest of the Scandinavian countries to becoming the richest. A fear of losing these general improvements in society may also come with having experienced this vast social transformation. What will Norway be without the oil? Nora's grandfather has dedicated his life to being part of building something he perceives as good for Norway - the wealth and the welfare state. Things that he perceives are at risk of being lost entirely if Nora and Norway turn away from oil.

Nora challenges the continuation of her grandfather's perception through her focus on how oil poses a risk to the preservation of a secure natural environment locally and a stable climate globally. The poster portraying Norwegian oil boiling the planet shows the oil as a global hazard calling for protests and changes, not pride, celebrations and family outings. While her grandfather thinks of what is good for Norway, Nora's frame of reference is oriented beyond the national. The dangers portrayed on the poster as well as through her participation in the protest in Oslo relate to the fear of losing a liveable environment, as I have discussed in Chapter 3 - of losing the future altogether. Agreeing to disagree becomes the way for Nora and her grandfather to remain in relation to one another despite their radically different perceptions of what goodness entails.

Nora and her grandfather's disagreement and my elaboration on it through the two pictures portraying oil platforms sets up two positions that seem impossible to bridge. Yet, I argue, through the activists' work of caring, disagreement and conflict are downplayed and made manageable through for example agreements to agree to disagree. The anthropological literature about Norway and Scandinavia attends to avoidance of conflict and difference (Gullestad 1989; 1992; Gopal 2004; Linnet 2011) as well as consensus culture (see for example Vike 2018; Horst and Irwin 2010; Christiansen and Petersen 2001) as central cultural locus points. It is possible to read the agreement to agree to disagree as an instance of a culturally typical conflict avoidance aimed at keeping the peace, albeit with the cost of missing the transformative potential of addressing issues head on. However, I suggest, such an analysis would flatten or even altogether miss the activists' care. This care takes place precisely *through* conflict avoidance, not despite it, and takes the form of agreeing to disagree in this example.

The anthropologist Paul Heywood attends to what it means to ‘agree to disagree’ in an anthropology of ethics perspective through his work about disagreements between Catholic church organization and LGBTQ+ activists in Italy. Heywood argues that “agreeing to disagree, or finding affinities over difference [...] is a crucial aspect of ethics across borders” (Heywood 2015, 340). Heywood describes how the conversation between the church organisation and the activists failed and suggests that this failure occurs because the parties fail to agree to disagree “not by erasing difference but by agreeing that things are different and how” (Heywood 2015, 341). What Heywood crucially argues is that acknowledgement of difference is central to having a meaningful dialogue across, what he calls borders and in the context of Stavanger I call radical disagreements. Based upon this understanding from Heywood, I wonder if agreeing to disagree is perhaps a richer practice than it might appear at first sight and what there might be to learn from taking this practice seriously as an example of care, based in the ethico-political obligation to care for their local community despite radical disagreement?

Humour as deflection

While Nora declined to talk with me together with her grandfather, the activist Tiril and her father, who works for an oil and gas company agreed to meet me. I introduced Tiril and father in Chapter 2 as well and return to their relationship here in more detail. Earlier Tiril had confided that though she generally thinks her father is a sensible person who she can talk to about her concerns and frustrations about climate change and political inaction, she did wish that her father did not work for an oil company. “I am not ashamed of it,”¹⁷² Tiril said, “but I’m also not proud,”¹⁷³ adding that she does understand it is not straight forward to just find another job. What is it like to be in relation in the emotional space of “not ashamed” and “also not proud”? What does care look like in that space? Through the following example, I suggest deflection through humour as one answer to this question.

As we sat around the kitchen table in Tiril’s family home, the dog curled up in the corner taking a rest after its overexcited greeting, I asked Tiril’s father to talk about what it is was like to be the parent of a climate activist while for his entire career working in one of Norway’s biggest oil and gas companies. He fell silent at the question. Tiril and I looked at him a bit apprehensively. Then Tiril’s father said he wanted to tell me a story. One day a few years back he came home from work, walked up the stairs and into the combined living room and kitchen where we were currently talking. Pointing to the big comfy couch, he explained to me that his two daughters, Tiril and her sister were sat there. He looked at them and as he said it, he looked at me and Tiril, performing an overly serious face and narrated how he told his children that he was done working for Statoil. In his account, the children jumped out of the couch and hugged him exclaiming cries of joy. Amid the spontaneous celebration, he told them that from now on he was working for an energy company called Equinor. It was the day when Statoil changed its name to Equinor and went from being solely an oil and gas company to a broader energy company.

172 Norwegian Bokmål: “jeg skammer meg ikke over det”

173 Norwegian Bokmål: “men jeg er ikke stolt heller”

From his place at the kitchen table, Tiril's father smiled at the joke and said that naturally Tiril and her sister were disappointed. We all laughed as Tiril's father recalled that moment. In a more serious tone of voice, Tiril's father added that he does not see realistic alternatives to his current job. The working environment is good, he has known several of his colleagues for many years, the job is nice, stable, and he feels too old to make a career change. Looking at Tiril he said, "so it's probably not going to happen any time soon,"¹⁷⁴ adding that getting another job might also mean the family would have to move out of the house since it would be difficult for another company to match his salary. I asked if he would prefer another job or if he saw a realistic alternative. If a realistic alternative existed, he replied, he would prefer to work for a company that was purely about renewable energy.

At first Tiril's father did not know how to answer to my question. As I have ethnographically shown through the thesis, silence often occurs when conversations turn to the relational implications of climate activism and to oil and gas in Stavanger. Like the silence in Chapter 3 that accompanied Frida's gloomy prediction that everything but the planet itself would eventually die because of climate change, the silent absence from the conversation I did not have with Nora and her grandfather, and the silence that accompanied Nora's statement that XR's actions would not do in Stavanger. These silences form the underpinnings of disagreements that are difficult to touch upon through conversation because they are complicated and potentially upsetting to sustaining relations. In the case of Nora and her grandfather, being in relation is sustained through avoidance. Tiril and her father's relationship is sustained through humour as exemplified when an uncomfortable or even painful issue arises like two daughter's wishes for their father to not work for an oil and gas company. The joke, as well as the subsequent retelling of it touches a sore subject in light way. It is possible to read Tiril's father joke as an ill-spirited attempt at making fun of his children's climate and environmental engagement, but I am convinced that such a reading would be misplaced and miss the opportunity to take seriously the dilemma that both Tiril and her father are grappling with and how they are trying to find ways of holding the discomfort of disagreement as part of their relationship. Addressing this dilemma through humour, I suggest, acts as a mode of care that makes it possible for them to touch what is difficult in a way where they can deflect head on conflict through laughter.

Displacing responsibility

An exchange between Frida and her mother, whom Frida at the podium in Oslo emphasised is not a bad person, makes the importance of staying in relation further apparent. This conversation took place as part of the interview I carried out with Frida and her mother and which I have already introduced excerpts from in previous chapters.

"You've never been annoyed with me because I work with this [oil and gas],"¹⁷⁵ Frida's mother said to Frida while looking at her closely. "No,"¹⁷⁶ Frida responded swiftly and with certainty, "because it makes no sense to be mad at the oil workers, they just take the jobs that are available."¹⁷⁷ "But,"¹⁷⁸ said Frida's

174 Norwegian Bokmål: "Så det kommer nok ikke til å skje med det samme"

175 Norwegian Bokmål: "Du har aldri vært irritert på meg fordi jeg jobber med det?"

176 Norwegian Bokmål: "Nei"

177 Norwegian Bokmål: "fordi det gir ingen mening å være sur på oljearbeiderne, de tar bare den jobb som er der"

178 Norwegian Bokmål: "Men"

mom, “if I really had a backbone, if I really had my principles in order, my moral compass levelled, then I would not have a job like this. Then I would cut my salary in half and...”¹⁷⁹, “but you don’t want to be a teacher”¹⁸⁰ Frida interrupted. “I was a teacher for a short while,”¹⁸¹ Frida’s mother explained while gesturing apologetically towards me, explaining how she did thrive as a teacher. “You quickly enter a job like that [in oil and gas] here.”¹⁸² she concluded. “It’s just like that,”¹⁸³ Frida responded matter-of-factly, “if you want a good job and have a natural science background, then that is what is here [jobs in the oil companies], and I have never thought that it is the people working in those companies who are the problem.”¹⁸⁴ Frida continued, “if you were a politician then it would have been completely different for me, because then you would have had so much more power. I don’t think individuals have so much power in big companies.”¹⁸⁵

In this exchange between a parent working in an oil-related business and her child who is a climate activist and deeply concerned about the future, the child takes on the role of consoling carer, comforting the parent. The child comforts by assuring her parent that she is not mad at her for being entangled in a sector that contributes heavily to that which the child fears and in which the child itself is also entangled through financial dependency on her parent. The paradoxical nature of this exchange is addressed through Frida’s mother’s metaphorical moral compass and what she might do if it “was completely levelled.” A metaphorical compass that is completely levelled can refer to several things. For example, it could refer to an idealised and unattainable world without bills to pay, which is not a realistic world given the current situation. Furthermore, is not a deep failure to not have your moral compass “completely levelled,” as this could only be the case in an unrealistically ideal world. However, the metaphor could also refer to a real sense of failure as a parent and a person, based on an impossible compromise between conviction and comfort. I am not sure which meaning the metaphor has to Frida’s mother as I did not ask her to elaborate and her statement was hardly finished before Frida interrupted to reassure her.

What does this unwillingness to linger within what is difficult convey about the kind of activism the Stavanger activists see as desirable? A look at anthropological takes on Norwegian social relations is useful to think through this question. The anthropologist Marianne Gullestad (1992; 1989) points out a propensity towards over-emphasising sameness and under-emphasising difference in social relations in order to maintain the cultural ideal of equality¹⁸⁶. An equality premised on sameness (Gullestad 1992, 174). What room does the idea of equality as sameness leave for conflict? According to Gullestad, “sameness does not always mean actual sameness, but a style which brings out and emphasizes what is common to the parties” (Gullestad 1989, 193). Conflict avoidance is thus central to the ‘equality as sameness’ ideal, which

179 Norwegian Bokmål: “hadde jeg virkelig ryggrad, hadde jeg virkelig hatt prinsippene på plass, moralsk kompass i lodd, da hadde jeg jo ikke jobbet såen. Da hadde jeg halvert lønnen min og ...”

180 Norwegian Bokmål: “men du har jo ikke lyst å være lærer”

181 Norwegian Bokmål: “Jeg har vært lærer i en kort periode”

182 Norwegian Bokmål: “Du kommer veldig raskt inn i en jobb såen jobb her”

183 Norwegian Bokmål: “Men sådan er det jo”

184 Norwegian Bokmål: ”vil du ha en god jobb og er du realfagutdannet så er det mye det som er her, og jeg har aldri tenkt at de de som jobber i et såen selskap som er problemet.”

185 Norwegian Bokmål: ”Hadde du vært politiker så hadde det vært noe het annet for meg, for da hadde du hatt så sykt mye makt. Jeg tror ikke at enkeltpersoner har så mye makt i en stort selskap”

186 Here I repeat the footnote from Chapter 1, where I state that The anthropologist Marianne Lien (2001) has pointed out that equality as sameness is a more prominent cultural property of Southern Norway and thus does not hold equal significance to all of Norway, however as my research takes place in Southern Norway, I find it a fitting reference.

according to Gullestad, characterises Norwegian social relations. If differences are felt to be too extreme, people will most likely withdraw from the relationship to avoid the “considerable pain and anxiety” associated with situations where people find no way around confrontation and direct articulation of conflict (Gullestad 1992, 193). Following Gullestad, it is possible to understand the activists’ avoidance of direct conflict as expressions of a cultural propensity to draw forward points of agreement and avoid direct conflict and confrontation, since conflict holds the risk of either feeling the need to avoid people they love or deal with the “considerable pain and anxiety,” as Gullestad puts it, of direct confrontation.

Part of the answer to my question is that family and kin relationships matter to the activists. Their care to a large extent is about caring for and maintaining these kin relationships and the presence of a historic legacy of oil in Stavanger makes practicing care through conflict avoidance an important aspect of maintaining these relationships. This work of caring is vital for staying in relation within the context of the double-loss that the activists must navigate – losing the future and losing their community. When Frida places the power to change things with politicians and not with workers in big companies, she displaces responsibility and thereby creates a space where she and her mother can be in relation to one another without conflict by over-emphasising agreement and under-emphasising disagreement. I see the work that goes into creating this space as central to this caring form of activism.

Discussion

A caring and implicated activism

In the previous section, I laid out three modes of caring that the activists employ to manage disagreement while attending to the personal; agreeing to disagree, deflection through humour and displacing responsibility. These strategies share a tendency with the balancing acts between concreteness and abstraction, proximity and distance that I laid out in section 1 of this chapter. They all approach conflict sideways rather than head on. What does this avoidance of confrontation say more broadly about climate activism in Stavanger? I now explore this question in the following discussion.

Distance and implication

Kari Norgaard’s (2011) work provides a comparative entry point into this discussion. In her study about climate change, emotions and everyday life in a Norwegian village, Norgaard argues that the people in the village avoided talking in depth about climate change because they “want to protect themselves,” which results in a comforting distance from their involvement in global climate change (Norgaard 2011, 63,71; see also 2006). While aspects of this cushioning avoidance might also be at play in contemporary Stavanger, my ethnographic material suggests that the young Stavanger activists are aware of their own and their community’s implication in contributing to the climate crisis, and that they are highly motivated to create change that will contribute to lessening the effects. However, rather than engaging in spectacular acts of civil disobedience, they engage in a strategy for creating change that has care for their community and family members at its heart.

A substantial dilemma forms from the Stavanger activists' position. They are protesting something in which the dream scenario will result in their community losing their privileged position in Norwegian culture and at a global scale. The central tension they navigate is between losing their future and losing their present community. They must attend to the risk of losing their present relationships whilst navigating their will to change their present for the survival of future on both a local and global level. As such, they are entangled in their activism in a way where they stand to potentially lose one either way. I think there is an important lesson to learn in how these young actors in climate activism strive for creating change with a sense of care for the realities of the present, whilst also not losing sight of the potential harmful realities of the future that this present has the power to manifest. I see the youth climate activists in Stavanger as an instance of a highly implicated activism that differs from the locally detached activism of XR in Oslo. While both types of activism are needed as part of the precarious predicament of an accelerating global climate crisis, I propose that the caring and implicated activism that the young activists in Stavanger carry out should not be overlooked in a romanticising fascination with the spectacular and performative activism such as XR's.

I wish to be clear that I am by no means arguing that civil disobedience and performative acts of resistance are not important. I am arguing for the importance of not dismissing the activism of the young people in Stavanger as toothless because of its eagerness to avoid creating resistance through confrontation. Their activism seeks to lessen the already existing resistance towards the environmental movement and its aim of phasing out Norwegian oil and gas production.

How do you stay connected and related to someone who you radically disagree with on a matter of great importance to you? Sometimes breaking away and pausing or ending relationships can be necessary. Sometimes it is possible to stay in the mess of the disagreement and continuously grapple with what to do. I suggest that the three modes of caring, agreeing to disagree, deflection through humour and displacing responsibility alongside the balancing of getting concrete, but not too concrete, is part of this work of staying and that the work of staying grows out of caring.

Refiguring the future

Drawing from the activists' own reflections that growing up in Stavanger has provided them with a nuanced perspective on oil and gas production, I have conceptualised their activism as caring and implicated. They are embedded in the benefits of the oil production they seek to change and cannot renounce this implication. What does their care and implication mean for the ways in which they seek to bring about change and how they view the relationship between change and the future, or in other words, the theory of change they work from?

To unravel this theory of change I compare the activists' conceptualisations of how to create change with central anthropological studies of activism in the Global North. The following paragraphs attend to the ways in which this literature conceptualises the relationship between activism and the change it wants to enact with particular focus on the role of the future.

Prefiguration is a central concept in the anthropological studies of activism in attending to how activism conceptualise and attempt to act upon the future (Maeckelbergh 2009; Graeber 2009; Juris 2008;

Polletta 2002). In her study of decision-making processes in the alter globalisation movement, Marianne Maeckelbergh (2009) argues that the activists' processes of direct democracy is a prefiguration of their desired future society. Maeckelbergh defines prefiguration as a practice in which the activists she is both describing and actively engaged with are "always trying to make the process we use to achieve our immediate goals an embodiment of our ultimate goals, so that there is no distinction between how we fight and what we fight for, at least not where the goal of a radically different society is concerned." (Maeckelbergh 2009, 66). Prefiguration also plays a prominent role in Jeffrey Juris' (2008) analysis of activist networks in Spain. Through their networking practices, Juris argues the activists "prefigure the utopian worlds they are struggling to create" (Juris 2008, 9).

Common across both Maeckelbergh and Juris' analyses is the view that activism seeks to bring about change by enacting alternative spaces in which the repressive structures that the activists seek to change do not exist. The activists therefore place themselves outside that which they seek to change. The Stavanger activists' strategy for creating change stands in contrast to such analyses of activists as actors from the outside. Rather than dismantling oppressive structures, the activism in Stavanger is about tending to and caring for a complex social reality that needs to be both maintained and repaired. What I propose this conveys is an activism that hinges on constructing a good future through what is already good in the present, a balancing act between the need for change and care for that which needs to change. I understand the activists to be working from an ethico-political obligation (Puig de la Bellacasa 2011, 90); to practice activism in a way that does not put the realities of the present in brackets through prefiguration. Their ethico-political obligation instead acknowledges their relationship to and dependence on the realities of their present situation, and work intentionally through this relationality in their pursuit of social change.

Stine Krøijer's work about left-radical activists in Northern Europe proposes another conceptualisation of the relationship between activism and the future. Krøijer argues that prefiguration does not leave adequate room for attending to "the radically open and indeterminate elements of activist practices," because it places too much emphasis on intentional agents striving to change the future by enacting it in small bits in the present (Krøijer 2020, 27). Krøijer's issue with privileging intentional agents is that her ethnography shows a hesitance towards intention on the part of the activists. This hesitance originates in that the intention is dangerous. When engaged in illegal actions being able to identify who initiated the action enables prosecution of that person (Krøijer 2020, 102). Therefore, intention is almost always attempted to be distributed to objects, for example big puppets, used as part of activist actions (Krøijer 2020, 103).

To capture the indeterminate and open character of the future, Krøijer suggests the concept 'figuration,' emphasising that the form rather than the intent is key to how the future is enacted in left-radical politics (Krøijer 2020, 3, 4–5). Krøijer proposes "to think of politics as mediated manifestations of intentionality, which means that it is the forms that materialize intentions and produce time" (Krøijer 2020, 6). Confrontation is central to Krøijer's argument. Confrontation, understood as a bodily experience of "moment[s] of confrontation during direct actions or the sense of strength in an encampment" is the locus point of this perception of the future (Krøijer 2020, 214). During confrontation the activists are able to give "determinate form to an indeterminate future" (Krøijer 2020, 3).

Centrally, to Krøijer's use of figuration as a conceptualisation of the relationship between activism and the future is the perspective that capitalism, the main object of the activists' protest and resistance, has no outside of it. More precisely Krøijer argues that "through an activist optic, capitalism has nothing

‘outside’ or ‘after’ it, but may potentially embody and offer interstices of other times and worlds” (Krøijer 2020, 5). Revolution is therefore not the end goal of the activists of Krøijer study, rather their figurations of the future occasionally create new worlds “within the shell of the old” (Krøijer 2020, 59), not in a linear movement towards a better world, but in occasional bursts of action.

In Stavanger however, the issue seems neither to be one of prefiguring the desired future in the present, nor of occasionally arriving at a form ripe for figuring alternative futures through confrontation. The crucial difference, I propose, is that for the Stavanger activists the future is not a desired state at all. Rather, as I have argued in Chapter 2 and expanded upon in this chapter, the future to the young activists is a site of loss already affectually present and felt in the body. To preserve the future from loss requires repairing in the present. Climate activism in Stavanger is about tending to and caring for a complex social reality whilst maintaining social relations despite radical differences in opinion. Rather than hinge the desired future in the present through prefigurative practices, the Stavanger activists work from a desire to build upon what they see as good in the present with what needs to change.

Krøijer writes about prefiguration as etymologically derived from “*pre* (‘before’) and *figurare* (‘to form or shape’)” (Krøijer 2020, 27). I propose that the Stavanger activists are rather trying to *reform* or *reshape* the future. This is not by prefiguring the future through enacting it in small instances in the present, nor by figuring it through repetition of form that enacts another world in the shell of the old. Instead, it is by practicing care in the present with the aim of *refiguring* the future. I add the preposition ‘re’ to ‘figuration’ to express a bringing back or giving of new life as in *revive* or *renew*. Refiguration means that the activists are trying to bring the future back to a less catastrophic shape. They do so by practicing relational caring in the present through which they hope to enable a *refiguration* of the future in which disaster is avoided or diminished.

This refiguration takes place through the theory of change: that change happens through social relations and that caring for these relations in the present despite radical differences is an important part of creating the desired future. This theory of change is based on an activism that acknowledges and works from the premise that it is relationally intertwined with that which it seeks to change. I suggest that the concept of refiguration growing out of an active awareness of being implicated and a caring form of activism makes an important contribution to contemporary understandings of non-radical activism that have gained popularity in recent years with the emergence of the youth climate movement.

The caring activism in Stavanger I have portrayed in this chapter is linked to both generation and affect through a reciprocal relationship of care premised on middle class imaginaries of family, love and kinship. This approach is then extended beyond the family out into the local community. What is interesting is how the three modes of caring show it is the young activists who most actively practice this care in intergenerational relationships. The young activists are showing a high degree of care and understanding for their parents. This care is perhaps disproportionate in mutuality considering that the activists do most of the work to avoid the potential conflicts of attending a demonstration or to affirm that working in the oil and gas industry does not make one a bad person or parent. This point brings me to a final discussion about the darker sides of care (Martin, Myers, and Viseu 2015).

Valuing harmony over confrontation

Feminist STS scholars have suggested to pay attention to “care’s darker side: its lack of innocence and the violence committed in its name” (Martin, Myers, and Viseu 2015, 627). They point out the need to “unsettle care” and the tendency to conflate “care with affection and attachment and positing positive feelings with a political good” (Murphy 2015, 721). This scholarship suggests that caring can also neutralise or gloss over injustices and fade important issues into the background. What might be neutralised or placed in the background through the care that the activists show in forms of public acts such as street art and how they relate to their parents and their larger community? What does their inclination towards balance and harmony do?

The valuing of harmony over conflict is the central object of study in the anthropologist Laura Nader’s work about ‘harmony ideology’ (Nader 1990; 1997). Nader argues for the need to analytically unpack “ideas of harmony” (Nader 1990, 291) and does so through an ethnographic exploration of the proposed harmonious nature of the legal system of the Zapotec village Talea in Southern Mexico. Nader asks why the Zapotec think that “a bad compromise is better than a good fight” (Nader 1990, 1). In answering her question, Nader proposes that “harmony ideology in Talean society today is both the product of nearly 500 years of colonial encounter and a strategy for resisting the state’s political and cultural hegemony” (Nader 1990, 2). Central to Nader’s analysis is that harmony is a mechanism of power, and she proposes that this type of power is by no means particular to the Zapotec but is applied across diverse cultural contexts. Harmony as a type of power does the work of making the issues of justice and rights, which are often ripe with conflict and confrontation, secondary to the ideal of achieving harmony (Nader 1990, 307). To describe this ideal, Nader proposes the concept ‘harmony ideology’ which refers to “an emphasis on conciliation, recognition that resolution of conflict is inherently good and that its reverse – continued conflict and controversy – is bad or dysfunctional, a view of harmonious behaviour as more civilized than disputing behaviour, the belief that consensus is of greater survival value than controversy” (Nader 1990, 2). These ideals of harmony also characterise the Scandinavian welfare context that the activists inhabit (Gullestad 1992; Jöhncke 2011), and the valuing of harmony and balance over confrontation and conflict are evident in the accounts I have shared from Stavanger. Following Nader, it is possible to understand the valuing of harmony over confrontation as the work of power, in which maintaining harmonious relations in the present makes the pressing issue of the climate crisis secondary. The darker side of caring in this perspective is that caring for the social relations in the present occurs at the expense of directly addressing the conflictual nature of phasing out oil and gas out of climate concerns.

While there is clear truth to Nader’s analysis, I do think that it too easily dismisses the theory of change from which I understand the activists to be working. Finding reflective and responsible ways of working from an acknowledgment of implication whilst also striving towards change is a crucial aspect of contemporary climate activism in high emission countries. The view from Stavanger offers one account of what such activism can look like. However, what Nader’s analysis helps articulate is the important point that a limitation of the activists’ theory of change is that it domesticates conflict.

My material proposes that activism has a different expression and different ideas about the future when the activists stand in close relationship to that which they desire to change. Confrontational activism is made possible by creating distancing images through caricatures such as the Oslo activists dressing up as

the oil industry and pouring oil over the naked body of a young activist. Such distancing images are downplayed in Stavanger as the polar bear and the small oil platform in the street artwork exemplifies. However, the polar bear is distancing in another way. Whilst it succeeded in not creating distance to the humanity of the people working in the oil industry, it created an image of the risks and dangers of climate change removed from the local environment. In this sense, the street art piece failed to account for the implication of Stavanger and opted for a harmony-inducing distance.

Concluding remarks

Through the pages of this chapter, I have laid out the case that the Stavanger activists work from the position of being implicated in that which they seek to change and that this implication results in activist strategies that are both careful to avoid resistance and full of care towards their families and larger community. A care premised on the ethico-political obligation (Puig de la Bellacasa 2011, 90) to strive for change without compromising the humanity and dignity of their oil-dependent community.

Contrary to anthropological accounts of activism that centres pre-figuration (Maeckelbergh 2009; Juris 2008; Graeber 2009; Polletta 2002) or figuration (Krøijer 2020) of the future as the strategy for enacting change, I have demonstrated that the Stavanger activists work from a theory of change premised on care for their local community. From this position, I have argued, the activists try to *refigure* the future, that is to give the future a new and less catastrophic shape. Drawing inspiration from literature about care (Puig de la Bellacasa 2011) and its critique (Martin, Myers, and Viseu 2015), I conceptualised this activism as a form of caring as well as implicated activism. By calling their activism implicated, I referred to the activists' ties to their local community and what that community stands to lose if the activists' ideal scenario were to come true and Norway were to phase out oil and gas production. The activists know that their daily lives are bound up with the wealth and jobs that oil produces and the vast upwards social mobility it has afforded Stavanger over the last 50+ years. They do not renounce this privileged position and how they are living from the stable prosperity made possible by a resource they greatly see as contributing to the devastation of the world through climate change.

On the scale of the city, this caring and implicated activism seeks to make the climate crisis concrete and present in Stavanger, but not too close in order to avoid alienating the community the activists are part of and desire to involve in the necessary changes they seek. On the scale of the family, the caring activism seeks balance through three modes of caring; agreeing to disagree, deflecting through humour and displacing responsibility. Throughout the level of the city and the level of family, the caring activism cultivates the ability of the activists to remain in relation to their local community with the hope of inducing change, whilst running the risk of neutralising the transformative potential of outright conflict.

CONCLUSION

“We’re planning a foam party with green foam, to, you know, signal that ONS is a greenwashing party,”¹⁸⁷ the activist Martin told me when I was back in Stavanger in August 2022. ONS (Offshore Northern Sea) is an annual oil expo in Stavanger, and after two years of various pandemic iterations, the expo was back to its usual in-person magnitude. Martin had been part of revitalising a local faction of Extinction Rebellion (XR), who were planning a greenwashing party at ONS. The expo focused on energy transitions under the theme ‘trust,’ indicating an invitation to trust the oil and gas industry to take the lead in a transition from fossil fuel to renewable energy. Even though they did not manage to produce green foam for the occasion, XR Stavanger threw their greenwashing party and marched through the expo wearing business attire and in a festive mood handed out flyers saying, “welcome to the greenwashing party,” listing sarcastic tips and tricks for greenwashing such as “be optimistic about technology so that you don’t need to change right now.”

Technological optimism seemed to be an essential part of the transition from fossil fuel to renewable energy that the oil expo revolved around. The highlight was a talk by Elon Musk, the founder of the luxury electric car brand Tesla. Musk’s visit to Stavanger created a lot of hype. For example, the local newspaper Rogaland’s *Dagsavis* described Musk as the “techno king” (Haaland 2022a), and in the small neighbouring city of Jørpeland, the two CEO’s of the electric vehicle charging firm Easee took the hype a step further. In their eagerness to have a business coffee with Musk, they created a video in which they had turned Jørpeland into a futuristic ‘Musk City’ with a bust of Elon Musk, underground Tesla tunnels and casual space rocket testing (see Figure 16) (Thomas 2022). Albeit jokingly, the video, called ‘One Coffee to change the World,’ relayed the very real sense of techno-optimism that seemed to saturate the oil expo. During Musk’s talk at ONS, activists from the newly-formed activist organisation Just Stop Oil, rung the fire alarm to amplify the deep crisis of the climate emergency and bring it to the attention of the ONS attendees (Haaland 2022b). They set off the alarms in the building where most reporters were watching a live stream of Musk’s talk. When the whole press corps were evacuating the building, they met a small group of activists presenting an appeal to stop all new oil exploration (Strand 2022). In the room where Musk was speaking, nobody was affected, all blissfully ignorant of the activists’ disruption.

187 Norwegian Bokmål: ”Vi planlegger et skum party med grønn skum for å, du vet, signalere at ONS er en grønnvaskingsfest”



Figure 16 Screenshot from Easee's Musk City video

Generation Carbon's caring and implicated activism

Trusting the development of technology to solve the problems of climate change is one of the most recurring responses to the climate crisis in a Norwegian context. Others respond through climate activism aimed at phasing out Norwegian oil and gas production. Both responses exist within what I have termed Stavanger's 'Generation Carbon.' The activist responses are what I have focused on throughout this dissertation; a situated exploration of what it entails to open and attend to the questions about change that technological optimism displaces into the future.

The central argument I have put forward in the dissertation is that experiences of loss and appeals to a tradition of Norwegian goodness are defining characteristics of Stavanger's Generation Carbon which enable a particular window of opportunity to act on the experience of loss through activism. This activism acknowledges and works from a premise of an inseparable relationship to and current benefit from that which it seeks to change. The theory of change this activism work from is that change happens through social relations, and that caring for these relations in the present despite radical disagreement is a pivotal method of providing a new shape to an undesired future of climate catastrophe. I have labelled this relationship between activism and the future as *refiguration* by comparing the Stavanger activists' practices to anthropological literature that attend to the relationship between activism and the future as *prefiguration* (Maeckelbergh 2009) and *figuration* (Krøijer 2020). The concept of refiguration grows out of my observation that in Stavanger the future is a site of loss, which is already present through the ways the activists experience information about climate change emotionally and affectually in their bodies. Through their caring and implicated activism, the Stavanger activists seek to act on this pre-emptive yet present loss in order to give the future a new shape, one where disaster is avoided or diminished. Through my conceptualisation of an implicated and caring activism working to refigure the future, I have contributed to scholarly understandings of activism in the Global North, which often centre activism that works from a position of antagonistic opposition (Maeckelbergh 2009; Graeber 2009; Juris 2012; Krøijer 2020), by adding a new

conceptualisation of the relationship between activism and the future based on the activist responses of Stavanger's Generation Carbon.

Through the name Generation Carbon, I propose that Stavanger's young climate activists' form part of a larger generation of young people growing up in fossil fuel-enabled societies marked by the increasing severity of the climate crisis, which has led to a recasting of oil as carbon and a need to figure out how to relate to oil through its carbon-polluting qualities. Inspired by Mannheim (1928) and Ortner's (1998) writing on generations as formed by a shared experience of historical crisis, I name the current generation of young people in Stavanger as Generation Carbon. In this dissertation, I have used the concept of Generation Carbon as a heuristic to assist me in thinking through the temporal dimensions of the relationship between fossil fuels, the metric of carbon and intergenerational dynamics. Though the scope of the concept is large, the claim I make it under is more modest. In Stavanger I have explored one situated and site-specific rendering of what Generation Carbon looks like and how they respond to their generational predicament from the vantage point of a place where oil has been seminal.

Stavanger's Generation Carbon currently inhabit the city together with a Generation Oil - for whom I understand the establishment and development of the oil industry along with the vast socioeconomic changes it has afforded to have been their generation's defining historical event. Throughout this dissertation, I have ethnographically shown the tensions between oil production and climate change, between conceptions of a profitable world and a liveable world, between Generation Oil and Generation Carbon, as they unfold in Norway's oil capital Stavanger. Specifically, I have shown these tensions as they play out relationally between a group of young climate activists who share a commitment to both phasing out Norwegian oil and gas out of climate concerns and a commitment to care for their local oil-dependent community. Finding reflexive and responsible ways of working from an acknowledgment of implication while striving towards change is a crucial aspect of contemporary climate activism in high-emission countries. Stavanger's Generation Carbon offers one account of what such activism can look like. I would love to see future ethnographies that explore other situated and site-specific renderings of what Generation Carbon look like and how they respond to the predicament of relating to fossil fuels through their carbon-polluting qualities.

My decision to centre the activist responses of Stavanger's Generation Carbon analytically and ethnographically has been inspired by the work of the anthropologist Gökçe Günel (2019) about the status-quo-preserving qualities of technical climate solutions in Masdar City, an eco-city in Abu Dhabi, and the sociologist Kari Norgaard's (2011) work on the social organisation of climate denial in a Norwegian village. Within this dissertation, I have taken point of departure in some of the empty spaces their analyses point to. Günel shows how trust in technologically-based climate solutions "offers a mode of response for dealing with climate change independent of ethical, moral and political entailments," thereby foreclosing questions about how to live (Günel 2019, 11, 10). Norgaard analyses how emotional work enables people to keep climate change at a distance and preserve a sense of reality in which "all is well" (Norgaard 2011, 148).

It is exactly this avoidance and distancing that I understand the Stavanger activists to be protesting and attempting to change. Across the chapters of the dissertation, I have detailed their efforts to rethink and re-evaluate the values and ways of life they have grown up with and the emotional work they carry out to keep the climate crisis present and alarming. In the following section, I account for how each of the chapters illuminates these discussions of values and ways of life through the lens of loss, goodness and activism.

Acting on loss and goodness through activism

Across all chapters, I have explored the activists' pursuit to phase out oil and gas without compromising the humanity and dignity of their local community. I have done so through a detailed analysis of the activists' social relations to the oil industry in Stavanger, their oil-dependent parents and larger local community through which the relationship between loss and goodness plays out. These social relations are characterised by the tension of radical disagreement and the desire to stay in relation, despite disagreement. For the activists, this tension results in different strategies for managing disagreement while struggling to be perceived as legitimate actors. In the following section, I review the four chapters of the dissertation and how they have contributed towards understanding Generation Carbon as marked by tensions between goodness and loss, and how this tension can be acted upon through activism. Loss played a central role across all four chapters, while goodness and activism oscillated between foreground and background. I further detail how each of the chapters have illuminated different aspects of the theory of change that I understand the activists to be working from.

In Chapter 1, goodness was in the foreground as I presented the stories people tell about how oil changed life for the better in Stavanger. I connected these stories to scholarship about Norwegian goodness (Tvedt 2006; Witoszek 2011; Anker 2020) and showed that the climate crisis causes contestation over both what goodness entails and what it requires of the inhabitants in Stavanger. I showed that oil has largely been understood in tandem with Norwegian goodness because oil directly benefits the entire national community through funding the welfare state. Loss figures in this chapter as the potential loss of the affluence and social mobility oil has brought to Stavanger, as well as the national welfare state oil has enabled. However, oil's social meaning and value can no longer be fully contained in this way because of the climate crisis. Therefore, Stavanger is currently marked by negotiations over how to realign with the regime of goodness, resulting in oil industry strategies to contain the overflow (Callon 1998) of oil's social meaning through narratives of 'clean oil,' and the activists' appeals to harness these overflows towards new ways of valuing and thinking about oil. Specifically, I argued that to the activists, oil's global carbon-polluting qualities make it impossible to accept oil as good based on its contribution to the common good of the national community. To sustain the national regime of goodness over time, the activists therefore see a need to expand it in space beyond the borders of the Norwegian nation. This entails the Norwegian state taking responsibility for carbon emitted from Norwegian oil when it is combusted abroad.

The chapter contributed towards an understanding of Stavanger's Generation Carbon by laying out the social stories that shape their window of opportunity to act on oil's carbon-polluting qualities through activism in Stavanger. By laying out the social environment in which Stavanger youth activism takes place, the chapter illuminated the context from which the activists' theory of change grows.

In Chapter 2, activism moved to the foreground as I explored how the social environment of Stavanger demands toughness and technoscientific facticity from the activists. I laid out the tension between the activists' emotional responses to facts about climate change, which I argued bring an undesired future into the present, with the activists' need to depersonalise facts as protection against age-based dismissals in order to be taken seriously. Through this tension, I showed how for the young Stavanger activists, emotions and affect play an integral role in keeping the climate crisis present and urgent. However, the activists face dismissals from those in the oil industry who claim they are too young to be proper knowledge agents.

In their attempts to be taken seriously, the activists find that they must downplay their experience of the climate crisis as deeply personal and emotional in their interactions with their local oil-dependent social environment.

Chapter 2 contributed to the understanding of Stavanger's Generation Carbon by showing that addressing oil as carbon in the social environment of Stavanger requires both carefulness and toughness in the form of technoscientific facticity that protect the activists from age-based dismissals. The chapter further shows that from the locality of Stavanger, emotional work is required to keep the climate crisis present and alarming. For the activists the future is already present as a site of loss. This sense of loss is the driver behind the activists' attempts to refigure the future through caring for their social relations in the present.

In Chapter 3, goodness came to the forefront. I showed that the activists question the welfare state and Norwegian goodness through their unease and hesitation towards having children, and by extension, fulfilling the welfare state's expectation that its citizens should reproduce. Through a conversation with queer theory about child figures (Edelman 2004; Sheldon 2016; Kverndokk 2020), I analysed the child as a way to make connections between the past, present and future. Loss figured prominently in Chapter 3 through the activist's stories about loss and what they understand to be at stake in relation to climate change. That the child is lost to the future and the future is lost to the child. By this I mean that the activists experience that the future as a condition for social life is deeply imperilled due to the climate crisis, and that if climate change radically alters the natural environment in which future children can grow up, the people these future children will grow into will also be dramatically different. Specifically, they will lose the possibility of developing the humility and ability that spending time outdoors in the mountains, valleys and fjords is understood to provide in Norwegian culture. Through the activist's stories that centre around the loss of the natural environment, I argued that their experience of loss is premised on their investment in the good life that the welfare state promises them and a nascent realisation that there is a limit to what their investment can deliver.

Chapter 3 showed how the experience of loss that characterise the activists of Stavanger's Generation Carbon creates cracks in their trust in the goodness of the welfare state due to its inability to adequately counter the risks and dangers that climate change poses to Norwegian nature. Activism itself was in the background as the chapter focused on the risks, dangers and sense of loss that make activism necessary, whilst also focusing on how the activists' investment in the welfare state means they struggle to completely disconnect themselves from it. Chapter 3 related to the theory of change by arguing that the activists' investment in the welfare state makes it hard for them to imagine radically different kinds of kinship and relatedness, whilst also holding a potential for counter power. Thereby the chapter outlined the limitations to the activists' theory of change which Chapter 4 returns to.

In Chapter 4, activism again moved to the fore. The chapter explored the activism that the activists see as possible in Stavanger, paying particular attention to how the activists' local environment poses limitations. Loss featured in the chapter as the activists' dilemma between losing the future and losing their ties to and the affluence of their local oil-saturated community. In attending to this dilemma, the analysis took point of departure in an analytical framework of care (Puig de la Bellacasa 2011). Building on Chapter 2, I argued that the activists' practices are not only careful, but also, full of care. Through examples about how the activists seek balance in their critique of oil and gas production, I argued that the activists work from the theory of change; that social change happens through relations, and a need to hinge ideas about the desired

future with ideas about the good in the present. This theory of change is premised on two factors. Firstly, the idea that attending to relations in the present can *refigure* the future. By refigure I mean to give the future a new shape from the catastrophic form it is currently understood to have and which the activists experience as already present through their affective responses to information about climate change. This concept of refiguration, I developed through a conversation with other anthropological conceptualisations of the relationship between activism and the future, namely Marianne Maeckelbergh's work on prefiguration (Maeckelbergh 2009) and Stine Krøijer's work on figuration (Krøijer 2020). Secondly, the theory of change is also premised on an activism that works from an acknowledgment that it is relationally intertwined and implicated in that which it seeks to change. Drawing on the concept of "harmony ideology" (Nader 1990; 1997), I further argued that a limitation of this theory of change is that it domesticates conflict.

Chapter 4 thus crystallised the theory of change from which the climate activists of Stavanger's Generation Carbon work by engaging with care as an analytical framework for understanding the activists' balancing acts to stay in relation with their local oil saturated environment despite radical disagreement about the future of Norwegian oil and gas.

Together, these chapters tell a story of unease and hesitation towards the present, propelled by a double sense of loss alongside a need to hinge ideas about the good in the future with ideas about the good in the present. Thus, the dissertation ethnographically depicts how phasing out oil and gas are just as much about social and cultural change as about dismantling or abandoning fossil infrastructure alongside the bureaucratic regulation such action requires. To discuss the implications of the relationship between loss, goodness and activism, I now attend to questions about how to lose well, power relations and the precariousness of privilege as well as the emergence of more confrontative activism. Finally, I return to the idea of keeping two thoughts in mind at the same time which I laid out in the introduction.

How to lose well?

Throughout this dissertation I have explored loss in multiple ways. Situated in an oil city that stands to lose its wealth and significance, I have shown that the activists worry about the vulnerability of the future, the risk of losing the future altogether, and having to manage the vulnerability of the present. More precisely, the dilemma of loss is that if the activists' dream scenario is realised and Norway phases out oil and gas production out of climate concerns it will have severe consequences for the flourishing of their local community. I have shown how the activists are very attentive to and show a great deal of care for their local community. Despite this care, the activists ultimately experience the need to choose one loss over another: the loss of the present over the loss of the future. From this priority emerges a central question: how to lose well? The anthropologist Anna Tsing and colleagues (Tsing et al. 2019; see also Haraway 2016) explore how to live and die well on a damaged planet as a central challenge in an age of a changing climate. Through my work in this dissertation, I suggest that from the vantage point of places like Stavanger and Norway that reap the benefit of globally climate polluting activities, 'how to lose well' is a timely addition and an empirical question for further research.

How to lose well? How to manage loss as part of change? How can change be attended to when it is not about the excitement and adventure of building new technology and industries, but about dismantling and

cleaning up after an era of immensely profitable oil and gas? These are important questions in an increasingly vulnerable world characterised by global climate change. Particularly in places that benefit from oil and gas production but are not yet on the front lines of experiencing the severe consequences of an increasingly climatically volatile world.

They are also difficult questions that Stavanger's *Generation Carbon* struggle with. From the vantage point of Stavanger, the dissertation has tracked shifts and changes in what it means to be and do good as a society in a time of a climate crisis. An ongoing definitional task that befalls Stavanger's *Generation Carbon*. I have argued that ideas about being and doing good are key for understanding the social and cultural dimensions of Norway's dilemma as an oil-producer in the climate crisis. While the multiple losses make activism necessary, goodness informs both the loss and activism required because it is also goodness itself that is at stake. In Chapter 3, I portray how the activists' grapple with the dawning realisation that they cannot keep having access to the same resources whilst retaining a liveable planet. This realisation results in a sense of unease and hesitation towards having children, and by extension, a questioning of the social reproduction of the welfare state. However, the activists' investment in the welfare state means that they struggle to imagine a wholly different society. The activists' articulations of loss are bound up with and gains meaning from the position of being invested in the Norwegian goodness that I analyse in Chapter 1 and 3. Still, in their unease and hesitation lies, I suggest, not only loss, but also a potential for crafting new ways of relating and practicing solidarity. A seed for beginning to imagine "not having all that we have", as Gerd put it in Chapter 3, not only as loss, but also as a potential for beginning the work of defining something else equally valuable.

Power relations and the precariousness of privilege

On one level, this dissertation tells a story about youth climate activism in the context of an affluent oil city in a welfare society in the Global North and the intense emotions that the dilemma of loss causes both the activists and their local community. On another level, it also tells a story about what Norgaard calls "the precariousness of privilege" which refers to "the darker consequences of the good life in a world where not all have that life" (Norgaard 2011, 208). The dissertation therefore tells a story about activism in the context of privilege and how a group of highly engaged young people grapple with their investments in the oil-fuelled welfare state's promise of a good life amidst a dawning realisation that the climate crisis means that this investment might not be able to deliver the life they want. My analysis thus adds a temporal aspect to Norgaard's definition of the precariousness of privilege, that to the young activists in Stavanger the good life of the present means that the good life cannot exist in the future. This is a disturbing realisation for people growing up in an affluent welfare society with a national tradition of 'doing good' and a promise to its citizens of a good life. Rather than completely rejecting dominant norms and values and placing themselves in a position of antagonistic opposition as I argued in Chapter 4, the activists work towards change from a position of acknowledgement of implication and care for their local, oil-dependent community. From this position the activists continuously negotiate their relationship to their local community and the national welfare state in the context of the climate crisis.

The precariousness of privilege does not annul the power relations that linger around the interpersonal level in which most of the dissertation plays out on. The interpersonal relations that I describe and analyse

throughout the chapters do not exist on an even playing field. The adults are part of a powerful industry with significant political connections and an impactful practice of lobbying (see Sæther 2017). The activists are young adults finding power in collective political action and affiliation with established environmental civil society organisations. In this relationship, the resources and power centred in the oil industry skews the power relation, delimiting the actions that feel available to the Stavanger activist.

The temporal dimension of the precariousness of privilege also holds implications for how to consider children and youth as actors in an age of climate change. Cultural images and discourses about children and young people are sites of cultural expression and negotiation, and paying attention to them has the potential to relay important information about societal norms and ideologies (Nguyen 2021, 2). Contemporary Euro-American children and youth are often described through terms like “digital generation,” “digital natives,”¹⁸⁸ “net generation,” “cyberkids,” and “iGen” that frame them as possessing an inherent digital and technological savviness positioning children and youth as capable of producing innovations that will contribute to the progress of capitalist society (Nguyen 2021, 4, 8; see also Iversen, Smith, and Dindler 2017). However, my research shows that youth are much more than a ‘digital generation,’ ready to innovate climate change away and make the problem of climate change disappear through developing innovative technological solutions. They are concerned about the future and preoccupied with living good lives in the predicament of the climate crisis. As I outlined in Chapter 2, the young Stavanger activists are not opposed to technological solutions per se. However, they argue that emission reduction plans that heavily depend on not yet mature technology like carbon capture and storage unfairly displaces the responsibility for solving the climate crisis onto children, youth and future generations who will be the ones who must develop this technology or live with the consequences of its failure. My ethnography about the activist responses of Stavanger’s Generation Carbon reveals a counter narrative to the technological control and optimism that characterises the story of a ‘digital generation.’ It shows a mismatch between narratives of technological control on the one hand and on the other hand narratives of climatic change that leads to crisis and chaos, where nature exceeds human control as increasing carbon emissions animate nature in dangerous ways.

A new and more confrontational activism?

An attentive reader might have wondered about that the activism at ONS 2022 does not look like the caring and implicated activism portrayed throughout the dissertation. And rightfully so. The greenwashing party and the ringing of the fire alarm together paint a picture that adds to the implicated and caring climate activism I have described and analysed in this dissertation as it signals a shift towards a harsher and more confrontational climate activism. When I first heard, it was shocking to me that the activists rung the fire alarm during Musk’s talk. I had been educated by my activist interlocutors about the need for a careful

188 I repeat my footnote from the introduction stating that I agree with critiques of terms like ‘digital natives’ and ‘digital generation’ that they gloss over the work of acquiring digital literacy (boyd 2014) and that children and youth can also be understood to be digitally at risk because they need guidance to navigate the digital world (Pedersen 2016). Further, particularly in the US American context in which the concepts originate, the use of ‘digital native’, works to gloss over what ‘native’ or ‘indigenous’ actually means in a settler colonial context and instead conceives of ‘digital natives’ as those who will create the future, while actual Indigenous peoples are understood to be stuck in the past (Byrd 2014).

and caring activism that does not seek to alienate. Why was it suddenly possible to do more provocative and performative activism in Stavanger? I propose a set of reflections that might be illuminating.

Firstly, XR and Just Stop Oil are new organisations operating in Stavanger. Most of my interlocutors were about to or had just left Stavanger in the summer of 2022 to study in other Norwegian cities. New organisations and new activists might mean a change of strategy. Secondly, ONS' theme of 'trust' and the invitation to trust the industry in the green transition can also be understood to be provocative – as the XR activists wrote in their greenwashing party flyers: “be optimistic about technology so that you don't need to change right now.” Perhaps the invitation to trust the industry was offensive enough to elicit a provocative activist response. Thirdly, most of my fieldwork took place during a global pandemic which ground most of the activities of the local activist community to a halt. Perhaps confrontational actions might have taken place had it not been for the pandemic. Still, XR did take performative and large-scale action in Oslo during this time. And as I detailed in Chapter 4, the impossibility of doing something similar in Stavanger originated in the nature of the social environment in Stavanger and the forms of action that feels available there, not pandemic consideration.

However, there was another dimension to the greenwashing party that I have not yet revealed. The local XR activists' intention to make an action at ONS made it onto the pages of the local newspaper Stavanger Aftenblad. It also reached the ONS organisers, Martin told me. The result was, much to Martin's surprise and dismay, that ONS invited XR to join ONS rather than protest outside of it. Considering that the head of the ONS youth program had pointed out in an article in Stavanger Aftenblad that she wanted young people to leave the oil expo as climate activists, the invitation might not be so puzzling after all (Brevik 2022). The industry seemed ready to embrace or even absorb climate activism and direct it towards new innovative climate solutions. Yet, the invitation put Martin and XR Stavanger in a dilemma of how to retain the protest if the activism was approved by that which it was supposed to oppose?

Keeping two thoughts in mind at the same time

Martin's dilemma calls to mind the recurring theme of keeping two thoughts in mind at the same time. As I write up this conclusion in September 2022, newspapers overflow with stories about how Russia will let Europe freeze over the winter by halting export of Russian gas to the EU (see e.g. Ellyatt 2022; Reuters 2022b). The current energy crisis caused by the energy scarcity following the energy-political implications of Russia's invasion of Ukraine adds increased complexity to the predicament of Stavanger's Generation Carbon. On the one hand, energy prices are increasing all over Europe, including Norway. On the other hand, the energy crisis offers a new way of reconciling Norwegian oil and gas production with the regime of goodness that I discuss in Chapter 1.

An advertisement from the Norwegian energy company Vår Energi, literally translating to Our Energy, on display in central Stavanger in August 2022 is a telling example of how this reconciliation can play out. The advertisement portrays a concrete foundation for an oil platform, a so-called condeep, amidst a stylised sea of gentle waves. Instead of an oil platform, the advertisement depicts a patchwork of landmark architecture from Stavanger on top of the condeep – the Petroleum Museum, the cathedral, the concert hall, the waterfront among other things (see Figure 17). “Our Energy is oil and gas. Value creation for

Norway – energy for Europe. Two thoughts in mind at the same time,¹⁸⁹ a text states above the patchwork of landmarks (see also Vår Energi n.d.). My interpretation of the advertisement is that it addresses a sense that there is something amiss in the vast profit that Norway gains from the skyrocketing prices for oil and gas that the war in Ukraine has caused. By suggesting the need to hold two thoughts in mind at the same time, the advertisement signals that Norway can profit from the situation *and* help Europe with energy supply. That the situation is win-win. The advertisement is a prime example of that in a context where energy scarcity leads to fear of energy rationing, Norwegian oil and gas production gets intertwined with supply politics in new and more urgent ways, reinstating Norway’s self-image of being good and further complicating phasing out the production.



Figure 17 commercial in Stavanger from the energy company Vår Energi depicting landmark architecture from Stavanger on top of a condeep.

The Vår Energi advertisement’s use of ‘keeping two thoughts in mind at the same time’ leads me back to where I started the dissertation and the school debate where Norway’s oil dilemma in the climate crisis was proposed as a question of keeping two thoughts in mind at the same time. The two thoughts that the young debater proposed were not the same two thoughts that Vår Energi now proposes. At the school debate, keeping two thoughts in mind at the same time was about the need to sustain Norwegian oil and gas production and the jobs it creates, while also acknowledging the need for ambitious climate policy. In the Vår Energi advertisement, instead it expresses the increased national value creation alongside energy security for Europe.

Perhaps the *form* of keeping two thoughts in mind at the same time is more important than the content of the two thoughts. Perhaps this form is after all also at play in how the Stavanger activists are able to

189 Norwegian Bokmål: ”Vår Energi er olje og gass. Verdiskaping for Norge – energi til Europa. To tanker i hodet samtidig”

partake in their activism. In their own way, the activists attempt to hold two thoughts in mind at the same time when they insist on holding their relationships to their oil-dependent local community close, whilst striving for phasing out Norwegian oil and gas. This ability complicates how the young climate activists can practice and articulate their activism; however, this double awareness enables them to do the work of acknowledging their own implication.

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