

Running head: THERE IS NO ALTERNATIVE

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THERE IS NO ALTERNATIVE
A Symbolic Interactionist Account of Swedish Climate Activists

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Abstract

Today, a climate crisis is immanent. In this thesis I have conducted nine semi-structured interviews with Swedish climate activists. I here answer four research questions: 1) how they construct the problem of climate change; 2) how they present the non-activists and their motivations; 3) how they present themselves and their own role; and 4) how strategies and reactions can be understood from the dynamic between these. To that end, I use symbolic interactionism as my theoretical framework, drawing on Goffman's self-presentation theory and the sociology of emotions. I find that activists describe climate change as springing out of the subjugation of nature under economics, with its following fossil fuel combustion and resource exploitation. Activists have awakened to this, whereas others are described as stuck in denial and occupied by a false consciousness. Activists present themselves as very understanding toward the others, avoiding ascribing guilt to individuals given that understanding climate change poses a big burden. I find that climate activists are in a position between having an understanding of the scientific problem while witnessing the social body's inertia to change accordingly. Springing from this tension, they narrate a world in crisis, which they seek to communicate through their activism, to awaken others. Activists describe feeling climate anxiety, although the term remains controversial. They present themselves as feeling impotent in the face of the challenges yet describe that there is no alternative to activism. Mass actions and individual sacrifices provide ways to ameliorate feelings of guilt and anxiety.

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Popular Abstract (Swedish)

Idag vet vi att klimatet håller på att förändras, och vi riskerar fatala konsekvenser. I denna studie undersöks svenska klimataktivister och deras förhållningssätt till sig själva, klimatproblemen och icke-aktivister, samt dynamiken däremellan. Detta genom att intervjua nio stycken klimataktivister.

I intervjuerna beskrivs klimatproblemen som å ena sidan att de ekonomiska lagarna är överordnade naturlagarna samt att vi därmed exploaterar naturen för mycket. Andra aktivister är mer politiska i sin framtoning och hävdar att kapitalism, tillväxt och profit är grunden i det hela. När aktivisterna beskriver hur de har kommit att förstå problemet kan man uttolka en uppvaknandeprocess. Icke-aktivister beskrivs i en förstående och förlåtande ton. Eftersom problemet med klimatet är så stort, både i emotionell och samhällsorganisatorisk mening, förstås icke-aktivister vara i förnekelse samt ha ett falskt medvetande, då klimatförändringarna beskrivs underminera hela ekonomin. På grund av detta menar aktivisterna att individuellt ansvar är otillräckligt, och att problemets *kollektiva* natur bör framhållas.

Huvuddelen av denna studie fokuserar på aktivisternas position som mellan två positioner. Å ena sidan presenterar att de har förstått problemet, men samtidigt ser de att det finns många som inte förstår eller inte kan ta till sig det, och därmed blir det arbete som ska motverka klimatförändringarna lidande. Som följd av detta vittnar klimataktivisterna om en värld i kris, och de beskriver hur man anpassar aktivismen till de andra för att försöka få dem att genomgå samma uppvaknandeprocess. Aktivism är på så vis en symbolisk handling som försöker kommunicera det tillstånd av kris vi befinner oss i. Många aktivister beskriver en känsla av hopplöshet, men är trots det aktiva, och framhåller att det inte finns något alternativ till att vara aktivist. Aktivisterna beskriver många negativa känslor såsom klimatångest och –rädsla, och jag tolkar uppvaknandeprocessen som en börda. Jag föreslår att denna känsla bör förstås ur interaktionen mellan problemet och de andras upplevda tröghet till förändring. För att hantera dessa känslor utgör massaktioner och individuella uppoffringar två sätt på vilka aktivisterna kan få utlopp för känslorna, samt känna sig som del av ett sammanhang.

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THERE IS NO ALTERNATIVE

Despite the extraordinary urgency of addressing the problem of climate change, the modern university, particularly the social sciences, is only beginning to rise to the challenge. Our technical understanding of the physical processes driving climate change has run far ahead of our explanations of the social and political processes driving these physical processes, and yet it is the social and political processes that must change (Wainwright & Mann, 2018, p. 130).

Research that investigates narratives involving climate change, heavily focuses on the reception-side of a message. That is, research is mainly guided by the quest to understand how a specific audience reacts to a story, how people can be persuaded or how the media fills its role as mediator between messenger and audience. While this is a very important and vital part of our understanding of the global crisis and while it considers the relevance of communication, it omits the role of the messenger. It seems that the place where stories about the fight against climate change originate, is somewhat of a blind spot in communication and social sciences research (Arnold, 2018, p. 43).

Table of Contents

1	Introduction.....	1
2	Purpose	2
3	Theoretical Framework	3
3.1	Social Psychology and Symbolic Interactionism	3
3.2	The Sociology of Emotions	5
3.3	Goffman’s Presentation of Self	5
4	Literature Review.....	7
5	Methods	10
5.1	Semi-Structured Interviews	10
5.2	Sample.....	11
5.3	Coding.....	12
5.4	Positionality, Ethics, and Limitations	13
6	Analysis.....	14
6.1	The Problem	15
6.1.1	Climate Change and its Origins.....	15
6.1.2	Narratives of Awakening	17
6.2	The Other.....	19
6.2.1	Denial and False Consciousness.....	19
6.2.2	Individual Responsibility and Its Discontents.....	23
6.2.3	The Gaze of the Others	25
6.3	Reactions and Strategies for Action.....	27
6.3.1	Narratives of Crisis.....	27
6.3.2	Activism and its Symbolic Significance	29
6.3.3	There Is No Alternative	30
6.3.4	Climate Anxiety.....	33
6.3.5	Awakening as a Burden	36
6.3.6	Sacrifices.....	38
6.3.7	On Practicing as You Preach.....	43
6.3.8	The Emotional Significance of Mass Actions.....	45
7	Concluding Discussion	48
8	References.....	51
	Appendix A: Interview Guide	54
	Appendix B: Translations of Interview Quotes	55

1 Introduction

It is hardly news to anyone that we stand on the brink of a devastating climate crisis. People are mobilizing worldwide to overcome the monumental problem that now stands before us: avoiding full-scale ecological collapse. This thesis studies climate activists, one of the groups central in the fight against climate change, from a social-psychological perspective to deepen the understanding of the response that is mobilizing. Having conducted nine in-depth interviews, a symbolic interactionist theoretical framework is used to analyze the empirical material.

Since 2001, we have experienced 18 out of the 19 of warmest years on record (NASA, 2019a). Last year, 2018, was a particularly volatile year in terms of natural disasters, which struck all over the world: the US, South Africa, the Nordic region, Japan and many more (Climate Council, 2019). 2018 was also a record high year in terms of carbon emissions, despite scientists having brought attention to the problem already in the 1980s (IEA, 2019). Climate change is not a future problem; it is *already* fueling extreme weather events. Scientists are clear about the sources of man-made climate change: it is the extraction of fossil fuels and compound economic growth (IPCC, 2018). We know with high confidence that “global warming is *likely* to reach 1.5°C between 2030 and 2052 if it continues to increase at the current rate” (IPCC, 2018, p. 6). It gets worse, as it will likely to get *even warmer* as the global population grows and more importantly uses fossil fuels while doing so (Scranton, 2015; Thompson & Kuo, 2012).

Many dramatic effects are projected to follow from this, such as dramatically rising water levels and the melting of glaciers from which many derive their drinking water, threatening hundreds of millions of people (Scranton, 2015; Thompson & Kuo, 2012). The list of problems we risk facing as a consequence of climate change knows no limits. Thus, let it suffice to say that it is by no means controversial to assert that climate change poses one of the biggest challenges to humanity to date. The scientific community speaks in a unison voice: climate change is happening and is threatening billions of people and ecosystems worldwide (NASA, 2019b). Radical changes are needed worldwide to counter this development. Although climate change is a natural scientific phenomenon, its source, the solutions, and the adaptations that follow are sociological in nature. Given that the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2018) locates the problem in fossil fuels and

growth and thus it is not “nature” that needs to change, it is society. That is why we need to understand people's response to climate change and the interactions around it. This thesis studies the activists' and their reactions, as well as the dynamic between activists and others.

2 Purpose

It is against this backdrop that this thesis finds its relevance. There is considerable reason to be worried about the future, and to consider how our societies can change to avoid a realization of apocalyptic future scenarios. In response to climate change, societies worldwide are mobilizing. The world has committed to limiting warming through the Paris agreement, *green* and *eco* are seemingly turning into ubiquitous prefixes, and 16-year-old Greta Thunberg has risen to world fame and received a Nobel Peace Prize nomination for her climate protesting. Climate activism is becoming more and more visible, as people are coming to terms with the stakes at hand. Climate change is on everyone's lips, though admittedly there is reason to question if sufficiently so.

The rationale for investigating climate activists is that they are controversial actors in this emerging struggle to make sure we steer clear of catastrophic climate change. That is why I look at their self-presentations, how they present others in relation to climate change and what they present to be the problem driving climate change, to get a deepened understanding of the movement from within. Part of the rationale for inquiring activists' self-presentations is to get a narrative account, which is also the way in which they recruit further members (Arnold, 2018). Although it seems self-evident that an understanding of the problems we face is integral to becoming active in the fight against climate change, it is not a sufficient explanation. Through understanding activists further this may give indications on further forces which are at play in the process. While it is in itself sociologically interesting given the stakes at hand, it may also carry strategic implications for a climate change movement looking to grow bigger. Either way, activists are important actors in the future of the climate issue, as they are at present the ones demanding the most radical solutions.

With that said, it seems that little is known about this emerging movement which is now gaining momentum. In popular culture and mass media, much is said about climate activists, yet reporting seems devoid of political content and rife with straw men. This was expressed by one informant, describing how media representations tended to emphasize only practical

details, stripping activists' stories of political content. Another informant expressed bafflement with how their peaceful action was labelled an act of terrorism by German media. Surely, activists are subject to lots of controversy. In the present study I have tried to understand climate activists from within, through establishing a sound research relationship and letting them describe their own thoughts and ideas.

To that end, the purpose of this thesis is to investigate Swedish climate activists' self-presentations, presentations of others, i.e. non-activists, and problem presentations. The aim is to understand what or who they present as the main problem(s) in the climate issue, how they describe their own role, how they describe others, and to understand the interaction between these. To that end, the research questions I seek to answer in this project are the following:

- How do Swedish climate activists construct the problem of climate change?
- How do they present the others and their motivations?
- How do they present themselves and their role?
- How can their descriptions be understood in relation to the dynamic between the problem and the others?

Granted, these research questions are broad, however this broadness has been a necessary part of this project as I follow a narrative approach inquiring how activists present the problem, the others, and themselves. Beneath these research questions, there have been considerations that I have carried with me which to varying extents have materialized in the final analysis. I will expand on this in the methods chapter.

3 Theoretical Framework

3.1 Social Psychology and Symbolic Interactionism

This thesis approaches the social world through a social-psychological theoretical framework, drawing on Mead and Goffman. Positioned in the symbolic interactionist tradition, individuals are understood to constantly read and evaluate the actions of others, their words, body language, facial expressions and all signals that carry a common meaning (Turner & Stets, 2005). Society is made up of interacting individuals, and as other human beings act symbolically towards us, we react and adjust accordingly. As we react, others take

our role and see themselves from our view, which produces another round of reaction and adjustment in an ever-lasting game of social ping pong.

It is through this continuous interaction with others that our very self-consciousness and sense of self are formed (Asplund, 1976). From the continuous role taking of others in the social interaction, we see ourselves from the view of specific others, and from *the generalized other*. The generalized other is our internalized understanding of the generalized attitude of all the individuals in society, but also the generalized other's attitude toward specific groups, and specific groups understandings of each other (Asplund, 1976). When we evaluate ourselves against the generalized other, we role-take also with smaller entities.

Forming a generalization of the attitudes that exists among the broader society is necessary in order to develop a self (Mead, 1934). To this end, Mead introduces the distinction between “I” and “me”. He suggests that “me” is the socially determined aspect of our personality, the one that emerges as individuals learn to see themselves through the eyes of others. “I”, however, is the subjective and creative aspect, which acts. As we take the roles of others, we begin to understand our self, our “me”, from the attitudes of others. The creative “I” then acts in reaction to this “me”, through interpreting and adjusting to the views others have of us (Asplund, 1976; Mead, 1934).

It is this way that social processes influence individual behavior, as the generalized other's attitudes continuously enter into the individual's thinking, exercising control over it. Indeed, it is not simply *what* others do that affects our reaction, but on our *definition* of what others do (Charon, 2001). To that end, the role of the present is emphasized, as the definition of the situation right now is what informs our interactions, our thinking and our interpretations. Accordingly, social structures and norms *guide* human action but do not determine it (Shott, 1979). Acts are teleological in nature, meaning that we act (and react) with a purpose in mind (Charon, 2001). To that end, thinking is a central component in the social interaction, which is partly why it is interesting to study how activists present others. Ultimately, symbolic interactionism views human beings as fundamentally active.

3.2 The Sociology of Emotions

As fruitful as it is, Mead's social psychology has its shortcomings, emotions being one of them. Emotions can be understood to be "like an unseen lens that colors all our thoughts, actions, perceptions, and judgements" (Goodwin, Jasper & Polletta, 2001, p. 10).

Anthropology shows us that one's culture *guides* how one interprets emotions and indeed to some extent *what* one feels (Shott, 1979). Mead described social interaction as fundamentally driven by various impulses and "states of disequilibrium with regard to the environment" (Turner & Stets, 2005, p. 103). A sense of disequilibrium may inspire action as the individual seeks to manipulate the environment in order to eliminate it. To Shott, these impulses, i.e. emotions, are understood as having a twofold nature: both a physiological response and cultural labelling of that physiological arousal (Turner & Stets, 2005). The latter, the cultural labelling and the socially constructed understandings of which emotions are expressed and how, is sometimes termed *emotional regime* (Kleres & Wettergren, 2017).

Again, in all social interactions we carry a both a general and a situational identity of who we are in that context (Shott, 1979; Turner & Stets, 2005). Through our highly reflexive process of taking the roles of others, we evaluate ourselves by examining the (perceived or real) responses of others. As we evaluate ourselves and receive feedback, an emotional reaction follows: positive if our identity is confirmed, negative if it is not. In this line of thinking, social control and social norms take the shape of self-control, as individuals "evaluate their generalized and situational identities from the perspective of the generalized other and the reactions of specific others in a situation" (Turner & Stets, 2005, p. 110). Particular significance is attributed to guilt, shame and embarrassment as punishing deviant behavior. Conversely, pride and empathy reward normative behavior, and so does vanity, as vain people are more rather dependent upon on others for their self-conceptions (Turner & Stets, 2005). All in all, the sociology of emotions locates emotions in-between the individual and the group, in their *interaction*, and they are instrumental in guiding our actions.

3.3 Goffman's Presentation of Self

The importance of social interaction is also emphasized by Goffman (1956). Largely concerned with exposing how interactional events throughout different social spheres showed many similarities, Goffman sought to derive a mode of analysis that puts social interaction at

the fore (Drew & Wotton, 2003). From this, Goffman claims that *role-taking* and *impression management* are fundamental to social reality, which consists of a form of acting. As individuals interact, they have many reasons to control the impression that is being made, and an individual especially seeks to control others responsive treatment of the own person. As they manage their external impressions before others, a surface of consensus is maintained through mutual impression management, as “each participant is expected to suppress his immediate heartfelt feelings”, in order to present oneself in a way that is acceptable (1956, p. 4). An individual’s performance in front of others will incorporate already accredited values and truths of the society, perhaps exaggerating the extent to which the individual agrees with them for the sake of the performance (Goffman, 1956). Similarly, when individuals do not know each other, they share their views and opinions only gradually, in a process of feeling-out the other.

However, this does not mean that individuals are deceiving each other. The extent to which individuals believe that their presented impression of reality is real ranges from being completely convinced to not believing in it at all (Goffman, 1956). Anyone looking to influence others will have to manage their impressions, conveying the message in an effective manner. Impression management and politics are intertwined, as “[p]ower of any kind must be clothed in effective means of displaying it” (Goffman, 1956, p. 154).

What this theoretical position means for the present study is that I approach interviews through to the view that the continuous social interaction between groups and individuals, and the emotions that arise therein, is instrumental to fully understanding human behavior. People manage their impressions in the social interaction, for various ends. In the final analysis, an individual carries a self, and the connection between the individual and the sociocultural forces resides in the role taking with others, as emotional reactions follow from an individual's evaluation of the self (Turner & Stets, 2005). Emotions are important for guiding social action, and faced with a scientifically informed threat to life, climate change is arguably a particularly emotional issue. In the final analysis, society emerges from our social interactions. Conversely, social interaction is at the core of both the causes and the potential solutions to climate change.

4 Literature Review

To this end, I have read and drawn on some of the existing literature. Most of the literature that I have come across focuses on inaction, and on activists as such. Nevertheless, in this section I have gathered some contributions for the current project.

Researching the emotions of climate activists in Denmark and Sweden, Kleres & Wettergren (2017) provide an interesting contribution to the understanding of climate activists. The aim of their study was to look at the roles played by fear, hope, anger and guilt in orienting activism. With data from 41 semi-structured interviews, they found that fear motivated climate activists, and that hope was a catalyst for action, with collective actions also further inducing hope. Their informants were cautious about expressing anger and rejected guilt and blaming others as well. Internally, fear was embraced yet the external message was a positive one – one of hope. Thus, there was a tension between the internal emotions and the ones deemed useful for mobilization, leading activists to deal with emotions such as fear and guilt inwards, engaging in *affective* impression management. Activists preferred to communicate a positive message outward. They concluded that their results pointed toward the necessity of hope for human action, and that fear can also be motivating, despite many claims to the contrary (Kleres & Wettergren, 2017).

Also in the empirical domain of research, Jia, et al. (2017) carried out a quantitative study inquiring why people become environmental activists. In doing so, they found three main themes that were endorsed by environmental activists: “1) concern for other species; 2) vigilance for the environment; 3) personal disgust towards environmentally irresponsible others”, expressing resentment for those who live unsustainably (2017, p. 110). They claim that activists displayed a sense of “biospheric morality”, i.e. a care not only for humans but for the nature as such (Jia, et al., 2017, p. 111). Conversely, they found that non-activists viewed activists as motivated by egoistic self-interest, and non-activists would themselves only engage in pro-environmental behavior if its benefits were thought to exceed the costs. Although positioned outside my theoretical framework, Jia et al's (2017) quantitative findings provide a glance at the expressed motivations for activism.

Investigating motivations for engaging in environmental activism, Fung and Adams (2017) found a broad range of factors through in-depth interviewing two self-identified activists at an

American college campus. Notably, at no point are emotions discussed, a significant shortcoming as they provide the rather vague conclusion “that previous experiences and education are related to awareness” (Fung & Adams, 2017, p. 13). The major factors inciting environmentalist practices were found to be awareness through education and previous experiences, self-improvement and self-satisfaction derived from doing something good, community engagement, and finally an ethic to practice as you preach (Fung and Adams, 2017).

Lots of literature discusses the reactions to climate change in the form of apocalyptic narratives and the like. Drawing on existing literature, Veldman (2012) provides an account drawing on environmental ethics. Veldman (2012) dismisses claims that climate activism necessarily needs a positive message, arguing to the contrary that there is evidence that activists do in fact themselves subscribe to the apocalyptic narrative. It is argued, given “that people use narratives to reason morally”, that the apocalyptic narrative provides a storyline to adhere to which can guide their actions (ibid, p. 11). In this line of reasoning, the apocalyptic narrative provides a story against which everyday choices can be evaluated. For example, when pondering on whether to take the car to the store or not, this matter is evaluated against the idea that reducing one’s carbon footprint is necessary in order to avoid ice to melt and by extensions humans to suffer. Thus, we walk to the store (ibid). This is the contribution of the apocalyptic narrative, and although there are many stories that can motivate people to environmental action, Veldman finds this one particularly well-suited, as it casts everyday choices in a moral light (ibid).

Pihkala, on the other hand, argues against the apocalyptic narrative. Approaching the debate on eco-anxiety from an interdisciplinary perspective, Pihkala (2018) draws on existing research to suggest that the debate on climate change ought to be framed in “hope in the midst of tragedy”, as he deems a framing of apocalypse as threatening to deepen paralysis and anxiety. Pihkala rejects what he calls “the myth of apathy”, arguing that people are not apathic, but that they on the contrary may care too much (Pihkala, 2018, p. 548). Thus, various defenses and coping mechanisms set in, providing a false external presentation of apathy. In the anxiety discussion, Pihkala (2018) provides a fruitful separation between direct and indirect anxiety, where the former may follow from for example the cutting down of a nearby forest, whereas the latter takes on an existential significance, for example taking the shape of worrying about the future of life as we know it.

In a similar fashion, Weintrobe (2013) approaches the topic from the perspective of the psychoanalytic literature. Central to current debates on climate change, Weintrobe argues, is anxiety, which poses “the biggest psychic barrier to facing the reality of anthropogenic global warming” (2013, p. 47). Weintrobe (2013) argues that anxiety, in the face of global warming and the necessary life changes that follow, often takes the shape disavowal, irrationality, projection or depression. The feeling of overwhelming guilt and responsibility may lead to paralysis. Thus, that people need genuine emotional support in order not to be crushed under the weight of anxiety. In this line of thinking, Weintrobe argues that

“[i]t is important for people to bear their anxieties, because when they do not, their thinking deteriorates, and irrationality, lack of proportionality, hatred and narcissism are more likely to prevail” (Weintrobe, 2013, 46)

In approaching this topic from the perspective of symbolic interactionism, the literature is scarce. Kleres & Wettergren's (2017) account of the emotions described by Swedish and Danish climate activists provide perhaps the best source of similar research at this stage. Although Jia et al. (2017) provide an insight into the motivations of climate activists, they do so by quantitative means. As such, they provide some interesting insights to draw from, yet they do not emphasize social interaction or emotions. Similarly, Fung & Adams (2017) emit emotions in their study. Finally, there are the non-empirical sources cited here. Primarily, they function as a backdrop against which the informants' descriptions and reactions can be understood. Apocalyptic narratives, perceived apathy, as well as climate anxiety and the necessity to be able to handle it are all central to the topic at hand.

It is in relation to this literature that this project emerges. From my reading, it seems that there is a bias toward studying *inaction* in relation to climate change. Arnold (2018), who I quoted in the epigraph, similarly suggests the places from which climate change narratives emerge are a neglected topic of research, in favor of studying the “reception-side of a message” (Arnold, 2018, p. 43). Similarly, Wainwright & Mann (2018, p. 130). argues that there are not enough studies “of the social and political processes driving these physical processes”, which academia now needs to grapple with. The specific contribution of the present study is precisely that: an empirical and qualitative study of an aspect of the social processes surrounding climate change, focusing on activists. In the next chapter I will describe the methods for this endeavor.

5 Methods

5.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

In pursuit of contributing an empirical account of Swedish climate activists, qualitative methods have been deemed suitable, given my emphasis on their own views and self-presentations. For this, I have used semi-structured interviews, and in particular I have drawn on Riessman's (2008) narrative interviewing, as interviews have been conducted in the pursuit of narrative accounts. Narrative interviewing requires that questions are as open as possible, in order to "allow informants to construct answers in ways they find meaningful", which to some extent "requires investigators to give up control" (Riessman, 2008, p. 24-25). Nevertheless, the depth of the data gathered trumps a slight lack of control.

The justification for using narrative interviewing in the present study has been to understand how climate activists present themselves, their reasons for becoming activists, how they present others, the problem, and so forth. These are all inherently narrative constructions, and it is through narratives that they recruit more activists. Indeed, narratives are important in social life as it is through narratives that we organize social events, mobilize resources, and gather people to protest (Arnold, 2018). I here understand interviews to be both narrative descriptions of one's experiences and beliefs, and an event of self-presentation.

To this end, my interview guide has consisted of five broad themes which I have followed: activism; the problem it is responding to; the others; climate anxiety; and personal background. These themes have formed the framework for the interviews, which have then taken various directions following the informants' idiosyncracies. A translation of my interview guide can be found in Appendix A. The questions in my interview guide have functioned as a tentative map to the interview situation. At times, these themes have been hard to keep apart, as in talking about one, informants often touch upon others. Ultimately, what has been presented to me throughout interviews has been narratives, in which life experiences and emotions are weaved together into coherence.

In conducting interviews, I have drawn on Bourdieu's writings on reflexivity, seeking to keep a sociological eye open to how the research relationships own structure sets up distortions (Bourdieu, 1993). In this line of thinking, attention must be paid to the co-construction of

interview data and to the reasons and motivations for the informant's participation. A mindful analyst must recognize that there is a bias that more expressive and out-going people are the ones ready to participate in an interview, making them imperfect as representatives. This goes for any interview study and cannot be overcome, but nevertheless remains a point to consider. To be considered is also the asymmetry of the relationship one is engaging in and the effects it has on the way participants talk and behave, an asymmetry that increases as the hierarchical distance increases.

It is however my contention that in the present study, such a distance has not been a major distortion. Informants were well-educated, roughly my own age and thus stage of life, and happy that someone was paying attention to them. The mere fact that I am a student of Sociology has also been a way of bridging the gap between researcher and informant, as several informants expressed their interest in the social sciences. Interviews took place in library group rooms, cafés, and at an informant's home, as I have tried to reduce the effect of bystanders as much as possible. Interviews were conducted in February and March 2019, and the average duration of an interview was 1 hour 6 minutes, ranging from 50 minutes to 1 hour and 52 minutes.

5.2 Sample

The sampled population for this study consists of nine self-identified climate activists. Informants were recruited through various forums on Facebook and through contacting organizations that work with climate change and environment through either social media or email. The reason for this was convenience, as I did not see any other way to reach such a specific group of people. The informants generated from this were between 19 and 29 years old, six of which were female, whereas three were males. With that said, I had not met any of the informants before our interview. From what I have been presented, all informants were from middle class families. I have anonymized the informants fully and eliminated any idiosyncrasies that may reveal their identity from the text, given that climate activists in Lund and Malmö is a rather small group after all. Throughout the analysis, informants have been given fictive names.

The reason for studying *self-identified* activists is that *I* should not be the one defining who is an activist and who is not, especially in times when the movement is growing and changing.

In so far as they identified themselves as activists, this meant that most of them had engaged in some kind of civil disobedience (mass) actions, both in Sweden and abroad (e.g. Ende Gelände and Code Rood), participated in peaceful demonstrations and other campaigns. Informants were or had been engaged members in various groups and networks, such as Fältbiologerna, Naturskyddsföreningen, Greenpeace, Fossil Free, Klimatfronten, Extinction Rebellion, and various smaller groups. Fältbiologerna and Naturskyddsföreningen are Sweden's two largest environmental organizations, and both of them are increasingly incorporating the climate issue into their program. Greenpeace is an environmental justice movement that endorses civil disobedience, seeking to protect biodiversity, prevent pollution and end all nuclear threats, among other things (Greenpeace International, 2019). Fossil free is an activist group that is campaigning for important institutions, such as Lund University, to divest their funds from fossil fuels to strip the industry of its social power. Klimatfronten is a Malmö-based network of groups that fight for the environment, the climate and solidarity, engaging in peace civil disobedience and information spreading, among other things. Extinction Rebellion is an international grassroots movement working to bring to light the seriousness of the risk of human extinction due to climate change, promoting radical change through peaceful civil disobedience. In addition to this, informants claimed to make individual sustainable choices, such as following a vegetarian or a vegan diet, not flying, consuming less and so on. In short, they sought to communicate and inspire others to an alternative way of life.

5.3 Coding

As soon as the interviews were finished, I transcribed the recordings as close to reality as possible, only cutting out incomplete words or phrases. They were then coded in an iterative process in NVivo12 where I read through and coded phrases and explanations, which were then subsumed under larger headings which have formed the structure of the analysis here. As such, the basis of one section of analysis is typically 1-3 codes that emerged throughout the process. In some cases, coding has been an inductive process, for example in the case of interpreting climate awakening as a burden. At other times, such as in the discussion on climate anxiety, it has been deductive, as previous research and knowledge as well as popular culture debate has probed me into focusing on a certain topic. The analysis has then been structured accordingly, and I have used extensive quotations. I have translated all quotes from Swedish into English myself, which I have done carefully while only altering them slightly in

order to make them more readable. My translations have been included in Appendix B for full transparency of this process.

5.4 Positionality, Ethics, and Limitations

It should be said here that as far as climate change goes, my own position is that I believe it is the most important issue of our time, and that it requires radical action. However, I am not an activist in its everyday meaning, and have not participated in any noteworthy demonstrations or climate actions. In my bachelor's thesis, however, I criticized the UN's Sustainable Development Goals on the grounds that they are trying to make systemic contradictions between the climate and capitalism disappear, as they propose less radical but ultimately impotent strategies of technological fixes, consumer power, and the like (Berglund, 2017). In short, I fail to see how mitigating climate change is commensurable with economic growth and a fossil economy.

Nevertheless, throughout interviewing I have distanced myself from my personal views and tried to understand the views held by climate activists, and the way they perceive things. With that said, some may argue that my own position risks corrupting this study. I concede that it has been important to *why* I have chosen the particular topic, but apart from that, a certain familiarity with the way of thinking that activists espouse has been an asset in helping me follow thoughts presented by participants.

Indeed, this has allowed me to approach the interviews as an insider, to the extent possible. I am familiar with some of the literature, and I have been able to follow as informants went on tangents to discuss some particular book or report, filling in when informants did not remember the name of a particular author, and I have demonstrated a certain knowledge of the lines of argumentation that climate activists tended to present to me. In short, I have *presented* various cues to indicate understanding and familiarity, in the hope of lowering the barriers between researcher and informant.

This has of course had effects on the data I have gathered, and I maintain that it has been a positive one, as I hope the reader will notice. Upon noticing that I understood where they were coming from, informants could freely discuss and reason out loud, whether about the physical aspects of climate change, the inertia of social change or their own emotions in

relation to climate change. As such, informants reflected upon strategies without trying to convince me to become an activist.

To further disarm this concern, I have used extensive quotes throughout the analysis to substantiate my claims and to show a clear connection to the empirical data. That is a way of avoiding the impression of cherry picking quotes, which has been especially important to maintain transparency both for myself and for the reader. A further justification is that it lets the informants themselves speak, given the expressed dissatisfaction of continuously being misrepresented.

The above attention paid to my own positionality and the fair representation of informant's descriptions is also of ethical importance. As far as ethics go, informants have been promised anonymity through a signed consent form, throughout interviews I have allowed them to speak off the record, and meetings have taken place as anonymously as possible. In this manner, I have tried to eliminate any risks they may face from participation in this study. Through allowing for discussion after the interview was finished I have also sought to make the exchange a mutual one, as I have been offered informants' precious time.

With that said, what is presented here is largely a narrative account based on the self-presentations of nine Swedish climate activists. As for limitations, it is a rather narrow study of a very specific group, but I am hoping that for what it lacks on breadth it makes up in depth. I do think that climate activists elsewhere in the Global North may find themselves in a similar situation to that which is presented here, although that is not to say that my findings can be universalized. What I describe here is the merely activists' perspective, and a partial account. This is a gargantuan topic, and I am content if I have managed to shed some little ray of light on the state of affairs for climate activists. Future studies could fruitfully inquire non-activists and their social interactions, to produce a holistic base of knowledge to understand social interactions relating to climate change.

6 Analysis

The analysis here is structured as follows: the first chapter deals with the problem presentations offered by the informants. It delves into what they have presented as the origins of climate change, and how they came to understand this problem. The second chapter deals

with the others, focusing on how activists presented non-activists, and how they described that non-activists viewed them. The final chapter focuses on the many effects that can be understood through symbolic interactionism as the reaction of being in between the problem and the others.

6.1 The Problem

6.1.1 Climate Change and its Origins

Ludwig: It is pretty obvious that this system does not have any tools to handle this crisis. We have had high-level climate talks since the 90s and emissions have still increased by 70 per cent since then.

The climate movement and the people within it are by no means homogenous. With that said, there is a broad description of the problem behind climate change that can be sketched out here, with informants taking more or less radical departures from a somewhat common picture. In this section I will describe the problem they have presented to me. The above quote is a good introduction to the general sentiment – the need for systemic change. At the most fundamental level, the problem they described as causing climate change is that the way our society is organized now interferes with the natural world:

Anna: If you see our system as it is right now, the economic system, it is seen as a natural law to which we need to adapt, rather than looking at what the actual laws of nature are. They are the environment and the climate. That is what we have to orient ourselves toward, and then we can adapt our socio-economic system to it, rather than the other way around where we try to fit them into the current [socio-economic] system.

Johanna: My fundamental problem is that we are exploiting nature which is the foundation for life. And... Yes, that is my fundamental problem. [...] I really have seen both sides. I have seen big companies be more environmentally friendly than political parties and the state, and vice versa. Yes, really good question actually. That is my ideological problem, and then I don't really care who is exploiting nature.

They both presented the contradiction between society (or the economic system) and nature as the important aspect, avoiding any contentious definition of the problem. Anna described that we need to rearrange our priorities, to rank the economic imperatives under the laws of nature, and Johanna presented that she *did not care who* was exploiting nature. Other informants were ready to specify further what they saw as the problem in more political terms, opting for the exploitation of nature and the entanglement of capitalism with fossil fuels as the chief culprit:

KB: But you as an activist, what do you see as the problem?

Elin: The economic system which has fossil fuels intertwined in it. And that we have made ourselves dependent on them. And I don't believe at all that the solution is technical solutions. They are good, but first and foremost we have to change our lifestyle, we who are well off in the Western world, Sweden. I think that we need to lower our standards of living a little bit, meaning that we can't travel abroad a lot, not eat lots of meat, but primarily that the entire consumer society, and then the problem is overproduction, and that companies profit from something that destroys the entire planet, and that they are allowed to do it.

KB: How do you, where do you see the source of the climate crisis?

Axel: The source is pretty easy actually, it is when we started extracting coal and oil in the 19th century. But, I realized in the same second that I said it that I take that back, actually. Because the lion's share... More than half of all emissions that have been emitted since the industrial revolution were emitted in the last 30 years.

KB: Okay, you talked about connections when you talked about coal and the forest, what were you thinking, or what did you mean?

Emil: Well this massive destruction of soil and nature, not just here, but also in other countries, which we don't see except that we see a type of poverty. And yes, it is we who are exploiting their land and resources so that society can develop, with all that it connotes. These connections became clear when you look at history what has happened.

Here the problem is described as the fossil fuel combustion that “we have made ourselves dependent on”. It is inherent in our standard of living, and so is exploitation of other countries. To the extent that an enemy was presented, it was the fossil fuel industry and large, irresponsible companies, who refuse to take responsibility for their actions:

KB: Are there any actors that you see as especially important for the climate crisis today?

Axel: Yes like I said earlier it is definitely the fossil fuel industry. They are... I am hoping for a tribunal in the future, similar to the Nürnberg trials, for the decennia of neglect that they have caused. Because of the terrible damages that are so vast and virtually innumerable, which the enormous financial institutions have caused. I am hoping for some type of justice.

KB: Now you have hinted about it a couple of times, but when we talk about the climate today, what do you see as the problem?

Ida: Corporations. Corporations, states. The climate issue is fundamentally a global problem that requires global solutions, and it is definitely not a problem... The problem is not normal people. The problem isn't bad structures among the population. *The problem is corporations and states which do not take the climate issue seriously, which refuse to take it seriously, which refuse to put the climate above profit*, and which refuse to realize their effects on the climate, and which continue saying ‘No we can fix this slowly. The problem is that we don't have the time to fix anything slowly, and that you have to lose 100 000 SEK today if we are to survive the climate issue’ (emphasis added).

In a similar fashion to Ida's de-emphasis of the role of “normal people” above, Elin distanced herself from criticizing individual companies as such, presenting their operations as the natural outcome of the political system. Rather than criticizing individual companies, the

economic structure is where accountability lies. Similarly, Linnéa talks about it being difficult as an individual to resist the impulse to buy new things given the workings of capitalism:

Elin: For example, large corporations have, and that's why I think it is the political system that is the problem, they have to care about their quarterly reports and keep doing business as usual to make a profit, because that is what a corporation is.

Linnéa: We consume too much, but I think that also has to do with capitalism, and how it is structured. I think it is very difficult in the current system to resist buying new stuff all the time. Because capitalism requires that we buy new things all the time, that we produce new things, that we find new resources.

Thus, although varying in their problem formulations, informants all constructed the problem as the conflict between society and nature. Whether this conflict sprung out of capitalism, consumerism, the fossil fuel industry or some other source was deemed a lesser problem than the fact that it needs to change and change *quickly* at that. Nevertheless, it was described that there is an opposition between the imperatives of capitalism and the health of the planet, as companies have to “lose 100 000 SEK today if we are to survive”. The divide between collective and individual methods was a clear line of debate, to which I will return. Although informants expressed that small reforms were indeed positive, they emphasized that they were small, worrying that the gravity of the problem was undermined by an emphasis on solutions such as plastic reduction, solar panels and electric vehicles. These solutions were understood to not attack the fundamental problem:

Emil: There are no technical solutions that will magically solve this. If we invest in it [solar panels and wind power] further it will mean further mineral extraction elsewhere that will further put aside people, nature...

6.1.2 Narratives of Awakening

Yet this understanding of the problems has to come from somewhere. When I asked the informants for the reason that they became activists, they often narrated the process as an awakening:

KB: How did you become a climate activist?

Johanna: When I was 14 I became aware of climate change, and that's when my journey started. Then when I was 16, when I started high school I joined an organization called [organization], which is one of Sweden's largest youth organizations for the climate and for activists and people interested in nature. Then I got increasingly involved in the organization and it occupied the majority of my life.

KB: But wait, you said that you become aware, you used aware, when you were 14?

Johanna: Yes.

KB: But how, then?

Johanna: Yes, well I have two memories. One is that I saw a documentary on TV with my mom and dad where they talked about climate change and that I was like ‘But this is insane, is the world going to end?’. And I remember that my dad said then ‘No but it is not certain that this is true’. And I doubted it a little then, but I believed in it, while simultaneously I felt that if this is true, it should be more well known, or why isn’t this the only thing we do?

Louise: I became interested in politics when I was around 15. And then I started reading a lot about society and so on, and then it was some time in that process where I realized that, well somewhere in a political awakening, that we are destroying the planet.

As seen above, in describing the process of becoming an activist, the way informants presented their transformation largely took the shape of a narrative of awakening. Situating the happening in a sequence of time, the key event that unfolded was to become “aware” and to “realize” something in one’s political awakening. They described a transformation, how this insight ultimately changed their course of action. In all three cases above the narrative form was one of awakening, where they to came to understand the seriousness of climate change which lead them to activism.

Others described their becoming an activist not so much as an immediate process of awakening, but rather as gradual and natural development with a particular tipping point. Describing growing up surrounded by an impetus to act sustainably, Ida described her attendance at an Ende Gelände¹ mass action as the tipping point, emphasizing how she *saw* the vast resistance there:

Ida: I’ve always cared about the climate because my family is very interested in politics and my mom is always like ‘Think about the environment!’ My dad as well, to some extent. And I am raised in a generation constantly told, well, we have always had theme days on sustainable development, so it has always been there. And then I became politically active in another context, and I got the opportunity to attend Ende Gelände, which I’m sure you know, a great climate action in Germany. So I went pretty much from zero to Germany. [...] It is a big first step, but it sounds as a good first step. And then Ende Gelände affected me because you could see the resistance. For example, the police who were always like ‘You cannot be here, it is illegal!’, and so on.

Once again, the structure of the story takes the shape of awakening, as *seeing* the resistance was described as integral to the experience, as Ida subsequently described that her climate activism intensified after her first mass action. A long process of gradual accumulation of knowledge ultimately tips into activism, as the Ende Gelände action made her see the

¹ Ende Gelände is a climate activist group that arranges civil disobedience mass actions that take place in Germany with the explicit goal of blocking the infrastructure of the fossil fuel industry. Ende Gelände’s actions had been attended by several of my informants.

resistance. Another informant similarly described his becoming-a-climate-activist as a long and gradual worry that ultimately tipped into activism as a result of a dramatic year:

Axel: You could say that for the last 15 years of my life, I am 22 years old, it has been an underlying worry in my life, fear for the climate and a worry for the future. And I became active last year, in the beginning of the year, within [organization]. When I, well it was maybe partly due to 2017 being such a dramatic year, when I realized that I no longer could put my head in the sand, but now it was time to grab the bull by its horns.

Again, the choice of word is to “realize”, once again tying into the idea of awakening as the crucial step towards becoming an activist. This way of narrating is further repeated in the description provided by Elin, who gradually grew up to “realize” how our very conditions of life are the problem:

KB: How come you became a climate activist?

Elin: I have always... I think it is important with justice, in many ways really. So I have found drawings from when I was very young that were about how humans litter nature, how we litter, and I felt very sorry for animals and so on. And then *when I grew up I realized it was about more than that*, about our entire life, our conditions for life. People are suffering a lot for how we in the Western world live (emphasis added).

In the final analysis, becoming an activist was narrated as a process of awakening, of understanding, or coming to insight. In line with this, the importance of academic knowledge in realizing the need for activism was put forth by some respondents as well. With that said, the problem formulation that informants described remains a marginal one. The next chapter deals with how they explain this, and how they describe the others – the non-activists.

6.2 The Other

6.2.1 Denial and False Consciousness

In the symbolic interactionist tradition, motives are conceived as a way of understanding social action (Blum & McHugh, 1971). Motives are social in nature and are understood as a way of structuring the observed behavior so that it becomes socially intelligible, a way of depicting the social character of the act itself. In this line of thinking, the way activists described others, non-activists, is understood already at the point of departure as a way of interpreting their behavior in a fashion that serves the activists' cause. As the symbolic

interactionist tradition puts forth, our acts are teleological in nature and our definitions and interpretations emerge from social interaction.

Applying this here, many informants presented themselves to be very understanding of why climate activists remain a rare bunch. In many ways, informants presented that many non-activists do not *see* the seriousness of climate change, not because they are somehow incapable of it, but rather because it is too tough a realization, leading to more or less explicit denial, or because their vision is obscured by a false consciousness. These two motivations for non-activist behavior were often presented in tandem, and I will begin with the first one – denial:

Axel: This isn't some exaggeration from someone, I don't know who, some guy in a basement writing stuff on twitter, writing doomsday prophecies. No, these are actual professional scientists who have been doing this all their lives and are terrified, who present reports that show that *the situation is much worse than most of us want to admit. It can be a difficult process* (emphasis added).

Ludwig: A lot of people do not really want to accept the fundamental life style changes that are necessary but think that we can keep on living the way we do if only we introduce different politics. Without realizing that we might have to utilize less energy, or drive cars less. Consume less meat and so on.

Elin: I think that people might not want to accept one's message, because it is too hard. Because you yourself feel guilt, because all of us, just by being in Sweden, make use of this vast infrastructure, so we have a big climate debt, but it isn't our fault.

The others are presented not as enemies or ignorant, but ultimately as victims of denial in the face of the challenges. It is a difficult process to admit that things are much worse than we thought, and to accept that the logical conclusion of this insight is changing the way we lead our lives. Therefore, denial follows as a coping mechanism.

Part of the denial was described to originate from the difficulty to grasp climate change. It was described as not tangible Swedes, given the disconnect between the source of emissions and their negative effects, the Global North and the Global South respectively. Informants described that this means that people do not *experience* it:

Anna: Yes. But I think that, right now it feels like everyone knows it but that they haven't taken it in. You know it purely intellectually, but you don't take it in. Because it feels so far away.

KB: Why do you think that is? Why do you think people don't take it in if they are aware of it intellectually?

Anna: Yes, well it is because you don't see the consequences of it as much. You can see the consequences, like the fires last summer, but now you forget it very fast and we keep on living as usual, and it doesn't affect us on a daily basis.

Louise: I think that is [an] accurate [explanation], that you don't see that you have any power for change, but also that you might not experience a tangible threat, which you might if you're subjected to racism or sexism, which can spark a certain motivation to fight against it, when you experienced itself. It is few in my part of the world who have experienced climate changes themselves, with the exception of maybe the fires last summer.

Linnéa: Sweden definitely is one of the largest emitters of CO₂ because of our lifestyles and because of that I think it is our responsibility to make sure we fix it. Especially since we are not the ones taking the consequences, that's what makes it so hard to motivate people as well. If it had been our fault but also our consequences, then I think a lot more would be happening. Now it is our fault, but we don't experience it, and then it is much harder to motivate people.

Above, informants described a general population that does not see the gravity of the issue at hand because it is yet to affect them in any meaningful way, with the possible exception of the forest fires of 2018. The threat of climate change was described as not "tangible" enough, they do not "experience" it and thus it remains something they know "purely intellectually" as Ludwig described that "it is the Global South and poorer countries that will suffer the many of the largest consequences". In regard to this, Johanna drew on her own experience as an activist mobilizing people around the planned establishment of a mine, which threatened drinking water and thus provided a good basis for mobilization:

Last summer it was clearer when we had the forest fires and the climate became warmer and it wasn't like, or like when we had the Ojnare forest: "Here's a forest being cut down and it affects the drinking water!" Then it was incredibly simple to involve people from all sorts of groups, because then it was tangible.

The motives ascribed to non-activists were thus partly those of denial, stemming from how serious the implications are, and an inability to really see climate change, as consequences primarily took place elsewhere. Denial was not presented as an active decision, but rather as a kind of coping mechanism that sets in when people are faced with challenges of this magnitude. To realize this was presented as rather burdensome.

Apart from denial, informants also expressed that people missed or only partially understood the linkages between our lifestyles and climate change. It is here that I introduce the concept of false consciousness as describing the motivations activists described others to possess. Informants largely described themselves as left-leaning, and their view on climate change often located the problems *within* capitalism. Thus, others were described as easily

manipulated by misleading arguments such as claims that Swedish emissions already are low², or that the problems can be handled within the status quo:

Ida: It feels as if the majority of the population doesn't have this idea that it is states and corporations that have to take responsibility for their emissions, and that they easily fall for talk about Sweden having done such a massive decrease in emissions, when the truth is that we moved our production to the global periphery, emitting there and then pointing fingers to India for being an unsustainable nation. It is incredibly absurd (emphasis added).

Ludwig: It is easy to all the time tell oneself that we will solve this through some new solar panels and some new charging posts [for electric vehicles], and this problem will be gone in a few years. It is very comfortable to fall back on that model, without seeing the underlying problems.

Louise described this lack of connections as a result of powerful interests and their capacity to shape how people view certain issues, and so did Axel:

Louise: I don't think that the average citizen has made these connections between how incompatible it is to have this economic growth and saving the climate. Well. Yes it partly has to do with that these interests are powerful and they can control the image of climate change and the reasons behind it, so that everything will continue the way it does now.

Axel: ... it [the climate movement] has been inefficient. But is also incredibly cold of me to say that, because the climate movement has had colossal economic and political interests against it, so I don't really know how much you can ask from a non-profit movement.

To borrow from the Marxist phrasebook, the motives ascribed to the other for not understanding the depth of the problem or being activists ultimately fits into the notion of a false consciousness (Marcuse, 1964). Although not explicitly using the term, non-activists were described as caught in the hegemonic understanding of social and ecological issues, believing that “we will solve this through some new solar panels and some new charging posts”, that Swedish lifestyles are sustainable because production has left the country, and that climate change does not pose a significant threat. I contend that this description amounts to ascriptions that non-activists’ “thought and behavior express a false consciousness, responding to and contributing to the preservation of a false order of facts” (Marcuse, 1964, p. 145). Several informants presented a dislike for how solutions were framed in the mainstream debate, given that a focus on green technology, plastic reduction, ethical consumerism and taking shorter showers preserves “a false order of facts” (ibid). Much like Goffman's claim

² An argument which some have been making but which ultimately rests on simply counting the emissions emitted from *within* Sweden, which is misleading given that heavy polluting industries have been outsourced to the Global South, emitting there. Swedes moreover consume and fly a lot, making their ecological footprint a big one, even if there are only a few polluting industries within the country (WWF, 2019)

that we want to maintain a surface of agreement, hegemonic understandings of the state of affairs were described as interfering with the possibility to question the status quo with its economic growth and entanglement with fossil fuels:

Anna: Our entire way of living is built on access to fast energy in the form of oil and carbon. So, it is really to question the entire society and the entire way of life, so that is why it is a difficult conclusion to reach.

In this line of thinking, an understanding tone was maintained towards others throughout all interviews, *despite* presenting a state of crisis, feelings of anxiety, and a feeling of deadlock in the fight against climate change, which certainly risks stirring up resentment (Wettergren, 2013). This may be tentatively understood as the result of activists seeking to refine their emotions to be more constructive, which Hochschild (1979) termed *emotion work*. This understanding posture was also extended to when informants described their interactions with the police, where an ethic of non-violence was put forth as instrumental. What activists presented here is far from “personal disgust towards environmentally irresponsible others” (Jia, et al., 2017, p. 110). This may result from Jia et al. (2017) using a quantitative methodology in which people are more honest, whereas my informants engaged in affective impression management. Be that as it may, I contend that my informants did take a less confrontative stance towards environmentally irresponsible people, given their common description that it is “difficult for the individual to act sustainably in an unsustainable system”. This was an aptly put description of how informants generally presented individual responsibility.

6.2.2 Individual Responsibility and Its Discontents

Axel: That is also a little bit of the eternal debate among people fighting for the climate. What should you really focus on: the individual actions or the collective arrangements surrounding them? Spontaneously I feel that we have to do a little bit of both, but at the end of the day that the most important is to support and defend the most radical societal reforms available.

The way climate activists described the actions and motives of the others also has implications for how they view the matter of individual responsibility. Like Axel expresses above, this balancing act between acting individually or collectively was a reoccurring topic that many informants contemplated. Because of the already mentioned descriptions of systemic obstacles to understanding that crisis is upon us, and the others’ tendencies to fall

into denial, informants were careful not to present individual responsibility as the cure to the presented ills:

Louise: I don't know what kind of individual choices one can do to *actually* make a difference, if the system is to continue the way it is, it requires all this consumption and production (emphasis original).

Johanna: It is one thing that I criticize a lot with the environmental movement, that I think it has become too individualized and practice as you preach. And I am very anti [...] Well very anti flying-shame. I am of course against that people fly more. I myself spent lots of time trying to practice as I preach, being a vegetarian and not flying and so on. But then I reached a point where I felt that I was tying myself in knots. I realized that ideologically I don't think it should be this way. I think we have a responsibility as individuals, but we shouldn't tie ourselves in knots.

The above objections against ascribing individual responsibility to challenge the status quo are part of a (more or less articulated) critique against the broader phenomenon *individualization*, which has been a major theme in sociology. Louise describes how a sustainable life is very difficult in the current system, and Johanna described how she tied herself into knots when trying. In *the Individualized Society*, Bauman sketches out a society in which many of us are very critical and engage in "life politics" where every move is considered carefully, yet this never provides any satisfaction (Bauman, 2001, p. 149-150). He argues that despite all our critical reflexivity, our criticisms rarely go so far as to question the framework in which our "life politics" take place – in this case, a capitalist society based on the extraction of fossil fuels and on ever-increasing economic growth. Criticism remains individual-centered and eschews collective political solutions, ultimately making it toothless as critique only touches the surface. As such, contemporary society manages to absorb critical thought while simultaneously becoming immune to the consequences of that critical thought (Bauman, 2001). This also brings to mind the informants' aforementioned critique of the mainstream debate focused on green technology, plastic reduction, short showers and green consumerism. This was described as progressive in the eyes of broader society, and informants described them as positive yet ultimately trivial actions that eschew "going to the roots of the problem". It was in this manner that Ida implicitly objected to the individualization of the debate on climate change:

It feels as if every time it is presented the burden is on normal people: 'You are the ones buying bad cars or you are the ones buying bad sweaters'. Or this poor family that goes to Tenerife once every four years, it is their fault we have the climate crisis. Rather than actually going to the roots of a problem that has existed for a much longer time and that goes much deeper.

With that said, I should mention that two out of nine informants expressed ambiguously that given that it seems to work, that Swedes are flying less, shame might be useful after all. However, the dominant opinion was the one described above by Ida: the refusal to put the burden on normal people. It is my interpretation that the understanding and forgiving tone is just as important as the details, as it forms a particular way of relating to the others as a collective posture, or an emotional regime, emerges from the interactions between groups. This is often required for activism (Kleres & Wettergren, 2017). Although my informants belonged to variety of groups, they presented a unity in dispersion, that of understanding, forgiveness, and ascribing accountability to structures as opposed to individuals. Ultimately, this can be interpreted as a way of relating to the others that emerges as activists understand through interaction that, say, violence or shame do not work. Up against the twin obstacle of denial and false consciousness, it was described as too uncomfortable for an *individual* to realize that our society fundamentally overshoots the earth's capacity to sustain it. Economic interests and hegemonic ways of viewing social issues shroud the issue in doubt. Having described how activists presented the others and their responsibilities, it is now time to discuss the reverse, how respondents presented themselves to be seen from the outside.

6.2.3 The Gaze of the Others

Apart from hands-on fighting against unsustainable industries and corporations, a significant part of climate activism consists of spreading the word, recruiting more people and building a strong mass movement. With that in mind, activists inevitably have to relate to how others understand and define them. Although activist expressed that their movement is growing and that people are generally positive towards protecting the climate, they saw themselves as less popular. The most often mentioned characteristic that informants saw others projecting upon them was that they were “hippies”:

KB: You already hinted a little bit when you spoke about exclusion and stereotypes of climate activists, how do you see, as a climate activist, that you are viewed from the outside?

Johanna: Yes, we are probably seen as dopey, naive, unhygienic perhaps. Yeah, depending on who [...] Well the problem is that we function psychologically that way, that we are very careful on how we are perceived socially, [...] it might be difficult to listen to what they are saying if the only thing I am thinking *is* ‘Oh my god they just keep massaging each other and lay in a cuddle pile on the floor, how fucking dopey’. Then I lose my confidence in listening, compared to if it was someone who looked like me.

This was a recurring theme throughout interviews, and was also mentioned by Ida, who argued that being deemed a “hippie” was a way of denigrating climate activists. A similar worry was presented by Ludwig, who gave an account of his personal impression management before others. In his estimate, it was important not to run away from the broader society’s values in one’s activism, instead neutralizing some of the impressions one makes for strategic purposes. He described looking decently normal and toning down any controversial expressions as favorable in order to *attract* new members:

Ludwig: ... I am trying to eat vegetarian as much as possible and not to fly in vain, but it is like, I’m not a rabid opponent either. [...]

KB: How come, that you’re not?

Ludwig: I don’t know, what should you say... You can’t really live outside society too much somehow, it is too complicated and you don’t attract people if you do it. I think that socially, if I am perceived as a decently normal and nice person and tell people that it might be better to eat a little bit less meat to some big meat consumer, then it has a bigger effect than if I myself become a vegan. If I manage to get someone else to halve their meat consumption.

Similar to the findings of Jia, et al. (2017), Ludwig also expressed that non-activists tend to understand the behavior of activists as driven by egoism. He described that some projected upon climate activists that they were virtue signaling³ or annoying know-it-alls, seeking to denigrate them and reduce their activism to egoism:

Ludwig: You’re virtue signaling, or you are shaming flying people, or that kind of stuff, you want to be a know-it-all.

KB: Are these the sorts of labels that you feel that are attached to you as a climate activist?

Ludwig: Well, perhaps not personally. But I feel that they, sure, they are being used. They are used to passivize people or to make your activism look like that you are doing only for your own gain, it is pretty cynical.

Similar to the “hippie” label, Linnea described that climate activism was at times seen as a spectacle and that activists were difficult to relate to. Describing a small civil disobedience action in which an intersection was blocked to attract attention:

Linnéa: Well after all you simply become a spectacle. In a good way, that is important too, but I think that many people don’t recognize themselves in climate activists, but they think that ‘Yes I think it is important, what these people are doing’ but they don’t see themselves as someone who could belong to these people, but that they are these radical green party people.

As such, at times it was understood that activists’ actions were not necessarily received the way they wished, instead they were seen as strange people who one could not necessarily

³ Pejorative expression describing a person’s empty talk serving to build the image of the person saying it as morally virtuous.

belong to. The way they presented the gaze of others was as judging them to be “naive” “hippies”, hard to relate to, or know-it-alls. This view is of course something to which they have to adjust to, otherwise activists “don't attract people”, as Ludwig put it.

6.3 Reactions and Strategies for Action

Axel: There are so many forms of denial in the climate debate, and sadly I have many relatives that live in denial in one way or another. Because they built their lives around say careers and marketing and that sort of stuff, and this is something that, when you realize how serious, how far-reaching and how fast we need to act in the climate crisis... That's *an experience that shakes your entire foundation, in every possible way. It changes your entire view on the world in every aspect.* That's my personal experience of it at least (emphasis added).

In symbolic interactionist terms, this final chapter regards climate activists as caught in the middle, understanding their descriptions in relation to the dynamic between the problem and the others. On the one hand, they have an understanding of the problem we face, and on the other hand, they observe the inertia of social change and the marginalization of their problem formulation, as the others are described as caught in denial and false consciousness. Activists find themselves in a position where they need to continuously adapt and react to the others' view on them, trying to take the role of others to see themselves from the outside, adjusting to the outside's definitions of them in order to act accordingly. Simultaneously, activists are drawing upon scientific knowledge of climate change and the necessary course of action. This has emotional implications in the form of sensing a crisis, anxiety, fear, and in “an experience that shakes your entire foundation”, as Axel put it. It also carries implications for the strategic aspects of climate activism, as the general population is understood to struggle with denial and false consciousnesses because of the difficulty of accepting the state of crisis.

6.3.1 Narratives of Crisis

Having come to this understanding of the incompatibility of the socio-economic order with planetary boundaries, as well as the inertia of social change, many of the interviewees described the future in gloomy terms. Ultimately, scientific knowledge and/or a political interest has not provided any comfort for them, as every informant reacted by narrating a story of a world in deep crisis:

Anna: When you have so much frustration inside regarding the climate issue it is nice to sometimes just go out and scream a little bit.

KB: What frustration are you thinking?

Anna: [abject tone] Well that so little is happening, that it isn't being taken seriously, that it is so urgent and so slow.

KB: Mm. You don't sound very hopeful?

Anna: No. I really am not [laughs]. I feel that my life as active has really gone in waves because it sometimes felt as if 'There is no point, why would I care, it will never work out anyway'.

Louise: Maybe it really sounds like a conspiracy, but I think that climate change won't be able to be stopped and that we will keep burning fossil fuels for some time still. Even if we stopped today, things would still keep happening which we don't really know what it will mean. And we won't do it today, so it will continue for quite a long time, and then I think it will start collapsing then, in some ways, and then it is good to have that type of knowledge, to be able to get food, and set up a fire, maybe.

Anna presents demonstrations as an opportunity to scream out her frustration, and given that "so little is happening", she sometimes felt that there was no point in being an activist. Toning down her impression by starting out by saying it may sound like a conspiracy, Louise expresses deep concerns with the state of affairs, fearing that even *if* we stop today, the climate will still change for some time ahead⁴, to the point that she considered learning the skills of how to gather food and to set up a fire. By the same token, Ludwig drew parallels to a world war:

I hope that a sufficiently large part of the population will come to insight of how vast this problem is, and that they shift position and attitude to the climate crisis so that we really start treating it as a crisis. And that it in a few years will be seen as a global project, in the same magnitude of a world war, that now we need to mobilize for this. So yeah, we will have to introduce rationing on these and these goods, but people will nevertheless understand and accept it.

Often the shortage of time was emphasized in the quotes above, as "so little is happening" and that climate change "won't be able to be stopped". Ludwig thus wished that "a sufficiently large part of the population" would awaken from their slumber, given that we are effectively approaching the point where it is too late. Thus:

Ida: Now it is time to fight, and there are not many years left when we can do it either, before it is too late. Then I believe that most people will actually keep fighting after, if we actually wouldn't solve the problem, and it is over in four years and 'We will never be able to turn this', I still think people will keep on, I think that some, some may give up, but I think many, myself included, will be like 'No, we are doing this to the end', sort of. It is a little bit dying-on-the-barricades feeling, without... Dying on the barricades.

Elin: I've tried so many forms [of engagement]. Really, since I was a kid. From writing small home-made magazines and giving them to people, and people think it is really cute, to when I was active in Green Students. Now I don't sympathize with them any longer, but when I did, I

⁴ The so-called *Rebound effect*: our current emissions continue to have effects into the future even if emissions cease today.

felt that you never really did something for real. The same thing was when I worked with environmental issues, I felt that it was like polishing a surface. It already feels too late, and we have to end fossil fuels now. It was now already a long time ago.

Many worried that it is already too late, saying that we should have acted long time ago. In that fashion, “conventional” work with environmental matters did not amount to much more than polishing a surface. As social change remains slow, despite all knowledge available, informants invariably narrated a state of crisis, using tropes such as war, rationing, and dying for the cause.

6.3.2 Activism and its Symbolic Significance

Finding themselves in their aforementioned position, describing the others as in denial or possessive of false consciousness, activism was often described as a way of symbolically reaching the others to convince them that it is a big problem and that we can solve it together. Going beyond parliamentary politics, activism sought to awaken others, to make the connections they were described to lack and show how climate change is urgent also for people in the Global North. It was about giving exposure to the tension between the living standards of the current society and the planet, and to the vast exploitation occurring in the name of growth and progress, and to inspire change:

Emil: You want to show with your entire life that this is something worth fighting for, and to somehow show, to somehow inspire other people. And if I can inspire two people, who inspire two people, that inspire two people, then it will grow, or if everyone can do it rather, if we can grow so fast that you can't move anywhere in the world without hearing us.

To this end, four of the informants had participated in mass actions such as Ende Gelände and Code Rood, both aiming to block the fossil fuel industry's infrastructure in Germany and the Netherlands. Although they are concrete on-the-ground actions, the purpose of them was also described largely as symbolic, as halting production for one or two days, though annoying, is negligible to the industry:

Louise: The production is stopped because it is some type of security hazard then, and they can simply not export it [the coal]. But yeah, it is seen as a symbolic thing.

What it did create, however, was lots of media coverage, making the headlines to the point of being branded as eco-terrorists in the German media. Another account that emphasized how

mass actions become largely symbolic is the following description of a Code Rood action in the Netherlands, which the plant had planned for, neutralizing the material effects:

Ludwig: There were rumors that at the plant they had counted on this and saved gas, because they knew we were coming, and they even gave workers days off those days, planning for it. So, in that regard it was a little bit of an anti-climax.

In a similar fashion, another civil disobedience action described by Louise, which ultimately lead to legal repercussions, targeted an inactive plant for the symbolic effect.

Louise: ...it was more symbolic, because I don't think it was the power plant, or whatever it is, was running, but this was some kind of reserve. So, it was more symbolical, because there was an IPCC meeting in [City] the same week,

However, not only actions, but also many individual acts also resided in the symbolic domain:

Linnéa: But I think that many individual things are symbolic in that they might not, what I do might not be very important if you look at emissions, but it says to my politicians that yes I care about this and you should care about this. Because if we don't show our politicians that we care about climate change, then they never will care about climate change either.

Facing powerful industries and institutions, and a population that is not cooperating, climate activism was in many ways presented as symbolic in nature as informants sought to grow the movement, spread knowledge and recruit more members. In symbolic interactionist terms, activism can be understood as trying to arouse in others a feeling that requires behavioral change, and activists acknowledged this. In their case, it was through communicating that climate change cannot be solved as long as our economic system remains spellbound by the fossil fuel industry. Having once awakened to the problems themselves, others were to be awakened next.

6.3.3 There Is No Alternative

Perhaps it is because Swedish climate activists find themselves largely relegated to the domain of symbolic action that many of the informants reacted by describing their activism with such distance. Often, they did not speak highly of their activism and moreover expressed a lack of hope or powerlessness. It was often presented that one's own work in Sweden was described as negligible, as everyone needs to act simultaneously and globally. Often, focus was put on the hindrances, on the work left to do, and on the distance between their

understanding and that of the masses. Ultimately, activists proposed system change, yet many saw it as unrealistic thus far:

Linnéa: We need to see a bigger system change, which I don't have any great hope that will happen, even if I myself would definitely want to see it.

Yet given the sense of living in a crisis, there nevertheless was no alternative to activism. "What would I do otherwise, you know, should I just be a cog in the machine?", as Ludwig put things. Similar to this sentiment, Louise laughed nervously at the banality of her group's work:

Well we have done a lot of [laughs] lectures and we write texts and so on.

KB: You're laughing?

Louise: [laughs] Yes well it feels. It feels so banal somehow, when the situation is so serious. But we have also done some actions...

A feeling of banality was one expression their presented futility, and another was skepticism. Anna questioned her own her influence, describing her activism as, if nothing else, offering nice socializing:

It is just this last year that I have been joining associations and groups and am trying to be more active in a more collective way.

KB: Why?

Anna: Because I was always thinking that I should get engaged in something, because it gives more force and motivation. I study environmental science and it often feels quite depressing, but it feels like it is more rewarding to do things together with other people. Even if it doesn't always feel as if you can change very much it is at the very least nice to meet people that think the way you do and do something. So that you feel that you're doing *something* (emphasis added).

In a similar fashion to Anna, Ludwig and Axel all described this feeling of powerlessness, sensing that whatever they did probably had little to no effect. Yet, they describe that it was imperative to still be engaged, as there was no alternative to activism:

Ludwig: ... it is often true as well that one's own actions don't have great importance, globally [laughs]. It is difficult to tell oneself. But at the same time the point is getting the collective on your side, to get the masses on board.

KB: So you are mixing a kind of half-beaten down feeling with an active engagement, you are trying to combine those two?

Ludwig: Yes exactly, and I don't see an alternative to being engaged. Even if most reports say that it will get pretty bad. Already now we are seeing climate changes, and we already have half a degree [celcius] that are already locked in by the emissions we have emitted, that will come.

Axel: I have to get engaged somehow, it isn't even about whether I can cause any meaningful change, it is just that *this is what I have to do any way*. So yeah...

KB: So then you're, partly you feel that you have to do something but at the same time you don't know if it has any effect, but you have to do it anyway?

Axel: Yes, absolutely. It is always hard to know if you have any meaningful effect in the bigger picture. I mean. I almost assume that I don't. I guess I have become, well my friends would describe me as a cynic. I'm not an optimist at least (emphasis added).

Axel described himself as not optimistic, and he was not unique in that regard. Many informants presented feeling that it is too late and that we are already in crisis, and that whatever one does largely negligible. To this end, I borrow Fisher's (2010) term *reflexive impotence*: informants knew that the situation is bad, but also knew that they cannot do much about it – they were reflexive of their impotence to inspire change. Although Fisher (2010) worries that this is a self-fulfilling prophecy, my informants were *very active* and *did act*, trying to contribute to a bigger political project which could inform political change. Yet even when doing so, they expressed a certain reflexive impotence, that change could probably not be achieved, yet trying was necessary – what would be the alternative? As Anna put it, at the very least it was good to “feel that you're doing something”.

From a sociology of emotions perspective, this is an interesting position. Shott (1979) claims that empathy is one source of altruistic behavior, and that we through ameliorating the unhappiness of the people we empathize with, or by increasing their happiness, our own feelings are relieved accordingly (Shott, 1979). Empathy is understood as an expression of the social group being incorporated into our selves. Yet climate activists find themselves in a position where no matter how empathic their understanding, the problem and its obstacles are too great, and they described a sense of crisis, how the climate issue is “depressing”, and what I interpret as reflexive impotence.

It is interesting to consider whether this reflexive impotence originates from the experience of being an activist, in which the obstacles and the challenges have become clearer than ever, or if it has been with activists all along. Joining a group or participating in mass actions ought to require some sort of hope or motivation at first – if one does not believe change is possible, why bother? My findings here indicate the former, as informants described seeing the actual resistance through mass actions as showing them how colossal the problems really are.

Whether there is an initial optimism that fades away is for other studies to determine however, as my empirical data does not allow for any conclusions regarding a potential change over

time. Either way, activists presented their activism by describing that there is no alternative. In this sense, Ludwig affirmed my characterization of him as “mixing a kind of half-beaten down feeling with an active engagement”, working against what Ida termed “the impending doom”.

6.3.4 Climate Anxiety

KB: I was thinking that on the one hand you're an activist, but do you also engage in more individual solutions as well? [...]

Louise: Yes I have to say that I do, although *not as a political act, but more like, I don't know, maybe some form of anxiety management*, maybe. That I try, that I don't eat meat and I eat a lot of vegan food and I don't fly and so on, *just because it feels too bad* (emphasis added)

Of course, from having understood the gravity of the climate crisis, and subsequently subscribing to these narratives of crises, an emotional response follows in reaction. In all of the interviews I probed around the topic of “climate anxiety” [*klimatångest*]. However, I did *not* use climate anxiety as a diagnostic-psychological criterion, but as an everyday term which people utilize to describe their feelings, in line with Shott (1979). This sentiment is strengthened by the fact that climate anxiety surfaced naturally in some interviews, whereas in others I was the one to mention it. There is some controversy and debate as to whether it is a good term, which some informants themselves reflected upon. Whether this is the case is for others to consider, on my end it has been a tool to probe into the emotional spectrum of informants.

In the introductory excerpt, Louise described that she had changed her lifestyle, not because she thought it made any difference, yet she had to, as she described lifestyle changes as a way of managing her anxiety. Throughout interviewing it became clear that informants invariably felt strong negative emotions in relation to climate change, although presented not only as anxiety, but also as panic or fear:

KB: Sometimes you have heard about people speaking about climate anxiety...

Axel: Mm

KB: What do you think about that?

Axel: Yes, it is definitely a term I would use, it certainly does exist, I feel like shit every day, actually. More or less, there are degrees in hell, but I definitely feel it, I have felt it for the bigger part of my life. It is something that has always existed in the background, in my thinking about the future and during the majority of my life.

Ida: I think that primarily a lot of young people have it. This feeling about, the impending doom. Or that, now we are going under.

KB: You said that you have had it?

Ida: Oh yes. And it comes... Or let's put it this way, my climate anxiety has lessened. I feel that the climate anxiety lessens by being active, and it is also why I am active. To somehow confront the problem more often makes it feel less stressful.

KB: Now we will return to that you mentioned 'panic'

Linnéa: Yes [laughs].

KB: Would you like to elaborate?

Linnéa: Yes, well as I said, I think that I more and more think that we will never get there, we will not make it.

KB: Do you feel hopelessness?

Linnéa: I don't know if it is hopelessness, I don't really think I'm there yet, I think that I am still at the stage where I get motivated by the panic, so for me it has been quite good after all.

As the quotes above all show, climate anxiety was something that many were ready to admit experiencing, as they described that “we will never get there”, “we are going under”, and informants described a future world ravaged by injustices and natural catastrophes. Again, the lack of time was often held forth. Approaching this from symbolic interactionism, I posit here that activists' climate anxiety arises from the interaction between the understanding of the problem and the others, whose change was described throughout as too slow. It is not merely the reaction to the physical problem of climate change, but it should be understood to emerge partly from the actual and projected impact of climate change, as well as from the social body's inertia to change according to scientific findings. With that said, many of them described their negative feelings as a source of motivation and energy, presenting their activism as a constructive outlet for negative feelings. It was described that through engaging in climate activism, these negative feelings were ameliorated, strengthening claims that fear or anxiety can catalyze activism (Kleres & Wettergren, 2017). In the words of Emil, “to be a climate activist is to in some regard get an outlet for it, to stand somewhere and scream ‘Come on! Wake up! Do something!’”.

As I mentioned in the literature review, a distinction can be drawn between direct and indirect eco-anxiety (Pihkala, 2018). What has been seen throughout my study is primarily the indirect one, taking the shape of an *existential* worry. Direct eco-anxiety was less pertinent, as informants generally described themselves as not having a particularly strong relationship to nature. Additionally, local ecological concerns were seldom the problems around which they mobilized. On the contrary, informants described how climate change was an existential

threat, presenting a worry for children, future generations, and the people in the Global South who will suffer the most.

However, while some came to present their feelings as anxiety on their own, others were a bit more skeptical of the term, despite indeed feeling strong negative emotions.

KB: Well there has been a popular culture debate around the concept climate anxiety – what do you feel about it?

Ludwig: I'm generally very skeptical to the term 'climate anxiety'. I think it is a term that is misused and utilized by the right to portray some sort of worried, moral-panic-type-of-person who cannot take care of themselves and who are not able to act but just wander around worrying. I don't know, I don't know if I like the term 'climate anxiety'.

KB: No okay. But if you would disregard the associations then, and just see it as a worry, an intense worry for the climate... Well I guess that is something one has...

Ludwig: Of course, of course.

While “of course” very worried about climate change, Ludwig was concerned that the consolidation of climate anxiety as a term would mean branding climate activists as worried people who cannot take care of themselves. Here, in symbolic interactionist terms, Ludwig is reacting to the definitions of specific others, not letting them define him and his group, as they seek to denigrate climate activists. Elin expressed a similar sentiment:

Elin: I am trying to channel it into anger or into action, but yes I have a lot of existential anxiety that the world may not exist in the way we know it. And this I have had since I was a kid. [...] But I am a little bit tired of the term because... I think it is often used by people who *are* passive in the issue. [...] I think I am more angry, or I don't know, I guess I am both (emphasis original).

Although Elin was weary of the term, seeing it as associated with a kind of reflexive passivity, she did feel strongly. Whether it was to be categorized as anger or anxiety was not as clear. There was also a component of *guilt* involved, as she felt she could not do enough:

Elin: Mm. I don't know if I have considered my feelings as climate anxiety, I don't know if it is because I am denying it. I probably have anxiety more because I think I am not engaged enough and it turns into stress.

KB: Yes... Yet you seem rather engaged?

Elin: Yes, exactly.

All in all, negative emotions concerning the state of affairs were rife, whether described as fear, anger, guilt or anxiety. Although some have suggested that climate anxiety may have a passivizing effect, it was clear that informants saw it as a source of energy for their activism.

This strengthens Kleres & Wettergren's (2017) suggestion that fear inspires action. Of course, studies of non-activists are needed to better understand the dynamic, but for the moment it can be concluded that climate anxiety is far from a mere hindrance to action. Having said this though, this intense worry also loomed as a threat:

Emil: Partly it [climate anxiety] takes the shape that they are very engaged and active climate activists. Some to the point that they get burnt out, because it is an enormously tough struggle, a great burden.

And it is this notion to which I now turn – the burden.

6.3.5 Awakening as a Burden

Up to here, I have described how what was initially presented as an awakening to the state of affairs, or of crisis rather, is associated with a negative emotional reception. In this section, I interpret preceding sections into a coherent frame: that the climate awakening, with its sense of crisis and emotional reactions, ultimately poses a heavy burden. This is tightly linked to the denial ascribed to others. In the words of the informants themselves:

Axel: It is a pretty tough awakening to realize that you are responsible for one of the greatest threats humanity faces. But above all I think that it is about economic interests, because you shouldn't forget that many of these oil corporations very early, often before the general public, knew about the consequences from this. [...] I can't, it tells me something that almost makes it difficult for me to breathe, when I think that 'What if we would have cut down [emissions], what if we would have started then?'

Emil: To somehow accept that this is how it is, is to undertake a very big burden, to have to advocate this, and to admit that 'Yes I live in a very unstable climate, in a very unstable environment'. I mean, I don't know what will happen in a hundred years, I mean no one wants to take on more anxiety than necessary. It is a very disturbing picture that for example Extinction Rebellion supplies, and I think that there is some truth to that people would just like to see that everything is fine, that every day is like the other.

Ludwig: Partly it is, from a sociological perspective, rather difficult to imagine the great change that is needed, *it is difficult to take on a change of that magnitude*. [...] Sometimes you ask yourself why you're engaged in the climate issue because there are so many factors that makes you abject. It is a pretty depressing issue somehow and it is not possible to progress locally if everyone doesn't do it simultaneously. It makes it much more difficult than any other issue, that it really doesn't matter if Sweden goes fossil free if the rest of the world doesn't to it as well. It makes it very difficult to maintain focus and keep pushing for it, to keep fighting.

Above, all informants present the awakening to the perils of climate change as posing a burden. It is a “tough awakening”, it means taking on a “very big burden” and it is “difficult to imagine a change of that magnitude”. In the words of Ludwig, taken to their logical conclusion, a comprehension of the climate crisis requires global changes so vast they approach the unimaginable. Given the seriousness of the problems at hand, vast changes are needed, and accepting this takes its toll, as Emil mentions this realization in relation to anxiety.

Ultimately, the difficulty in taking on this burden was presented as part of the reason why other people do not become climate activists, and why they succumbed to denial. As I have shown, informants described non-activists to be in denial, and here it is understood as following from that “it is a very disturbing picture” that is emerging. Awakening to the crisis and becoming an activist was presented as an enormous obstacle, given that it means looking inwards, taking on great responsibility and accepting that vast (potentially uncomfortable) lifestyle changes are immanent:

KB: It is relatively rare that someone calls themselves a climate activist thus far. Why do you think that is?

Axel: Absolutely. I think that it once again reflects that the climate is such an incredibly uncomfortable issue. It is so uncomfortable for people to talk about it, more than other issues, for better or for worse, it requires introspection and it puts back the responsibility on the individual more than most other issues. I mean, most people don't look at themselves and wonder ‘Oh what have I actually done about the gang shootings in Malmö?’

This realization of the vast changes necessary may be a hindrance too big, as Louise saw “politically aware” acquaintances succumb to passivity:

Why so few are climate activists? I think it is partly about, well, many people that I know who are politically aware and maybe know, hold the same view that I do about this conflict [between nature and society] and so on, I think it is because they don't see that it is possible to change, that the challenges are too great, and then I think that they don't get engaged, because it looks too dismal.

KB: So they lay down flat?

Louise: Yes. Exactly.

Awakening to the climate crisis was tough for informants themselves, but also caused denial in the others who they ultimately sought to recruit. Faced with this burden, some informants expressed that wish they were wrong:

Axel: ...I feel very tough when saying this, but I have sort of lost my faith that most people over 40 actually can understand and act in accordance with the climate. *I am happy to be disproven on that point, more than happy* (emphasis added).

KB: But it is some type of change of the entire framework that is needed, then? Further modernization and technological optimism isn't the way?

Emil: No. And if against all odds it is, I will be very happy, but there is no evidence to suggest that.

Here both Axel and Emil present their views, presenting that they wish they were wrong, given their hard-to-digest conclusions. Describing the difficulty of converting people aged above 40 and that radical change is needed, the implication is that the challenges are so big that it would be easier if they were wrong. In a similar fashion, Louise described her aversion to capitalism, though she conceded that a future climate friendly society may be less comfortable for her personally:

But perhaps you could argue that I also benefit from the state of affairs given how well off I am.

KB: Yes... Things are okay for you?

Louise: No. Or they are, but [laughs]

KB: Do tell!

Louise: No but it isn't so fun to live under capitalism, I think. But at the same time that I can eat what I want, all the time I can just go and buy whatever I want, and all those things that might be taken away from me in this other system that I... [envision]. Or in another society I might not be as well off.

All things considered, holding a political view that contradicts the entire society, scientifically informed though it may be, poses a burden that is both political and emotional. Accepting the implications is bitter pill to swallow, as the reforms that follow from it may not be in the interest of one's convenience, as described by Louise. Ultimately, informants presented carrying this burden as a difficult task, and as one of the obstacles for spreading climate activism further, as denial often follows. They described their own conclusions as hard to digest, conceding that the future may not be as comfortable, and that they wish they were wrong about this. As part of carrying this burden, activists were ready to make sacrifices for their activism.

6.3.6 Sacrifices

The attentive reader will have noticed that in many of the descriptions laid out up to here, guilt figures as a backdrop. Here, I want to suggest that the burden that follows from climate awakening stems *partly* from a feeling of guilt, a guilt which inspires action. To briefly

recapitulate some of my already used excerpts to substantiate this claim, informants described that “we have to change our lifestyle”, because “people are suffering a lot from how we in the Western world live” given that “it is we who are exploiting their land and resources so that society can develop”. The burden of climate awakening is difficult to accept, “because you yourself feel guilt, because all of us, just by being in Sweden, make use of this vast infrastructure, so we have a big climate debt”.

The takeaway is that our society and our lifestyles exist at the expense of others, who are disproportionately affected by the effects of climate change, making justice an important value. From a sociology of emotions perspective, people feel guilt when evaluate themselves as participating in “behaviors that violate moral codes as specified by the generalized other” (Turner & Stets, 2005, p. 108). Thus, when people say that they experience guilt it is when they have violated the society’s moral codes, and they are motivated to eliminate this negative self-evaluation. According to Wettergren (2013), many social movements geared toward alleviating the suffering of others have to find ways to manage guilt. Guilt has the possibility of catalyzing altruistic behavior as a compensation, and it functions mechanism for social control as individuals monitor themselves as to act in ways that promote social solidarity, seeking to rid themselves of guilt (Shott, 1979).

In the case of my study, the generalized other's morality can be understood as one of fairness, justice, non-exploitation, human rights: the very values that activists found being violated through climate change, which was described to be caused by “us”, by the very economic framework in which we exist. As such, activists can be understood to take on the guilt of their society, as they were willing to sacrifice themselves in various ways, as they adjusted their behavior to relieve guilt (Shott, 1979; Wettergren, 2013). This *despite* their ideological opposition to individualizing and engaging in life politics, as emotional relief can be interpreting as trumping this. Sometimes what I interpret as sacrifices took the shape of paying four times the price to take bus or train instead of flying, but they were also made to the detriment of health, social comfort, future plans in education and family plans. It was not always comfortable:

Ida: The problem is that no, it isn't comfortable to be a climate activist, it is definitely not comfortable to be a climate activist, but it is also pretty damn necessary. [...] It [mass actions abroad] usually feels worth it when you come home and get to sleep of the fever.

KB: Did you say fever?

Ida: Yes, you always get a little bit ill. It is always like, the high stress, you sleep a little bit bad, high pressure, you know. You usually get a little bit ill from exhaustion.

As part of climate activism not being especially comfortable, Ida expressed with blasé that she expected to become ill after a climate action. The most extreme manifestation of this discomfort was provided by Johanna, whose commitment to climate activism ultimately led to a burn-out that she had been struggling with for a long time:

But then I got... Then I quit, and the drawback of this is that I have been fighting with burn out and fatigue syndromes back and forth. In the end it became... You could say that the climate movement wore me and my engagement down [*tog helt död på mig*]. And that was two years ago, and since then it has been a long way back.

While these two were examples in which activism was carried out to the detriment of health, for others it shaped how they planned their life. Several informants had chosen university education with the explicit aim of developing a further understanding of climate change. For Axel, climate activism came to take an important role why he chose *not* to study:

I was thinking of studying, it was a thought I had for a while that I should get educated within something related to the environment, but, and once again this might reveal something about how I see the future, but... Seriously, should I study a program for four years and when I am finished the climate goals are still screwed? I might actually be able to make a bigger difference if I put my time and energy on being as active as I can, while I am working and providing for myself and the rest of the time, or as much as possible of the rest of the time where I can manage I will dedicate myself to activism...

KB: Okay, so then you're... Well then *you could almost call it efficiency measure?*

Axel: *Yes, actually that is the best way to put it.* Because, well yes I also think it is a little bit difficult to structure studying, so it was a little bit from there... (emphasis added).

While he conceded that he had difficulty structuring studies, climate activism was presented to play an important role in his choice of not studying, with the ultimate goal described as being able to devote more time to activism. To that end, he agreed that “efficiency measure” was a fitting term to describe his choice. His engagement for the climate thus exercised a strong influence in his decision making, and it did so for others as well, for example when talk about future children surfaced. Given that informants were young, it was not a major consideration in their lives thus far. Nevertheless, two informants presented (without being asked about it explicitly) that although they were not fully certain of what they wanted, the prospects of a climate crisis had tipped them over into thinking that they might *not* want to have children:

Linnéa: Then there is this matter of whether to have children or not, it has also been a big debate, from the climate perspective. That it isn't the most environmentally friendly you can do, to have children⁵. It depends a lot on the personal stuff, on the individual...

KB: How have you felt about that then?

Linnéa: It is something where I have changed myself pretty recently. Now I am that young so that I don't walk around thinking I'll have children soon, but I have been thinking that, well yes I might want to have children when I'm older. But I have more or less completely changed my mind, I don't think it is 100% because of climate anxiety, but it is definitely one of the reasons I have changed my mind, thinking that no maybe it isn't something that I want any more.

KB: Do you feel that it means something for how you plan your future to have a certain amount of climate anxiety?

Louise: Yes, maybe a little bit. Or I don't know. For example regarding children. I can't say but I feel that I do not want children, because it feels too difficult to bring a life into this world, but I don't know...

KB: For the world or for the life?

Louise: I'm thinking for the life, but really I don't know if it is about that, or if it is about not wanting to have children, but it is a parameter in it.

A similar line of reasoning was presented by another informant, recalling a conversation between two friends, who discussed the tension between bringing a life to the world and seeing the world coming to an end. Others described how their activism was a continuous threat to their social interactions, as they found themselves balancing between the activist role of trying to convince people to live sustainably and being a socially pleasant person in social interactions:

Linnéa: It is a balancing act between saying what you think and being this moral police that you don't always feel like being, and I think that is a really difficult balancing act.

Anna: ...it often felt that I was boring and annoying all the time, being like 'But can't we go by bike instead?' and so on, to be the one that everyone thinks is the annoying one.

KB: Oh, when was that?

Anna: With friends home in [city], when I was always like the one that 'But listen can't we just car pool?' and so on. I always felt annoying when making remarks on things which I thought were stupid. To all the time be the one who makes things harder and more difficult.

KB: Pointing fingers?

Anna: Yes sort of. But I cannot not intervene.

From a symbolic interactionist perspective, the above struggles can be conceived as trying to act in accordance with one's sense of self to the largest extent possible, without destroying the social atmosphere, i.e. making others uncomfortable. Informants found themselves at times taking the role of an *ecological* killjoy (Ahmed, 2017). By the same token, Axel saw himself

⁵ An unorthodox opinion that was not presented by anyone else, yet it is still indicative of the tendency to sacrifice certain things for one's cause, to evaluate life choices in relation to one's ecological footprint.

carrying through activities which he himself found unpleasant, yet nevertheless had to be done:

I have participated in, participated personally in a few demonstrations, and I'm participating in one tomorrow. So yes. It is often, well it might be the part of climate activism that I like the least. I'm not much of a manifestation person. I am the one who appreciates sitting by myself and reading about the problem and writing texts about the problem. But I do my best to show up at as many manifestations as possible, it is also a matter of practice, you get better at handling it.

All things considered, I have deemed that what has been presented to me has been many of the ways in which life as a climate activist takes its toll and means certain sacrifices. In the section on previous research I described that Jia et al. (2017) found that non-activists saw environmental activists as motivated by egoism and self-interest, only engaging in activism when it fit them. Although not discussed in their study, that indicates that non-activists projected their own motivations onto activists. Non-activists themselves were not ready to engage in pro-environmentalism unless the benefits were greater than the costs, dismissing activists as “virtue signaling”, i.e. doing empty symbolic work devoid of actual content to seem morally good.

Contrarily, what I have found in this study has been that climate activists willing to sacrifice themselves in various ways, and not just when a cost-benefit analysis turned out in their favor. “Sacrifice” was not an explicit description by informants, yet I suggest that coming to the realization of the seriousness at hand meant that the climate activists evaluated much of their life in relation to climate activism, leading to various sacrifices. This despite ideological opposition individualization, as I suggest the emotion relief provided by acting in accordance with one's climate-friendly self trumps this. This further strengthens the interpretation that climate awakening amounts to a burden. This also echoes Veldman's (2012) account of the effectiveness of the apocalyptic narrative, which provides a moral framework through which we filter everyday actions, as ambitions to lower one's carbon footprint guides life choices. This claim is consistent with my findings here, as far as individual life choices are concerned (which were described as insufficient). In the final analysis, coming to understand the climate crisis meant a reevaluation of life in its entirety, as Axel put it.

6.3.7 On Practicing as You Preach

The readiness to make individual sacrifices for one's climate activism is an interesting finding. I described previously that informants disavowed individual responsibility in favor of collective solutions, yet it must be said that *all of them* described making various individual choices to be more climate friendly, such as not flying, following a vegetarian diet, buying less and so on. However, they did not present these activities as strategies for change, but as a way of to feel good, to avoid critique, and ultimately, to *practice as you preach*:

KB: But you speak about changing your lifestyle, is that something you have done yourself?

Elin: Well yes I don't fly. But it is also like, what difference does it really make if I took a flight after a couple of years, but now it is just that it would feel very strange if I did that, when I am engaged in this. But it is possible, I don't have really strict rules for myself, it is more that I am trying to practice as I preach. I know I should be a vegan, but I'm not.

Axel: I think that it is also about trying to appear as a credible voice that be able to practice as you preach, because otherwise it is very easy for opponents to point that well 'You have flown around the globe four times this year, are you going to talk to us about the best climate actions?'

Here is an interesting tension between what one does and what one asks of others. Activists themselves did major lifestyle changes, yet as I have shown, they reacted to the inertia of social change and public opinion by understanding, rather than by demanding individual responsibility or shaming unsustainable behaviors, as this reaction may further estrange non-activists from the climate struggle. From the sociology of emotions, shame is understood as a control mechanism that motivates people to either engage in altruistic behavior, or to avoid the situation from where shame was aroused (Turner & Stets, 2005). Given the previous discussion on denial, it was clear that activists saw others taking the latter path. Thus, there was a sense that others should not be shamed for not knowing, given the aforementioned emotional and economic obstacles to comprehending climate change.

While activists felt pressured to "practice as you preach" and to "appear as a credible voice", the other way around they also expressed a need to tone down their expressions, to not seem like a "hippie", a "spectacle", or a "virtue signaling" "know-it-all". These contradictory descriptions testify to the peculiar position climate activists that find themselves in. On the one hand, they felt expected to practice as they preach, in order to avoid criticism for being hypocrites. In the case of this study, the logical conclusion of their realizations was presented as veganism, not flying, consuming less and steering one's life away from materialism, and

protesting against the fossil fuel industry. Then, on the other hand, they felt compelled to manage their external impression by not being so radical, by avoiding looking like “hippies”, by seeming like “a normal and decent person” and by not shaming and blaming non-activists. However, this then may get them dismissed as hypocrites by non-activists, along the grounds that “I bet those protesters have phones/go on holiday/wear leather shoes” (Monbiot, 2019). Climate activists find themselves on a tightrope between being practicing as they preach, therefore potentially becoming hard to relate to, and living in a way that is too normal, which is then argued to undermine their own conclusions. This is an ambiguous position, as symbolic interactionism postulates that feedback that contradicts our own self leads to an emotional response which compels us to adjust. Yet faced with *the hippie-hypocrite paradox*, it was not clear how this could be done.

This conflict was never made explicit, though it is arguably reflected in how informants sought to tailor their activism to fit the generalized other, namely through reframing it in terms of broader values that more people believe in. This fits very well with notion that social interaction is a game of continuous actions and reactions, as well as with Goffman’s (1956) claim that presentations tend to emphasize the values that are accredited by the broader society. In this light, many activists described a desire to tie the climate into other issues which are already widely acclaimed to make people more susceptible to their message, be it justice, feminism, asylum rights, or anti-racism:

Linnéa: I think that we should talk more about responsibility and justice in the climate debate, because I think those are important components if we are to succeed [...] Then it is easier to attract people, because if you care about one issue and I can prove that climate change will for certain affect this issue, then it is easier for you to care about it too. So we should probably connect it to other justice issues.

Johanna: Yes, that’s why I think that if we spoke about it more as a social justice issue and more of a class issue, and perhaps pulled it into the feminist or the anti-racist movement. I think it is both a right-wing and a left-wing issue, I want it to be everywhere. But... Yes well then it would have been much easier to understand it. [...] You don’t have to talk about PPM [parts per million] in the atmosphere, how much carbon emissions we have, because it is more scientific and requires a certain level of knowledge to understand.

These two quotes indicate the difficulties in constructing a political movement based on scientific claims about statistics and projections into the future. Climate justice and arguments that appeal to people’s emotions as opposed to their rational side was mentioned by several informants. Faced with the difficulties of fully grasping the crisis due to denial and powerful actors obscuring the problems, a perspective of justice was presented as a fruitful one.

Perhaps that is why the forest fires that ravaged Sweden in 2018 were mentioned at several occasions, since they provided a material and emotional manifestation of statistics that were described as difficult for people to take in. Similarly, Johanna described how easy it was to mobilize Swedes around a planned mining project given the risks that it would contaminate the drinking water, which provided a clear problem which people could relate to emotionally, not just rationally.

6.3.8 The Emotional Significance of Mass Actions

Just as it was understood that emotional arguments carried a certain value for the recruitment of others, activists described their activism in emotional terms as well. Everything was not sketched in gloomy terms, and amidst it all, some informants also expressed minor wins. Ludwig described a small action in relation to a work fair that included representatives from the fossil fuel industry, the chemical industry and the weapons industry. Disillusioned with the invitation of these companies to a university work fair, Ludwig was part of a small action intending to provide an alternative view on what they were up to:

I think it was extremely successful. There were many people interested who wondered what we were doing, that came up to us and talked [...] I think it also gave a few thoughts to, well as I mentioned earlier, that many started reflecting about like 'Well where should you work? What should you actually dedicate yourself to?'. I don't know, I think it planted a seed among many, that you can be committed to societal issues also as an engineer.

Ludwig describes how their action led to people reflecting and “planted a seed” among the people affected, all things considered an “extremely successful” outcome. Johanna, again, who was part of a group organizing a small-turned-big action against mining in a forest in Sweden:

What I think that I take with me most of everything is the feeling of having power, that be able to influence things if only you joined forces with some friends and was a little bit smart and humoristic. We actually succeeded when it came to this issue about raise awareness about natural protection in Sweden and mining in Sweden, partly through this grass roots movement that we arranged in the forest, but we also raised it elsewhere. It created an entire movement in Sweden and has actually led to change, both at a political level and in particular legal cases.

Thus, here there was an instance in which activism did break through and cause changes beyond mere symbolic action. As previously mentioned, this action had clear material effects for the Swedish population however, which Johanna describes as making mobilization for the

action far easier. Note the emotional character of Johanna's description: there was a "feeling of having power" by joining forces.

As I have demonstrated, informants felt a lot of negative emotions in regard to the climate and the current state of affairs. Feelings were invoked in various ways, for example sustainable consumerism was described a way of avoiding or "managing" anxiety, and *feeling* that one did something was valuable even when it was suspected the actual effects were none. When writing about climate anxiety, I developed how informants presented their activism as a way of turning negative emotions into something positive. Here I want to discuss informants' descriptions of mass actions and argue that mass actions provide one venue for handling and overcoming the negative emotions presented up to here, as I already described how Anna said it was nice to "just go out and scream a little bit" to rid oneself of frustrations. Mass actions were described as significant from an emotional point in primarily two ways. Firstly, as an outlet for negative feelings, which I showed in the section on climate anxiety, where activists described activism in itself as a way to canalize negative emotions. Secondly, mass actions were described as an uplifting experience that spurred further action:

Emil: It was very constructive, and then during the action we were thousands of people gathered, it was an enormous feeling of community and of a common goal, and we were very firm that lets do this, like 'Fuck, fuck, let's close this shit down'. It was huge.

KB: Mm. How was it to attend Ende Gelände?

Elin: The first time it was really strengthening. Because it is also connected with a lot of sorrow. Because just because you're engaged doesn't mean you have hope, I really don't. It is really hard to watch politicians take shitty decisions year after year and media praises them as if they were progressive. So it was really strengthening to be there with thousands of people that are really engaged and have the chance to do something tangible. That that part of the industry was shut down, if only for a few hours.

Above, mass actions were described as strengthening one's convictions and determination, given the sorrow and lack of hope for the state of affairs. Against this backdrop, mass actions provided an "enormous sense of community" as something tangible was pursued. Describing participation in a large demonstration for during a climate meeting in Katowice, Anna presents becoming inspired for further activism:

I really felt that now I have found my inner activist, now I will begin blocking stuff. Yes it really gave me a big push, to be able to do stuff together. That everyone there really was dedicated, and really engaged, it was a lot of fun.

KB: Was it a push that you felt that you needed?

Anna: Yes it probably was. I mean I was already active and I would have been either way, but it gave me more of a fighting spirit.

A point to be made thus is that mass actions provide activists with an emotional outlet and a positive social experience, in addition to the material purpose of the action – blocking infrastructure and raising awareness of the crisis we face. In this sense, mass actions combine several functions: concrete action, strengthening bonds, creating a sense of belonging to a larger movement and countering one's negative emotions. In the words of Emil, this latter function was very important at times:

I think it is very important for the climate justice fight that we have each other to support each other and convince each other, because sometimes, sometimes the energy wanes. It is no wonder really, when you're trying to do something that is being actively resisted. I mean, capitalism builds on this type of resource extraction functioning.

This finding echoes Kleres & Wettergrens' (2017) finding that collective action *induces* hope rather than merely the other way around, as it induced “a fighting spirit”, as Anna put it. Reflecting upon strategy, one informant suggested that small civil disobedience actions are useful in the sense of lowering the threshold for further action. According to my findings here, there is some evidence to this claim. Faced with a great burden at their hands, many activists described participation in mass actions and demonstrations as strengthening their commitment to climate activism, which was welcomed. From the sociology of emotions, it can be argued that mass actions provide a way in for acting altruistically, which “can alleviate the burden imposed by negative emotions” (Turner & Stets, 2005, p. 109). Although others may oppose the altruism of a climate action, symbolic interactionism tells us that one's own definition is equally important. Being up against Goliath, informants described that collective action strengthened them in times of feeling weak, when their actions felt futile and banal. Mass actions can be interpreted as confirming activists' situational identities, having a socially integrating effect as it provided a sense of community and a positive experience, despite the mentioned “sorrow” which caused an action to take place.

This is an ambiguous path of argumentation however, given that many expressed reflexive impotence despite acting, as I have shown. Indeed, another way mass actions were presented as emotionally significant was through both “feeling the line of conflict in one's body” and as *seeing* how vast the resistance is. The pendulum swings between the constructive effect of mass actions versus the effect being a realization of how big the problems really are provides an interesting point of inquiry for further research.

7 Concluding Discussion

What has been offered in this thesis is an empirical analysis drawing on interviews with nine Swedish climate activists. Ultimately, what this study contributes is a glance into the interactive dynamic between climate activists, the others and the scientific and political problem that the onset of climate change poses. The seriousness of climate change is clear, and it is my hope that the findings of this study reveal certain characteristics of the activists fighting against the on-set of devastating climate change. I have also pointed out some tentative ideas for further research, which I will touch upon here.

As for the *problem*, some activists constructed it as the subjugation of nature under economics, and the exploitation of nature. Others were more overtly political and described the workings of capitalism as the fundamental problem, with its consumerism and endless growth, as big corporations and the fossil fuel industry are allowed to damage the planet. It was described that it is difficult for any individual to act sustainably, given that we are all entangled into a system built on fossil fuels. Coming to this understanding was described as a process of awakening. Although small reforms were positive, activists were careful not to praise them too much, as they saw large-scale collective action as a necessity.

In relation to this, they presented *non-activists* to suffer from denial, partly from the way climate change is structured: emissions come from the Global North, whereas effects are mainly in the Global South, with the exception of the 2018 forest fires. They also described others to possess a false consciousness, as the popular debate on climate change treated it as not serious enough, individualizing problems and focusing on toothless minor changes. The way activists related to the others, who ultimately are slow to rise up to the challenge, was presented as one of understanding and forgiveness, as they ascribed accountability to economic structures and large companies instead. This way of relating to the others makes them susceptible to activist campaigns. As activists sought to recruit more people, they did not present it as useful to shame people who acted environmentally irresponsibly. On the contrary, they opted for a description of a society in which everyone is kept hostage, rejecting individualization and advocating systemic change. Further studies should fruitfully inquire this with an explicit focus on emotions, looking at emotion work and emotional regimes.

The main part of the analysis focused on situating their descriptions in relation to the dynamic between the problem and the others. I argue that climate activists find themselves in the space

between having understood the gravity of climate change on the one hand, and finding themselves in a society where most people do not share their understanding of the problem, or its potential solutions, on the other. From the interaction between these two poles, tensions arise. Climate activists' descriptions testify to a society in a state of crisis, in which time is running out and where the others are caught in a false consciousness and struggle with denial. Activism is described as largely symbolic, whereby activists seek to expose the seriousness of climate change. Once having awakened to the crisis, they seek to provide the means for others to do so and to join the movement. With that said, the way activists described their activism was with a certain distance, and they feared that it did not change anything, that their role and their own efforts were negligible. Their political views remain marginal, however supported by science they may be. I have thus suggested that activists experience a reflexive impotence, as they find themselves reflexive of their own incapability for change.

Informants presented themselves as deeply skeptical that system change would be achieved in time however, some described that they wished they were mistaken, given their hard-to-digest conclusions. Yet there was nevertheless a sense that there was no alternative to activism. This gives the role of hope an ambiguous role for activism here, as many activists expressed *a lack of hope despite being active*, contrary to Pihkala's (2018) as well as Kleres & Wettergren's (2017) emphasis on the necessity of hope. This dynamic provides an interesting topic for further research: was there initial hope that faded away, or is an "abject" sense of crisis enough to stir people to action?

I have also claimed that the awakening to the climate crisis, with the physical problems as well as social inertia, poses a burden, as informants described climate anxiety, worry and fear. This burden was described as an obstacle to further the cause of activism, as other people succumbed to denial. Anxiety, nevertheless, was presented as a source of motivation. It was described that through being active, anxiety was ameliorated. I have also briefly mentioned the role of guilt. What I have found in this study was on the one hand an ideological opposition toward individualization and individual responsibility, yet activists simultaneously were ready to sacrifice themselves in various ways. Here, there is an interesting dynamic between the ideological and the emotional, as I have suggested that sacrifices allow an avenue for relief of guilt, a relief that trumps one's ideological convictions. This is an interesting point of further inquiry. All in all, informants evaluated many of their life choices in relation to the

climate, reaffirming Veldman's (2012) claim that the apocalyptic narrative provides a way of evaluating everyday decisions.

Moreover, I have argued that climate activists find themselves in a peculiar position with regard to how others see them. On the one hand, they describe being compelled to practice as they preach so that they are not dismissed as hypocrites. Simultaneously, they felt accused of being “hippies” and radicals that are “hard to relate to”. Climate activists walk the tightrope between these two, and risk being exposed as hypocrites for using e.g. a mobile phone, while not using one will get them accused of being “hippies” – I have called this situation *the hippie-hypocrite paradox*.

As for mass actions, informants described them in emotionally significant terms. In times of waning commitment, mass actions reinforced activists and provided a sense of community, as well as an outlet for negative emotions. As such, I have suggested that their descriptions of the emotional significance of mass actions suggest that mass actions also offer avenues for activists to handle their negative emotions through engaging in behavior understood as altruistic by their standards. Thus, mass actions and individual sacrifices can be understood as two ways making it easier to “bear their anxieties”, which Weintrobe (2013, p. 46) emphasizes the importance of. However, I have suggested that mass actions play an ambiguous role, as participating meant seeing the vast resistance against their struggle, to feel the line of conflict in their body, which could possibly exacerbate one's sense of crisis. This dynamic can be addressed by future studies.

All things considered, the self-presentations of the activists in this study testify to a movement that is very concerned of the state of affairs. Some of the traits described were a sense of being forgiving and understanding of the others, being insecure in the own project, and wishing that they were mistaken. Informants described that it was difficult to remain a cog in the machine, given the impending doom. Although up against both emotional obstacles and an entire way of life, the general sentiment was that there is no alternative to activism.

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Appendix A: Interview Guide

Activism

- How did you become a climate activist?
- What can it look like?
- Could you tell me about climate actions?
- How have they affected your future activism?
- What do you take with you from them?
- Is there something that you've read or watched that has been instrumental to your becoming-an-activist?

The Problem

- When we speak about the climate issue today – what do you see as the problem?
- Is there someone/are there some people that are particularly important?
- Are there any hindrances?
 - Why do the hindrances act the way they do?
- What is most important right now?
- What do you see as your role?
- How come your formulation of the problem remains so rare?

The Others

- Are there others who see the problem differently?
 - What do you think about them?
 - What are their drivers?
- What do you think that others should do?
- It is still rather rare to be a climate activist, why do you think that is?
- How are climate activists seen from the outside?
- What do you see as the solution to the climate issue?

Climate Anxiety

- Sometimes I have heard about the term climate anxiety – are you familiar with the term?
- What do you think about it?
- How does it take shape? [If informant has expressed feeling climate anxiety/fear/worry]
- Is this something you share with others?
- How does it affect the way you see the future?

Personal Background [if it has not already surfaced]

- Where are you from?
- What do your parents do?
 - Did you discuss politics at home?
- How did you grow up?
- Did you spend a lot of time “in nature”?
- Would you say that your relationship to nature has been important for your activism?

Appendix B: Translations of Interview Quotes

Interview quotes in Swedish with my English translation. Please note that “I” has been changed to “KB” (my initials) in the text of the actual thesis, and that the quotes are not in the same order as in the text.

<p>AXEL: Det finns ju så många olika nyanser av förnekande i klimatet, och, alltså min personliga reaktion, och tyvärr jag har ju många släktingar som lever på ett eller annat sätt i ett förnekande av detta. Också just för att de har byggt sina liv just kring kanske karriärer och marknadsföring och den typen av saker, liksom, att detta är någonting som är så, det, när man inser hur allvarligt, hur långtgående och hur fort vi måste agera i klimatkrisen. Det är liksom, det är en upplevelse som skakar om en i grunden, på alla sätt. Det förändrar hela ens syn på världen i alla aspekter... Är min personliga upplevelse av det i alla fall.</p>	<p>AXEL: There are so many forms of denial in the climate debate, and sadly I have many relatives that live in denial in one way or another. Because they built their lives around say careers and marketing and that sort of stuff, and this is something that, when you realize how serious, how far-reaching and how fast we need to act in the climate crisis. That’s an experience that shakes your entire foundation, in every possible way. It changes your entire view on the world in every aspect. That’s my personal experience of it at least.</p>
<p>“I: Hur blev du en klimataktivist? JOHANNA: Ja. Jag blev, när jag var 14 så blev jag medveten om klimatförändringarna, och då började väl min resa. Och sen när jag var 16 år, när jag började gymnasiet så gick jag med i en organisation som heter [organisation], som är en av Sveriges största ungdomsorganisationer för klimat och aktivister och naturintresserade. Och sen så blev jag mer och mer engagerad i föreningen och det tog upp större delen av mitt liv. I: Men då vänta, du sa att du blev medveten, du använde medveten, då du var 14? JOHANNA: Ja. I: Alltså hur då, då? JOHANNA: Eh. Ja men jag har två minnen. Det ena är att jag såg någon dokumentär på TV med mamma och pappa där de berättade om klimatförändringarna och att, att jag bara, “Men det här är ju helt sjukt, kommer världen gå under?” liksom. Eller. Alltså. Och jag kommer ihåg att min pappa sa då “Nä men det är inte säkert det här är sant” och. Och att jag tvivlade lite då, att jag trodde väl på det där, men samtidigt var så var jag väl också så att om det här är sant, så borde det väl vara mer känt, eller varför är det inte, det här det enda vi gör?”</p>	<p>I: How did you become a climate activist? JOHANNA: When I was 14 I became aware of climate change, and that’s when my journey started. Then when I was 16, when I started high school I joined an organization called [organisation], which is one of Sweden’s largest youth organizations for the climate and for activists and people interested in nature. Then I got increasingly involved in the organization and it occupied the majority of my life. I: But wait, you said that you become aware, you used aware, when you were 14? JOHANNA: Yes. I: But how, then? JOHANNA: Yes well I have two memories. One is that I saw a documentary on TV with my mom and dad where they talked about climate change and that I was like “But this is insane, is the world going to end?”. And I much remember that my dad said then “No but it is not certain that this is true”. And I doubted it a little then, but I believed in it, while simultaneously I felt that if this is true, it should be more well known, or why isn’t this the only thing we do?”</p>
<p>“LOUISE: Alltså jag blev såhär intresserad av... politik när jag var typ 15. Och så då började jag läsa på, mycket om samhället och såhär, och så var det väl någonstans i den processen som jag</p>	<p>LOUISE: I became interested in politics when I was around 15. And then I started reading, a lot about society and so on, and then it was sometime in that process where I realized that,</p>

<p>insåg att... såhär... aa någonstans i ett politiskt uppvaknande att också... vi håller på att förstöra planeten liksom”</p>	<p>well somewhere in a political awakening, that we are destroying the planet.</p>
<p>“EMIL. jag har varit ganska passiv klimat, passivt för klimataktivismen liksom, men efter det så tog jag en väldigt mycket mer aktiv roll i det, ehm, jag har varit tillbaka till Ende Gelände efter det också, också varit tillbaka till den skogen där som riskerar skövlas för den här gruvans utvinning liksom, och, ja men jag känner ett väldigt starkt engagemang för det, känner att, det, när man själv kan se helhetsbilden så blir man väldigt driven av att kunna förmedla den här bilden till andra människor, som inte rör sig i den här trakten, där de här kopplingarna fortfarande är väldigt osynliga, och det, det är väl mycket det man brinner för, alltså vi måste fatta att vi har fel, vad vi håller på med är sjukt, och vi håller på att driver ned oss i, i en enorm misär [emphasis added]</p>	<p>EMIL: I have been pretty passively engaged in climate activism, but after that I took a much more active role in it. I have been back to Ende Gelände after that too, and I have been back to the forest that risks being cut down for this mine’s extraction. I feel a very strong engagement for that, and <i>I feel that when you can see the whole picture it makes you very driven to be able to communicate this view to other people</i>, who are not present in this area, where these connections are still invisible, and that is what you are dedicated to – we have to realize that we are wrong, that what we are doing is crazy, and that we are digging ourselves into a great misery. [emphasis added]</p>
<p>“LUDWIG: Jag har alltid så här, brytt mig om klimat eftersom min familj är väldigt politisk och min mamma är alltid såhär “Tänk på miljön!” och pappa också i någon mån, liksom. Och typ såhär, är jag uppfostrad i en generation som konstant får höra så här, ja men typ, men vi har alltid haft typ såhär hållbar utveckling som temadagar, [...] så det har alltid funnits där liksom. Och sen så blev jag politiskt aktiv i ett helt annat sammanhang, och fick möjligheten [...] att åka med till Ende Gelände, som jag, som du säkert har koll på, en sån massiv klimataktion i Tyskland, liksom, eh. Så jag gick ganska mycket från noll till Tyskland. [...] Det är ett stort första steg, men det låter som ett bra första steg liksom. Men sen påverkade Ende Gelände mig för att man såg <i>motståndet</i>. Eller såhär, men såhär polisen som såhär alltid “Ni får inte vara här, det är olagligt” och yadiyada” [emphasis original]</p>	<p>LUDWIG: I’ve always cared about the climate because my family is very interested in politics and my mom is always like “Think about the environment! My dad as well, to some extent. And I am raised in a generation constantly told, well, we have always had theme days on sustainable development, so it has always been there. And then I became politically active in another context, and I got the opportunity to attend Ende Gelände, which I’m sure you know, a great climate action in Germany. So I went pretty much from zero to Germany. [...] It is a big first step, but it sounds as a good first step. And then Ende Gelände affected me because you could see the resistance. For example, the police who were always like ‘You cannot be here, it is illegal!’, and so on.</p>
<p>“AXEL; Man kan väl säga att jag, egentligen, de senaste 15 åren av mitt liv, jag är 22 år gammal, så har jag väl väldigt, det har varit som en bakomliggande oro i mitt liv, rädsla för klimatet och oro för framtiden. Och jag blev väl engagerad först förra året, i början av förra året, inom [organisation]. Då jag, det hade väl kanske dels att göra med att 2017 var ett väldigt dramatiskt år, då jag insåg att jag inte längre kunde sticka huvudet i sanden, utan nu var det lite att ta tjuren vid hornen.”</p>	<p>“AXEL: You could say that for the last 15 years of my life, I am 22 years old, it has been an underlying worry in my life, fear for the climate and a worry for the future. And I became active last year, in the beginning of the year, within [organization]. When I, well it was maybe partly due to 2017 being such a dramatic year, when I realized that I no longer could put my head in the sand, but now it was time to grab the bull by its horns.”</p>

<p>“I: Hur kom det sig att du blev en klimataktivist? ELIN: Ehhm. Jag har alltid varit, jag tycker det är viktigt med rättvisa, olika frågor egentligen. Så har hittat teckningar och sånt från när jag var väldigt liten som handlat om hur människan skräpat ned i naturen, hur vi skräpar ned, jag tyckte väldigt synd om, eeh, djuren och sånt. Och sen så, när jag växte upp så förstod jag väl att det handlade om mer än så, ehh, om hela vår livs, våra livsförutsättningar, människor som får lida väldigt mycket för hur vi i västvärlden lever.”</p>	<p>“I: How come you became a climate activist? ELIN: I have always... I think it is important with justice, in many ways really. So I have found drawings from when I was very young that were about how humans litter nature, how we litter, and I felt very sorry for animals and so on. And then <i>when I grew up I realized it was about more than that</i>, about our entire life, our conditions for life. People are suffering a lot for how we in the Western world live. [emphasis mine]</p>
<p>“LUDWIG: Det är ganska uppenbart att det här systemet inte har några verktyg för att hantera krisen liksom. Vi har haft klimattoppmöten sen 90-talet och klimatutsläppen har ändå ökat med 70% sedan dess liksom.”</p>	<p>“LUDWIG: It is pretty obvious that this system does not have any tools to handle this crisis. We have had high-level climate talks since the 90s and emissions have still increased by 70 per cent since then.”</p>
<p>“ANNA: Ja men man ser liksom systemet som det är nu, det ekonomiska systemet och så där, som att det är lite, naturlagar liksom som man måste förhålla sig till istället för att se vad är de faktiska naturlagarna, det är ju liksom, miljö och klimatet, alltså det är det vi har att förhålla oss till och sen får vi anpassa våra sociala, ekonomiska system för det istället för tvärt om att man ska försöka få in det i det nuvarande systemet. ”</p> <p>“JOHANNA: Mitt grundproblem är nog, att vi exploaterar naturen som är förutsättningarna för liv. Och, ja det är mitt grundproblem. Jag skulle inte säga att det bara är staten och kapitalet sitter i samma båt [referens till Ebba Gröns låt Staten och Kapitalet som respondenten tog upp], för att jag har sett så mycket båda sidor, jag har sett liksom stora företag vara mer på miljö, eller alltså naturens sida än liksom politiska partier eller staten. Och vice versa. Så... Eh. Jaa jättebra fråga faktiskt. Ja men. Det är mitt ideologiska problem, och sen bryr jag mig inte så mycket om vem det är som exploaterar naturen”</p>	<p>“ANNA: If you see our system as it is right now, the economic system, it is seen as a natural law to which we need to adapt, rather than looking at what the actual laws of nature are. They are the environment and the climate. That is what we have to orient ourselves toward, and then we can adapt our socio-economic system to it, rather than the other way around where we try to fit them into the current [socio-economic] system”</p> <p>JOHANNA: My fundamental problem is that we are exploiting nature which is the foundation for life. And... Yes that is my fundamental problem. I would not say that it is that the state and the capital are in bed with each other, because I really have seen both sides. I have seen big companies be more environmentally friendly than political parties and the state, and vice versa. Yes, really good question actually. That is my ideological problem, and then I don't really care who is exploiting nature.</p>
<p>“I: Okej. Du pratade om, du pratade om kopplingar, när du pratade om kol och skog och så, vad, vad tänkte du, eller vad menade du? EMIL: Nä men alltså den här, massiva förstörelsen av mark och natur, inte bara hos oss, utan också i andra länder, som vi inte, aa som vi inte ser, förutom att vi ser en form av fattigdom, förutom att vi ser att aa det är VI som</p>	<p>I: Okay, you talked about connections when you talked about coal and the forest, what were you thinking, or what did you mean? EMIL: Well this massive destruction of soil and nature, not just here, but also in other countries, which we don't see except that we see a type of poverty. And yes, it is we who are exploiting their land and resources so that society can</p>

<p>exploaterar deras land och resurser, det är vi som exploaterar naturen för att samhället ska kunna drivas vidare, med allt vad det innebär, och att de här kopplingarna blir så tydliga när man ser genom historien vad som har skett.”</p>	<p>develop, with all that it connotes. These connections became clear when you look at history what has happened”</p>
<p>“I: Men som aktivist liksom vad ser du att är problemet? ELIN: Ehm. Det ekonomiska systemet som har liksom fossila bränslet inflätat i sig. Och att vi har gjort oss så beroende av det. Jag tror inte alls på att lösningen är liksom, olika tekniska lösningar, det är bra, så. Men framförallt så behöver vi förändra vår livsstil, ändå, vi som har det väldigt bra, rika längder i västvärlden, liksom, Sverige. Ehm. Aa men jag tror att vi behöver, liksom, sänka vår levnadsstandard en aning, på så sätt att vi inte kan resa utomlands jättemycket, inte äta mycket kött, men framförallt att hela konsumtionssamhället, och grundproblemet då är ju överproduktion, ehm, och att företag gör vinst på något förstör för hela planeten, och att de tillåts göra det.”</p>	<p>“I: But you as an activist, what do you see as the problem? ELIN: The economic system which has fossil fuels intertwined in it. And that we have made ourselves dependent on them. And I don’t believe at all that the solution is technical solutions. They are good, but first and foremost we have to change our lifestyle, we who are well off in the Western world, Sweden. I think that we need to lower our standards of living a little bit, meaning that we cant travel abroad a lot, not eat lots of meat, but primarily that the entire consumer society, and then the problem is overproduction, and that companies profit from something that destroys the entire planet, and that they are allowed to do it.</p>
<p>“I: Men hur ser du, var ser du liksom ursprunget till klimatkrisen? AXEL: Ja alltså ursprunget är ju ganska lätt egentligen, det var ju när vi började gräva upp kol och olja på 1800-talet. Men det säger, vilket, jag kom på det i samma sekund jag sa det, jag tar nog tillbaka det faktiskt. För att den, merparten av, över hälften av alla koldioxidutsläpp som har skett sedan industriella revolutionen har skett under de senaste 30 åren.”</p>	<p>“I: How do you, where do you see the source of the climate crisis? AXEL: The source is pretty easy actually, it is when we started extracting coal and oil in the 19th century. But, I realized in the same second that I said it that I take that back, actually. Because the lion’s share, more than half of all emissions that have been emitted since the industrial revolution were emitted in the last 30 years.</p>
<p>“I: Finns det, om du ser några eller någon aktör som är särskilt viktig i hur klimatkrisen ser ut idag? AXEL: Ja det är ju som jag sa tidigare så är det ju absolut oljebolagen och även kolbolagen, de är, jag hoppas på en tribunal i framtiden, liknande Nürnbergrättegångarna, för decennierna och även, för decennierna av ickeagerande som de har åsamkat. Alltså de fruktansvärda skadorna som är så stora och närmast oräkneliga som de har enorma finansiella institutionerna har orsakat. Jag hoppas på något slags rättvisa, i det där.”</p>	<p>“I: Are there any actors that you see as especially important for the climate crisis today? AXEL: Yes like I said earlier it is definitely the fossil fuel industry. They are... I am hoping for a tribunal in the future, similar to the Nürnberg trials, for the decennia of neglect that they have caused. For the terrible damages that are so vast and virtually innumerable which the enormous financial institutions have caused. I am hoping for some type of justice.</p>
<p>“I: Nu har du hintat på det lite några gånger, men när man pratar om klimatet idag, vad ser du som problemet? IDA: Företag. Företag, stater. Eller så här, klimatfrågan är i allra högsta grad ett globalt problem som kräver globala lösningar, och det är definitivt inte ett problem som, eller så här, problemet är inte vanliga människor. Problemet</p>	<p>“I: Now you have hinted about it a couple of times, but when we talk about the climate today, what do you see as the problem? IDA: Corporations. Corporations, states. The climate issue is fundamentally a global problem that requires global solutions, and it is definitely not a problem... <i>The problem is not normal people. The problem isn’t bad structures among</i></p>

<p>är inte så här, dåliga strukturer bland befolkningen. Problemet är företag och stater som inte tar klimatfrågan på allvar, som vägrar, sätta klimatet över profiten, och som vägrar inse vilken inverkan de har på klimatet, som fortsätter säga “Nä men vi kan avveckla detta långsamt” och problemet är att vi har inte tiden att avveckla någonting långsamt, och ni måste förlora 100 tusentals spänn idag om vi ska klara klimatfrågan.”</p>	<p><i>the population.</i> The problem is corporations and states which do not take the climate issues seriously, which refuse to take it seriously, which refuse to put the climate above profit, and which refuse to realize their effects on the climate, and which continue saying ‘No we can fix this slowly’. The problem is that we don’t have the time to fix anything slowly, and that you have to lose 100 000SEK today if we are to survive the climate issue^f [emphasis mine]</p>
<p>“ELIN: Till exempel stora företag har ju, det är ju därför jag tycker att det är det politiska systemet som är problemet, för att, de måste ju, de måste ju bry sig om sina kvartalsrapporter och att fortsätta som vanligt för att fortsätta gå med vinst för att, för att det är, det är det som är ett företag.</p>	<p>“ELIN: For example, large corporations have, and that’s why I think it is the political system that is the problem, they have to care about their quarterly reports and keep doing business as usual to make a profit, because that is what a corporation is.”</p>
<p>LINNÉA: Vi konsumerar för mycket, men det tror jag också att har med kapitalismen att göra, och hur den är uppbyggd. Jag tror att det är väldigt svårt med det systemet vi har nu, att motstå, just med det här att man måste köpa nya grejer hela tiden. För att det är så, att kapitalismen bygger på att vi hela tiden köper nytt, hela tiden producerar nytt, hela tiden hittar nya tillgångar.</p>	<p>LINNÉA: We consume too much, but I think that also has to do with capitalism, and how it is structured. I think it is very difficult in the current system to resist buying new stuff all the time. Because capitalism requires that we buy new things all the time, that we produce new things, that we find new resources.</p>
<p>ANNA: Man blir, när man har så mycket frustration inom sig vad gäller klimatfrågan så är det skönt ibland att bara kunna ut och skrika lite, typ. I: Vad tänker du för frustration? ANNA: [uppgiven ton] ja men att det händer så lite, att det inte tas på allvar, att det är så bråttom och så trögt. I: Mmm. Du låter inte så jättehoppfull? ANNA: Nej. Nej det är jag verkligen inte. [skratt] Så det, jag känner att det... Mitt liv som engagerad har verkligen gått i vågor för att ibland har det bara känts att “nä men det är inget lönt, liksom varför ska jag hålla på att bry mig. Det kommer ju ändå inte gå”.</p>	<p>ANNA: When you have so much frustration inside regarding the climate issue it is nice to sometimes just go out and scream a little bit. I: What frustration are you thinking? ANNA: [abject tone] Well that so little is happening, that it isn’t being taken seriously, that it is so urgent and so slow. I: Mm. You don’t sound very hopeful? ANNA: No. I really am not. [laughter] I feel that my life as active has really gone in waves because it sometimes felt as if ‘There is no point, why would I care, it will never work out anyway’”.</p>
<p>LOUISE: Alltså det kanske låter jättekonspiratoriskt. Men alltså jag tror att klimatförändringarna inte kommer kunna stoppas och vi kommer fortsätta bränna fossila bränslen ett bra tag till. Även om vi skulle sluta göra det idag så skulle det ändå fortsätta hända grejer som vi inte riktigt vet vad det är, och vi kommer inte sluta göra det idag, så det kommer fortsätta ganska länge, och då tänker jag väl att någonstans där kommer det ju börja falla där, på något sätt, någonting, och då är det bra att ha såna kunskaper, att kunna skaffa mat och... göra upp eld så, kanske.</p>	<p>LOUISE: Maybe it really sounds like a conspiracy, but I think that climate change won’t be able to be stopped and that we will keep burning fossil fuels for some time still. Even if we stopped today, things would still keep happening which we don’t really know what it will mean. And we won’t do it today, so it will continue for quite a long time, and then I think it will start collapsing then, in some ways, and then it is good to have that type of knowledge, to be able to get food, and set up a fire, maybe.</p>

<p>LUDWIG: Jag hoppas att en tillräckligt stor, liksom, stor del av befolkningen kommer till insikt om hur stort det här problemet är, och liksom skiftar inställning och attityd till klimatkrisen så att vi verkligen börjar behandla det som en kris, och hoppas att det här liksom, inom ett par år börjar ses som ett global projekt typ, alltså i stil med, eller kanske i samma magnitud som ett världskrig liksom, att nu måste vi mobilisera inför detta, och aa vi kommer behöva införa ransonering på de här och de här produkterna, men att folk ändå fattar det och tar in det...</p>	<p>LUDWIG: I hope that a sufficiently large part of the population will come to insight of how vast this problem is, and that they shift position and attitude to the climate crisis so that we really start treating it as a crisis. And that it in a few years will be seen as a global project, in the same magnitude of a world war, that now we need to mobilize for this. So yeah, we will have to introduce rationing on these and these goods, but people will nevertheless understand and accept it.</p>
<p>ELIN: Jag har testat så många former [av engagemang]. Alltså verkligen sedan jag var liten. Från aa men skriva små egengjorda tidningar och dela ut till folk, och folk tycker ju bara att det är gulligt liksom, och sen när jag var med i Gröna Studenter, nu har jag inte mina sympatier där, längre, men när jag var det så, jag kände liksom aldrig att man, att man gjorde någonting eller att det hände någonting på riktigt. Samma sak när jag jobbade med miljöfrågor så kände jag liksom att det var att sitta och putsa på en yta. Jaa, det känns ju liksom att det är ju redan för sent, och vi måste liksom sätta stopp för fossila bränslen nu, för länge sedan var det ju nu.</p>	<p>ELIN: I've tried so many forms [of engagement]. Really, since I was a kid. From writing small home-made magazines and giving them to people, and people think it is really cute, to when I was active in Green Students. Now I don't sympathize with them any longer, but when I did, I felt that you never really did something for real. The same thing was when I worked with environmental issues, I felt that it was like polishing a surface. It already feels too late, and we have to end fossil fuels now. It was now already a long time ago.</p>
<p>IDA: Nu är det ganska upp till kamp liksom. Och det är inte så många år kvar vi kan göra det heller, förens det faktiskt är kört. Sen tror jag att de flesta kommer att faktiskt kämpa även efter att det är, om det är, om vi nu faktiskt inte skulle lösa problemet, och det är kört om fyra år, såhär "Vi kommer aldrig vända detta", så tror jag fortfarande att folk kommer fortsätta, jag tror att vissa kommer nog, vissa kanske ger upp, men jag tror att många, och däribland jag, kommer vara såhär "Nä vi ska köra det här ut i det sista!" liksom. Det är lite dö på barrikaderna-känsla, utan att... Dö på barrikaderna.</p>	<p>IDA: Now it is time to fight, and there are not many years left when we can do it either, before it is too late. Then I believe that most people will actually keep fighting after, if we actually wouldn't solve the problem, and it is over in four years and 'We will never be able to turn this', I still think people will keep on, I think that some, some may give up, but I think many, myself included, will be like 'No we are doing this to the end', sort of. It is a little bit dying-on-the-barricades feeling, without... Dying on the barricades.</p>
<p>"I: Ja ibland har man hört talas om folk som pratar om klimatångest AXEL: Mm. I: Vad tycker du om det? AXEL: Ja absolut det är nog en term jag skulle beskriva, det finns i allra högsta grad, det, jag är, jag mår skit varje dag, faktiskt. Alltså mer eller mindre, det finns ju grader i helvetet. Men jag känner absolut av det, jag känt av det i större delen av mitt liv. Det är någonting som närmast har funnits i bakgrunden, i hela mitt tänkande kring framtiden under väldigt, under större delen av mitt liv."</p>	<p>I: Sometimes you have heard about people speaking about climate anxiety AXEL: Mm I: What do you think about that? AXEL: Yes it is definitely a term I would use, it certainly does exist, I feel like shit every day, actually. More or less, there are degrees in hell, but I definitely feel it, I have felt it for the majority of my life. It is something that has always existed in the background, in my thinking about the future and under the majority of my life.</p>

<p>IDA: Jag tror framförallt att många unga har det. Just den här känslan av det är, just här, the impending doom, typ. Eller så här, nu går vi under.</p> <p>I: Du säger att det har du haft?</p> <p>IDA: O ja. Ofta. Och det kommer... Eller så här, jag har fått mindre klimatångest. Eller jag känner att klimatångesten minskar av att vara aktiv, och det är också därför jag är aktiv liksom. Men på något sätt att bemöta problemet oftare får det att kännas mindre stressigt typ.”</p>	<p>IDA: I think that primarily a lot of young people have it. This feeling about, the impending doom. Or that, now we are going under.</p> <p>I: You said that you have had it?</p> <p>IDA: Oh yes. And it comes... Or let's put it this way, my climate anxiety has lessened. I feel that the climate anxiety lessens by being active, and it is also why I am active. To somehow confront the problem more often makes it feel less stressful</p>
<p>“EMIL: Bara tanken av det, om man empatiskt tänker på det, om hundra år, om jag någon gång får barn, och dom får barn, deras värld kan potentiellt se extremt annorlunda och mer orättvis ut än vad jag lever i. Jag menar det bidrar till en hel del ångest och tänka att allt det här runt omkring mig fungerar på samma sätt om människor är ovetsamma över vad som faktiskt händer, men det är ju människor, generationer framåt, som faktiskt kommer uppleva det som vi gör nu, liksom. Det, aa..</p> <p>I: Skulle du säga att du själv har klimatångest?</p> <p>EMIL: Ja. Alltså, det kommer i vågor, väldigt mycket, känner det varje gång, nu när jag sitter ned med dig, det är väldigt känslösamt liksom, men samtidigt alltså, att vara klimataktivist är att på något sätt få utlopp för det, att stå någonstans och liksom skrika ut att kom igen vakna liksom, gör någonting! [...] Det är på något sätt att göra om känslor, från någonting negativt till någonting positivt. Jag tror att det är mycket den styrkan som klimataktivister hittar.”</p>	<p>EMIL: Just the thought of it, if you emphatically think about it, that in a hundred years, if I ever have children, and they have children, their world could potentially look extremely different and be more unjust than the world I live in. I mean, that contributes to a whole lot of anxiety to think that all this that surrounds me functions in the same way if people do not know what is actually happening, but it is people, generations ahead, who will actually experience what we are doing now.</p> <p>I: Would you say that you have climate anxiety?</p> <p>EMIL: Yes. Well, it comes in waves. I feel it now when I'm sitting here with you, that it is very emotional, but at the same time, to be a climate activist is to in some regard get an outlet for it, to stand somewhere and scream 'Come on! Wake up! Do something!' [...] It is somehow to make feelings from something negative to something positive. I think that is part of the strength that climate activists find.</p>
<p>“I: Nu ska vi komma tillbaka till att du nämnde 'panik'.</p> <p>LINNÉA: Yessss [skratt].</p> <p>I: Vill du utveckla?</p> <p>LINNÉA: Ja, men som sagt, jag tror att jag är mer och mer över det här, det känns, så blir man ju mer och mer som att vi inte kommer komma dit, att vi inte kommer klara det.</p> <p>I: Känner du hopplöshet?</p> <p>LINNÉA: Jaa. Det vet jag inte om det är hopplöshet, jag tror inte riktigt att jag är där än, jag tror fortfarande jag är på stadiet där jag blir motiverad av paniken liksom, så för mig så har det ändå varit ganska bra.”</p>	<p>I: Now we will return to that you mentioned 'panic'</p> <p>LINNÉA: Yes [laughter].</p> <p>I: Would you like to elaborate?</p> <p>LINNÉA: Yes, well as I said, I think that I more and more think that we will never get there, we will not make it.</p> <p>I: Do you feel hopelessness?</p> <p>LINNÉA: I don't know if it is hopelessness, I don't really think I'm there yet, I think that I am still at the stage where I get motivated by the panic, so for me it has been quite good after all.</p>
<p>“I: Jag tänkte lite så här att å ena sidan är du ju då aktivist, men ägnar du dig också åt såna mer individuella lösningar också? Till exempel vad du äter, det är ju vanligt att folk diskuterar mycket... Att man... att man gör så...</p> <p>LOUISE: Alltså ja det får jag väl säga att jag gör, inte som en politisk handling men som, jag vet inte vad det är, någon slags ångesthantering</p>	<p>I: I was thinking that on the one hand you're an activist, but do you also engage in more individual solutions as well? For example what you eat, is discussed a lot...</p> <p>LOUISE: Yes I have to say that I do, although not as a political act, but more like, I don't know, maybe some form of anxiety management, maybe. That I try, that I don't eat</p>

<p>kanske. Att jag försöker, att jag inte äter kött och äter mycket veganskt och inte flyger och sådära, bara för att det känns bara för jobbigt.”</p>	<p>meat and I eat a lot of vegan food and I don't fly and so on, just because it feels too bad.</p>
<p>“I: Ja det har ju funnits viss populärkulturell debatt kring begreppet klimatångest - hur känner du där? LUDWIG: Jag är generellt skeptisk till begreppet klimatångest. Jag tycker att det är ett begrepp som missbrukas och används väldigt mycket av liksom, ja men högern, för att utmåla det till någon sorts orolig, oroliga moralpanikpersoner som inte, jag vet inte, som inte kan ta hand om sig själva eller sin inte förmår agera utan bara går runt och oroar sig liksom. Så jag vet inte, jag vet inte riktigt jag gillar inte begreppet klimatångest liksom. I: Nä precis. Men om man skulle se bort från liksom konnotationerna då, och bara se det liksom som en oro, en intensiv oro för klimatet... Ja men det är väl något som man har antat jag. LUDWIG: Javisst, javisst.”</p>	<p>I: Well there has been a popular culture debate around the concept climate anxiety – what do you feel about it? LUDWIG: I'm generally very skeptical to the term 'climate anxiety'. I think it is a term that is misused and utilized by the right to portray some sort of worried, moral-panic-type-of-person who cannot take care of themselves and who are not able to act but just wander around worrying. I don't know, I don't know if I like the term 'climate anxiety'. I: No okay. But if you would disregard the associations then, and just see it as a worry, an intense worry for the climate... Well I guess that is something one has... LUDWIG: Of course, of course.</p>
<p>ELIN: Jag försöker att kanalisera det till ilska istället eller till agerande, men alltså ja jag har mycket så här existentiell ångest för att världen kanske inte kommer finnas kvar så som vi känner den. Men... Och det har jag haft sedan jag var liten [...] Jag kanske är lite trött på det begreppet för att det är mycket, jag tycker att eftersom, eller att det kommer ofta från människor som <i>är</i> passiva i frågan [...] Jag tror att jag är mer arg, eller jag vet inte, jag är nog både och.”</p>	<p>“ELIN: I am trying to channel it into anger or into action, but yes I have a lot of existential anxiety that the world may not exist in the way we know it. And this I have had since I was a kid. [...] But I am a little bit tired of the term because... I think it is often used by people who <i>are</i> passive in the issue. [...] I think I am more angry, or I don't know, I guess I am both.” [emphasis respondent's]</p>
<p>ELIN: Mmm. Jag vet inte om jag har tänkt på mina känslor som klimatångest, jag vet inte om det är för att jag förnekar det. Jag har nog snarare ångest för att jag tycker att jag engagerar mig för lite och så, och att det blir stress... I: Ja... Och du låter då ändå ganska engagerad? ELIN: Jo men precis.</p>	<p>ELIN: Mm. I don't know if I have considered my feelings as climate anxiety, I don't know if it is because I am denying it. I probably have anxiety more because I think I am not engaged enough and it turns into stress. I: Yes... Yet you seem rather engaged? ELIN: Yes, exactly.</p>
<p>“EMIL: delvis tar det [klimatångest] sig uttryck att de är väldigt engagerade och aktiva miljöaktivister, ehm, vissa till den graden att de råkar bränna ut sig, för att det är en enormt stor kamp, en stor börda.”</p>	<p>“EMIL: Partly it [climate anxiety] takes the shape that they are very engaged and active climate activists. Some to the point that they get burnt out, because it is an enormously tough struggle, a great burden.”</p>
<p>“AXEL: Det är rätt, det är ett ganska hårt uppvaknande att inse att man är ansvarig till ett av de största hoten som mänskligheten står inför. Men framförallt så tror jag att det handlar om ekonomiska intressen, för man ska ju också inte glömma att många av de här oljebolagen väldigt väldigt tidigt, ofta långt innan</p>	<p>“AXEL: It is a pretty tough awakening to realize that you are responsible for one of the greatest threats humanity faces. But above all I think that it is about economic interests, because you shouldn't forget that many of these oil corporations very early, often before the general</p>

<p>allmänheten redan ens hade kommit upp på dagordningen, visste om konsekvenserna av detta</p> <p>[...]</p> <p>Ja men jag kan liksom inte, det säger någonting som så här kan få mig nästan svårt att andas när jag tänker på, tänk om vi hade huggit ned, tänk om vi hade börjat då?”</p>	<p>public, knew about the consequences from this. [...]</p> <p>I can't, it tells me something that almost makes it difficult for me to breathe, when I think that 'What if we would have cut down [emissions], what if we would have started then?'"</p>
<p>“EMIL: Att på något sätt acceptera att det faktiskt är så här, är att åta sig en väldigt stor börda, att behöva förespråka det här, och på något sätt behöva erkänna, ja jag lever eventuellt i en väldigt instabil, i ett väldigt instabilt klimat, och i en väldigt instabil miljö, jag menar jag vet inte vad som kommer hända om hundra år, jag menar ingen vill väl lägga mer ångest på sig än nödvändigt. Jag menar det är en väldigt otrygg bild, som exempelvis Extinction Rebellion förmedlar, ehm, och jag tror att det ligger något i att människor väldigt gärna vill att allting ska funka, att dagen ter sig som den gör liksom”</p>	<p>“EMIL: To somehow accept that this is how it is, is to undertake a very tough burden, to have to advocate this, and to admit that 'Yes I live in a very unstable climate, in a very unstable environment.' I mean, I don't know what will happen in a hundred years, I mean no one wants to take on more anxiety than necessary. It is a very disturbing picture that for example Extinction Rebellion supplies, and I think that there is some truth to that people would just like to see that everything is fine, that every day is like the other.</p>
<p>“LUDWIG: Dels är det väl ganska, liksom, ur ett sociologiskt perspektiv, ganska jobbigt typ att föreställa sig den ganska stora förändring som krävs, det är svårt att ta till sig liksom en förändring av den magnituden. Det är lätt att hela tiden liksom, jag vet inte, intala sig själv att vi löser det här med lite nya solceller och lite nya laddstolpar så, så är det här problemet ur världen efter några år. Att det är väldigt bekvämt att, att falla tillbaka på den modellen liksom. Utan att liksom se de underliggande problemen liksom.”</p>	<p>“LUDWIG: Partly it is, from a sociological perspective, rather difficult to imagine the great change that is needed, it is difficult to take on a change of that magnitude. It is easy to all the time tell oneself that we will solve this through some new solar panels and some new charging posts [for electric vehicles], and this problem will be gone in a few years. It is very comfortable to fall back on that model, without seeing the underlying problems.”</p>
<p>“LUDWIG: Ibland frågar man ju sig varför man engagerar sig i klimatfrågan liksom för det är så många faktorer som gör en uppgiven på något sätt. Det är en ganska deppig fråga någonstans och det går inte att göra framsteg lokalt om inte alla gör det samtidigt. Eh. Det gör det ju mycket mycket svårare än någon annan fråga. Att det spelar verkligen ingen roll om Sverige blir helt fossilfritt om inte resten av världen också gör det, liksom. Eh. Det gör det ju liksom väldigt svårt att hålla fokus liksom och fortsätta pusha för det, fortsätta agera.”</p>	<p>“LUDWIG: Sometimes you ask yourself why you're engaged in the climate issue because there are so many factors that makes you abject. It is a pretty depressing issue somehow and it is not possible to progress locally if everyone doesn't do it simultaneously. It makes it much more difficult than any other issue, that it really doesn't matter if Sweden goes fossil free if the rest of the world doesn't to it as well. It makes it very difficult to maintain focus and keep pushing for it, to keep fighting.”</p>
<p>“I: Det är relativt sällsynt att någon kallar sig klimataktivist fortsättningsvis. Varför tror du att det är så? AXEL: Absolut. Jag tror återigen att det kan handla om att klimatet är en så oerhört obekväm fråga, det är så obekvämt för folk att prata om det, det är nästan mer än de flesta samhällsfrågor så på gott och ont så kräver den en</p>	<p>“I: It is relatively rare that someone calls themselves a climate activist thus far. Why do you think that is? AXEL: Absolutely. I think that it once again reflects that the climate is such an incredibly uncomfortable issue. It is so uncomfortable for people to talk about it, more than other issues, for better or for worse, it requires introspection</p>

<p>självrannsaking och den lägger tillbaka på ansvaret på individen mer än många av de andra frågorna. Jag menar, de flesta individerna kan liksom inte titta på sig själv och undra liksom att åh vad har jag gjort åt gängskjutningarna i Malmö egentligen? “</p>	<p>and it puts back the responsibility on the individual more than most other issues. I mean, most people don't look at themselves and wonder 'Oh what have I actually done about the gang shootings in Malmö?'"</p>
<p>“LOUISE: Varför så få är klimataktivist? Jag tror att det dels handlar om, att man inte, alltså varför jag tror, alltså många som jag känner som ändå är såhär politiskt medvetna, och, kanske vet, har samma syn som jag på denhär konflikten och så, men ändå inte är klimataktivist, det tror jag att är för att man inte ser, att det går att förändra, att det är för stora utmaningar, och då tror jag inte att man, det är så många som, engagerar sig för det ser så mörkt ut I: Så man lägger sig platt? LOUISE: Ja... Precis.”</p>	<p>LOUISE: Why so few are climate activists? I think it is partly about, well, many people that I know who are politically aware and maybe know, hold the same view that I do about this conflict [between nature and society] and so on, I think it is because they don't see that it is possible to change, that the challenges are too great, and then I think that they don't get engaged, because it looks too dismal. I: So they lay down flat? LOUISE: Yes. Exactly.</p>
<p>IDA: Problemet är väl det att nej, det är inte bekvämt att vara klimataktivist, det är absolut inte bekvämt att vara klimataktivist, men det är också väldigt jävla nödvändigt. [...] Det [massaktioner utomlands] brukar kännas värt det när man kommer hem och får sova av sig febern, typ. I: Sa du febern? IDA: Ja men man brukar alltid bli lite sjuk. Det är alltid såhär, den höga stressen, man sover lite dåligt, alltid klädd lite för kallt, hög press liksom. Man brukar bli lite såhär utmattningssjuk.”</p>	<p>IDA: The problem is that no, it isn't comfortable to be a climate activist, it is definitely not comfortable to be. A climate activist, but it is also pretty damn necessary. [...] It [mass actions abroad] usually feels worth it when you come home and get to sleep of the fever. I: Did you say fever? IDA: Yes, you always get a little bit ill. It is always like, the high stress, you sleep a little bit bad, high pressure, you know. You usually get a little bit ill from exhaustion.”</p>
<p>“JOHANNA: Men sen så blev jag... Sen slutade liksom, eller baksidan av det här, är väl liksom att jag har kämpat med utbrändhet och utmattningsdepressioner i olika omgångar. Till slut så blev det... Man kan säga att klimatrörelsen tog helt död på mig och på mitt engagemang. Och det var två år sedan, och sedan dess så har det liksom varit en väg att hitta tillbaks till liksom.”</p>	<p>“JOHANNA: But then I got... Then I quit, and the drawback of this is that I have been fighting with burn out and fatigue syndromes back and forth. In the end it became... You could say that the climate movement wore me and my engagement down [tog helt död på mig]. And that was two years ago, and since then it has been a long way back.”</p>
<p>“AXEL: Jag hade tänkt plugga, det var väl typ så här en tanke jag hade ett tag att okej så här jag ska försöka utbilda mig inom någonting som har med miljön att göra, men, och det här kanske återigen säger lite om vad jag ser på framtiden, men jag har börjat bli så här, att men... Allvarligt talat ska jag gå en utbildning i 4 år och sen när jag kommer ut så är liksom klimatmålen ändå körda? Jag kanske egentligen kan åsamka större skillnad om jag lägger min energi och tid på att försöka vara så engagerad jag kan, samtidigt som jag jobbar och bara har det att försörja mig</p>	<p>“AXEL: I was thinking of studying, it was a thought I had for a while that I should get educated within something related to the environment, but, and once again this might reveal something about how I see the future, but... Seriously, should I study a program for 4 years and when I am finished the climate goals are still screwed? I might actually be able to make a bigger difference if I put my time and energy on being as active as I can, while I am working and providing for myself and the rest of the time, or as much as possible of the rest of the</p>

<p>och sen resten av tiden, eller så mycket av resten av tiden som jag själv orkar och kan lägga jag helt enkelt på aktivism.</p> <p>I: Okej, så då jobbar du... Alltså då kan man nästan kalla det en effektiviseringsåtgärd?</p> <p>AXEL: Ja faktiskt, det var nog det bästa ordet man kan beskriva det som. För att... Aa. Jag har också allmänt lite svårt att strukturera plugg och studier, så att det var nog lite utifrån det jag tog...”</p>	<p>time where I can manage I will dedicate myself to activism</p> <p>I: Okay, so then you're... Well then you almost call it efficiency measure?</p> <p>AXEL: Yes, actually that is the best way to put it. Because, well yes I also think it is a little bit difficult to structure studying, so it was a little bit from there...</p>
<p>“LINNÉA: Sen är det ju det här med att skaffa barn har ju också varit en jättedebatt, från just klimatperspektivet. Att det är ju inte just det mest miljövänliga man kan göra, att skaffa barn liksom, det beror ju väldigt väldigt mycket på personliga, eller individen, så.</p> <p>I: Hur har du känt inför det då?</p> <p>R: Så det är ju också någonting som jag har ändrat mig i ganska nyligen. Eh. Nu är jag, nu är jag såpass ung att det är inte som att jag går runt och tänker att jag ska skaffa barn snart, men ändå lite så tankarna att, jo men man kanske vill ha barn när man är lite äldre så, men det har ju i princip helt ändrat mig, nu tror jag inte det är 100% av just klimatångest, men det är definitivt en av anledningarna till att man har tänkt om lite, och tänkt att, nä men det kanske inte är, det kanske inte är något som jag vill längre.”</p>	<p>“LINNÉA: Then there is matter of whether to have children or not, it has also been a big debate, from the climate perspective. That it isn't the most environmentally friendly you can do, to have children. It depends a lot on the personal stuff, on the individual...</p> <p>I: How have you felt about that then?</p> <p>R: It is something where I have changed myself pretty recently. Now I am that young so that I don't walk around thinking I'll have children soon, but I have been thinking that, well yes I might want to have children when I'm older. But I have more or less completely changed my mind, I don't think it is 100% because of climate anxiety, but it is definitely one of the reasons I have changed my mind, thinking that no maybe it isn't something that I want any more.”</p>
<p>“I: Känner du att det innebär något för dina framtidsplaner att ha ett visst mått av klimatångest? [...]</p> <p>LOUISE: Jaa kanske lite. Eller jag vet inte. Till exempel med barn. Alltså jag kan inte säga men jag känner att jag inte vill ha barn, för det känns såhär, jobbigt att sätta en värld - eeh - liv till världen, men jag vet inte...</p> <p>I: För världen eller för livet?</p> <p>LOUISE: För livet, tänker jag... Men egentligen vet jag inte om det handlar om det, det kanske bara handlar om att jag inte vill ha barn, men det är väl en parameter i det alltså.”</p>	<p>“I: Do you feel that it means something for how you plan your future to have a certain amount of climate anxiety?</p> <p>LOUISE: Yes, maybe a little bit. Or I don't know. For example regarding children. I can't say but I feel that I do not want children, because it feels too difficult to bring a life into this world, but I don't know...</p> <p>I: For the world or for the life?</p> <p>LOUISE: I'm thinking for the life... But really I don't know if it is about that or if it is about not wanting to have children, but it is a parameter in it.”</p>
<p>“LINNÉA: Alltså att det är en balansgång mellan att liksom, säga vad man tycker och att alltid vara den här moralpolisen som man inte orkar vara riktigt, och det tycker jag är en jättesvår balansgång”</p>	<p>“LINNÉA: It is a balancing act between saying what you think and being this moral police that you don't always feel like being, and that I think is a really difficult balancing act.”</p>
<p>“ANNA: Framförallt innan jag började plugga och träffade andra folk som tänkte lika mycket på det som jag, så kändes det ofta som man bara var den som var så tråkig och jobbig hela tiden, att bara, “Men kan vi inte cykla istället?” liksom och så här som alla tycker bara är den dryga.</p> <p>I: Jaha när var det?</p> <p>ANNA: Ja men med kompisar liksom hemma i [city], liksom, när man hela tiden var den som</p>	<p>“ANNA: Above all before I started studying and started seeing other people that think about it as much as I do. Then it often felt that I was boring and annoying all the time, being like ‘But can't we go by bikes instead?’ and so on, to be the one that everyone thinks is the annoying one.</p> <p>I: Oh, when was that?</p> <p>ANNA: With friends home in [city], when I was always like the one that ‘But listen can't we just</p>

<p>“Men hallå vi kan väl samåka?” och så här, typ så här, jag kände mig hela tiden bara dryg som sa till om saker, som jag tyckte var dumma. Men hela tiden vara den som försvarar och gör det krångligt och ja I: Pekpinnar? ANNA: Ja men typ. Aa. Men jag kan ju heller inte säga till I: Alltså det finns inget alternativ till att säga till? ANNA: Nej. Eller så här, jo ibland orkar man ju inte...”</p>	<p>car pool?” and so on. I always felt annoying when making remarks on things which I thought were stupid. To all the time be the one who makes things harder and more difficult. I: Pointing fingers? ANNA: Yes sort of. But I cannot not intervene I: There is no alternative to intervening? ANNA: No. Or I mean, sometimes I can't manage to do it...”</p>
<p>“AXEL: Jag har väl deltagit, hoppat in i, bara deltagit personligen i en del manifestationer, ska delta i en imorgon, och... Så att ja. Det har jag. Det är ofta, det är ofta, det är kanske på ett sätt den del av klimataktivismen som jag gillar minst. Jag är inte mycket av en manifestationsperson. Jag är den som uppskattar att sitta för mig själv och läsa på om problemet och skriva texter om problemet. Men jag gör mitt bästa för att dyka upp på så många manifestationer som möjligt ändå, också en träningsfråga, man blir bättre på att hantera det.”</p>	<p>“AXEL: I have participated in, participated personally in a few demonstrations, and I'm participating in one tomorrow. So yes. It is often, well it might be the part of climate activism that I like the least. I'm not much of a manifestation person. I am the one who appreciates sitting by myself and reading about the problem and writing texts about the problem. But I do my best to show up at as many manifestations as possible, it is also a matter of practice, you get better at handling it”.</p>
<p>“LUDWIG: Det är svårt, för att jag tänker också att politiken kan ju liksom inte heller springa ifrån vad som är socialt accepterat i stort och börja genomföra någon klimatkrigsekonomi förrän folket är med på det. Men samtidigt är det också svårt för individen att agera hållbart i ett ohållbart system.”</p>	<p>“LUDWIG: It is hard, because politics can't run away from what is broadly socially accepted and start implementing some type of climate war economy [klimatkrigsekonomi] before the people are on board. At the same time it is also difficult for the individual to act sustainably in an unsustainable system.”</p>
<p>LUDWIG: Många vill inte riktigt acceptera de grundläggande livsstilsförändringar också som krävs, utan tänker att vi kan fortsätta leva som vi gör idag om vi bara liksom för en annan politik. Utan att inse att vi kanske också måste förbruka mindre energi, eller måste köra mindre bil, eller, ja. Konsumera mindre kött och så vidare.</p>	<p>LUDWIG: A lot of people do not really want to accept the fundamental life style changes that are necessary but think that we can keep on living the way we do if only we introduce different politics. Without realizing that we might have to utilize less energy, or drive cars less. Consume less meat and so on.”</p>
<p>ELIN: Jag tror att folk kanske inte vill ta till sig ens budskap liksom, för att det är så jobbigt liksom, för att man kanske själv känner skuld, för att vi alla, bara genom att befinna oss i liksom sverige och ta del av den här infrastrukturen så har vi jättestor klimatskuld liksom, men det är ju inte vårt fel</p>	<p>“ELIN: I think that people might not want to accept one's message, because it is too hard. Because you yourself feel guilt, because all of us, just by being in Sweden, make use of this vast infrastructure, so we have a big climate debt, but it isn't our fault.”</p>
<p>“ANNA: Ja. Men jag tror nog, att det känns som nu att de flesta vet det egentligen men det är bara att man inte har tagit till sig det. Alltså man vet det rent intellektuellt liksom, men, men inte tar till sig det liksom. För att det känns så långt bort liksom. I: Ja varför tror du att det är så? Varför tror du att man inte tar till sig det om man ändå känner till det intellektuellt?</p>	<p>“ANNA: Yes. But I think that, right now it feels like everyone knows it but that they haven't taken it in. You know it purely intellectually, but you don't take it in. Because it feels so far away. I: Why do you think that is? Why do you think people don't take it in if they are aware of it intellectually? ANNA: Yes well it is because you don't see the consequences of it as much. You can see the consequences, like the fires last summer, but</p>

<p>ANNA: Jo men det är väl just för att, ja men för att man inte ser konsekvenserna av det nu så mycket. Man ser ju konsekvenserna, men, ja som bränderna i somras, men nu glömmen man bort det väldigt snabbt, och nu lever vi på som vanligt, och så påverkar det inte mig i min vardag liksom”</p>	<p>now you forget it very fast and we keep on living as usual, and it doesn't affect us on a daily basis.</p>
<p>“LOUISE: Det tror jag är en grej, det där att man inte ser att man har någon makt att förändra, men sen så att man kanske inte heller upplever ett hot rent kontret, som man kanske gör om man typ, blir utsatt för rasism eller sexism, så kan det tända en viss motivation att kämpa emot, när man liksom har upplevt något själv, och det, det är väl få i, min del av världen, som har upplevt själv liksom klimatförändringar, det som, undantaget kanske typ skogsbränderna då, i somras”</p>	<p>“LOUISE: I think that is [an] accurate [explanation], that you don't see that you have any power for change, but also that you might not experience a tangible threat, which you might if you're subjected to racism or sexism, which can spark a certain motivation to fight against it, when you experienced itself. It is few in my part of the world who have experienced climate changes themselves, with the exception of maybe the fires last summer.”</p>
<p>“JOHANNA: I somras var det ju mer tydligt när vi hade skogsbränderna och det blev varmare klimat men det var liksom inte, eller som när vi hade då, Ojnare skogen, och här är en skog som skövlas och det påverkar dricksvattnet, då var det <i>otroligt</i> lätt att engagera folk från <i>alla möjliga</i> grupper, för då gick det att ta på.”</p>	<p>“JOHANNA: Last summer it was clearer when we had the forest fires and the climate became warmer and it wasn't like, or like when we had the Ojnare forest: Here's a forest being cut down and it affects the drinking water!”. Then it was <i>incredibly</i> simple to involve people from <i>all sorts of groups</i>, because then it was tangible.” [emphasis original]</p>
<p>“LUDWIG: Sen tror jag det också beror på att effekten av klimatförändringarna, är inte, har inte börjat komma förens på senare år liksom och det är först nu som folk ändå börjar koppla sambanden mellan våra utsläpp och klimatförändringarna, och börjar se dem i vitögat liksom. Också att de som drabbas värst också är de som. Ja men det är det globala syd liksom och fattigare länder som tyvärr kommer få ta många av de största konsekvenserna”</p>	<p>“LUDWIG: Then I think that it also is because the effects of climate change haven't surfaced before the last couple of years, and it is just now that people are starting to connect the dots between our emissions and climate change, and are starting see them clearly. Also that the one's hit the worst are also... Well it is the Global South and poorer countries that will suffer the many of the largest consequences.”</p>
<p>IDA: Det känns som att alla är medvetna att klimatet är ett problem, det finns, eller så här, klimatförnekare finns ju, men den absoluta majoriteten är ju absolut inte det. Och den absoluta majoriteten tycker ju absolut att vi så här måste rädda klimatet och vi måste bearbeta klimatproblemen och så vidare liksom. Det känns som att majoriteten av befolkningen har inte den här tanken om att det är, det är stater och det är företag som måste ta ansvar för det utsläpp de gör, <i>och som lätt faller för, men typ att man pratar om att så här, men Sverige har minskat sina utsläpp massivt, eh, när sanningen är att vi har flyttat vår produktion till den globala periferin, släpper ut där och sen skyller vi på att Indien är dåliga klimatmänniskor</i> liksom. Men det är så fruktansvärt absurt. [emphasis mine]</p>	<p>“IDA: It feels as everyone is aware that the climate is a problem. There are climate deniers, but the absolute majority of people really aren't. And the absolute majority definitely think that we need to save the climate and we have to address the climate problems and so on. It feels as if the majority of the population doesn't have this idea that it is states and corporations that have to take responsibility for their emissions, and that they easily fall for talk about Sweden having done such a massive decrease in emissions, when the truth is that we moved our production to the global periphery, emitting there and then pointing fingers on India for being an unsustainable nation. It is incredibly absurd. [emphasis mine]</p>

<p>LOUISE: jag tror inte att gemene man liksom har den kopplingen mellan hur oförenligt det är så... Att ha det hära ekonomiska tillväxten och att rädda klimatet. Så det är... Aaa. Och det, ja, det har väl dels att göra med att de intressena är så mäktiga att de kan liksom styra bilden av klimatförändringar och vilka orsaker de har, för att allt ska fortsätta som de gör nu, men också att det, ja det är för svårt att ta in liksom.</p>	<p>LOUISE: I don't think that the average citizen has made these connections between how incompatible it is to have this economic growth and saving the climate. Well. Yes it partly has to do with that these interests are powerful and they can control the image of climate change and the reasons behind it, so that everything will continue the way it does now. But also that it is too hard to take it in, you know.</p>
<p>ANNA: hela vårt sätt att leva bygger på att vi har tillgång till liksom snabb energi i form av olja och kol. Så det är verkligen att ifrågasätta hela samhället och hela sättet att leva så det är därför det är väldigt svårt att komma till liksom.</p>	<p>“ANNA: Our entire way of living is built on access to fast energy in the form of oil and carbon. So, it is really to question the entire society and the entire way of life, so that is why it is a difficult conclusion to reach.”</p>
<p>AXEL: Visst finns det problem, det är inget snack om saken. Det, det finns. Framförallt, om man ska vara hård, så har den ju varit ineffektiv. Men det är också oerhört kallt av mig att säga det, därför att vi har haft, klimatrörelsen har haft kolossala ekonomiska och politiska intressen emot sig, så jag vet inte heller hur mycket man egentligen kan begära av en ideell rörelse.</p>	<p>“AXEL: Sure there are problems, no question about it. Above all, if I am going to be tough, it [the climate movement] has been inefficient. But is also incredibly cold of me to say that, because the climate movement has had colossal economic and political interests against it, so I don't really know how much you can ask from a non-profit movement.”</p>
<p>“AXEL: För det är väl lite också av den eviga debatten hos människor som kämpar för att åsamka förändringar i klimatet. Att du kan, vad ska man egentligen lägga fokus på, de individuella handlingarna eller det kollektiva organiseringen kring det? Och det finns många... Jag känner väl spontant att vi måste väl göra faktiskt lite både ock, men att det viktigaste i slutändan det handlar väl om att stödja och stå upp för de mest radikala samhälls-angripande åtgärderna som finns.”</p>	<p>“AXEL: That is also a little bit of the eternal debate among people fighting for the climate. What should you really focus on: the individual actions or the collective arrangements surrounding them? Spontaneously I feel that we have to do a little bit of both, but that at the end of the day the most important is to support and defend the most radical societal reforms available.”</p>
<p>LOUISE: jag vet inte vad det är för individuella val för att <i>faktiskt</i> göra en skillnad, om systemet ska fortsätta som det gör, det kräver ändå all den hära konsumtionen och produktionen... [italics original]</p>	<p>“LOUISE: I don't know what kind of individual choices one can do to <i>actually</i> make a difference, if the system is to continue the way it is, it requires all this consumption and production.” [emphasis original]</p>
<p>“IDA: Det känns som att varje gång det presenteras så lägger det skulden på, så här, vanliga människor, det är ni som kör dåliga bilar eller det är ni som köper dåliga tröjor, eller så här, fan det är den här stackars familjen som åker till Teneriffa en gång vart fjärde år, det är deras fel att vi har klimatkrisen liksom. Snarare än att faktiskt gå till grunden med ett problem som har existerat mycket längre, och som går långt mycket djupare.”</p>	<p>“IDA: It feels as if every time it is presented the burden is on normal people: ‘You are the ones buying bad cars or you are the ones buying bad sweaters’. Or this poor family that goes to Teneriffa once every four years, it is their fault we have the climate crisis. Rather than actually going to the roots of a problem that has existed for a much longer time and that goes much deeper.”</p>
<p>“IDA: Jag bryr mig verkligen inte om om du har ett företag som kör slamfärg hemma i ditt kök, alltså kör hårt typ. Men det handlar om de här stora stora företagen med massiva utsläpp som inte tar ansvar, inte betalar sin utsläppsskatt kanske, inte faktiskt gör vad de säger att de ska göra för klimatet.”</p>	<p>“IDA: I really don't care if you have a company making paint home in your kitchen, go ahead. But it is about these big corporations with massive emissions who don't take responsibility, who don't pay their emission taxes, who don't do what they say they will for the climate</p>

<p>“JOHANNA: Det är en sak jag kritiserar mycket med miljörelsen, att jag tycker att den har blivit för individualiserad och lev som du lär. Och jag var [sic] väldigt anti[...] Nä men alltså anti-flygskam, alltså skammandet av att flyga. Jag är såklart anti att folk flyger mindre [mer]. Jag själv har ägnat jättemycket tid åt att försöka leva som jag lär, och vara vegetarian och inte flyga och så vidare. Men sen tror jag det kom till en punkt där jag kände att jag slog knut på mig själv, att så här, men, att jag insåg liksom att rent ideologiskt så tycker inte jag att det ska vara. Jag tycker att vi har ett ansvar som individer, men jag tycker inte att vi ska slå knut på oss själva.”</p>	<p>“JOHANNA: It is one thing that I criticize a lot with the environmental movement, that I think it has become too individualized and practice as you preach. And I am very anti [...] Well very anti flying shame. I am of course against that people fly more. I myself spent lots of time trying to practice as I preach, to be a vegetarian and not fly and so on. But then I reached a point where I felt that I was tying myself in knots. I realized that ideologically I don't think it should be this way. I think we have a responsibility as individuals, but we shouldn't tie ourselves in knots.</p>
<p>“I: Men du pratar om att ställa om din livsstil, är det någonting som du har gjort själv? ELIN: Eehm. Ja men jag flyger inte. Fast det är också såhär, vad spelar det egentligen för roll om jag skulle ta en flygresa efter några år, men det är, det är nog mest att det blir, det känns väldigt skevt om jag skulle göra det, när jag, är engagerad i det. Men det är möjligt att jag, jag har liksom inte jättestarka regler på mig så, det är mer, att jag försöker leva som jag lär, liksom. Men. Jag vet ju att jag borde vara vegan, men det är jag inte”</p>	<p>“I: But you speak about changing your lifestyle, is that something you have done yourself? ELIN: Well yes I don't fly. But it is also like, what difference does it really make if I took a flight after a couple of years, but now it is just that it would feel very strange if I did that, when I am engaged in this. But it is possible, I don't have really strict rules for myself, it is more that I am trying to practice as I preach. I know I should be a vegan, but I'm not.</p>
<p>AXEL: jag tycker, det handlar lite också om att, för att framstå som en trovärdig röst att kunna, att försöka leva som man lär, det är väl, för att annars är det väldigt lätt också för motståndarsidan att peka ut. Ja men du, du har ju liksom flugit 4 gånger runt jorden det här året, ska du komma och prata med oss om vad som är de bästa klimatåtgärderna...”</p>	<p>“AXEL: I think that it is also about trying to appear as a credible voice that be able to practice as your preach, because otherwise it is very easy for opponents to point that well ‘You have flown around the globe 4 times this years, are you going to talk to us about the best climate actions?’”</p>
<p>LINNÉA: Ja, så det blir ändå lite så att man är, ja, man blir något spektakel helt enkelt, så. På ett bra sätt, det är ju viktigt också, men jag tror att många människor känner inte igen sig i klimataktivisterna utan de tänker att “Ja jag tycker det är viktigt, det som de här människorna håller på med” men de ser inte sig själva som någon, som att de skulle kunna tillhöra de människorna, utan att det är mer att det är de här radikala miljöpartisterna.</p>	<p>“LINNÉA: Well after all you simply become a spectacle. In a good way, that is important too, but I think that many people don't recognize themselves in climate activists, but they think that ‘Yes I think it is important, what these people are doing’ but they don't see themselves as someone who could belong to these people, but that they are these radical green party people.”</p>

<p>“I: Du har ju redan hintat lite när du pratade om exkludering och stereotyper av klimataktivist, hur du ser, som klimataktivist, ser att ni ses på utifrån? JOHANNA: Ja. Vi ses nog som flummiga, naiva, ohygieniska kanske, ja. Säkert beroende på vem [...] Alltså problemet är ju att vi funkar rent psykologiskt så, att vi, vi är väldigt måna om hur vi uppfattas socialt, [...] eller åt andra hållet att det kan vara svårt att lyssna på vad de har att säga och det enda jag tänker på är att så här, “<i>Ja men gud de ska bara hålla på att massera varandra och ligga i en stor kramhög, fy fan vad flummigt</i>”, liksom. Då tappar jag hela liksom förtroendet att lyssna bara, jämfört med om någon som hade sett ut som mig.” [emphasis mine]</p>	<p>“I: You already hinted a little bit when you spoke about exclusion and stereotypes of climate activists, how do you see, as a climate activists, that you are viewed from the outside? JOHANNA: Yes, we are probably seen as dopey, naïve, unhygienic perhaps. Yeah, depending on who [...] Well the problem is that we function psychologically that way, that we are very careful on how we are perceived socially, [...] it might be difficult to listen to what they are saying if the only thing I am thinking is ‘Oh my god they just keep massaging each other and lay in a cuddle pile on the floor, so fucking dopey’. Then I lose my confidence in listening, compared to if it was someone who looked like me.” [emphasis mine]</p>
<p>“LUDWIG: ... jag försöker äta vegetariskt så gott det går och inte flyga i onödan, men det är liksom, jag är inte rabiat motståndare heller liksom. [...] I: Hur kommer det sig då, att du inte är det? LUDWIG: Jag vet inte, det känns, jag tror inte heller riktigt på såhär, om jag, vad ska man säga... Man kan inte heller riktigt leva utanför samhället för mycket på något sätt, det är för omständligt och man får inte heller med sig människor om man gör det. <i>Jag tänker också socialt liksom, om jag uppfattas som en hyfsat normal och trevlig person och säger åt folk att det är kanske bättre att äta lite mindre kött till någon stor köttätare så är det, då har ju det större effekt än om jag själv blir vegan. Om jag lyckas få någon annan att halvera sin köttkonsumtion.</i>”</p>	<p>“LUDWIG: ... I am trying to eat vegetarian as much as possible and not to fly in vain, but it is like, I’m not a rabid opponent either. [...] I: How come, that you’re not? LUDWIG: I don’t know, what should you say... You can’t really live outside society too much somehow, it is too complicated and you don’t attract people if you do it. I think that socially, if I am perceived as a decently normal and nice person and tell people that it might be better to eat a little bit less meat to some big meat consumer, then it has a bigger effect than if I myself become a vegan. If I manage to get someone else to halve their meat consumption.”</p>
<p>“LUDWIG: Man är godhetsknarkare liksom, eller man har flygskam, eller liksom såna, den typen av... Du vill bara veta bäst... I: Är det såna stämplor som du känner att man liksom får på sig som klimataktivist? LUDWIG: Eehm. Alltså. Inte personligen kanske. Men jag känner att visst, de svävar ju runt, absolut, och används för att passivisera folk eller att få ens aktivism att framstå som någonting, liksom, man bara gör för sin egen skull liksom, det är ganska cyniskt.”</p>	<p>“LUDWIG: You’re virtue signaling, or you are shaming flying people, or that kind of stuff, you want to be a know-it-all. I: Are these the sorts of labels that you feel that are attached to you as a climate activist? LUDWIG: Well, perhaps not personally. But I feel that they, sure, they are being used. They are used to passivize people or to make your activism look like that you are doing only for your own gain, it is pretty cynical.”</p>

<p>EMIL: att man vill visa med hela sitt liv att det här är någonting som är värt att kämpa för, att på något sätt visa, att på något sätt inspirera andra människor, och att kan jag inspirera två människor, som inspirerar två människor, som inspirerar två människor, då, då växer det upp, eller om vi alla kan göra det, rättare sagt, om vi kan växa såpass stort att det inte går att röra sig någonstans i världen utan att vi är hörda,</p>	<p>“EMIL: You want to show with your entire life that this is something worth fighting for, and to somehow show, to somehow inspire other people. And if I can inspire two people, who inspire two people, that inspire two people, then it will grow, or if everyone can do it rather, if we can grow so fast that you can’t move anywhere in the world without hearing us”</p>
<p>JOHANNA: Jag tycker ändå att den här flygfria rörelsen har ju faktiskt skapat en politisk förändring, eller den har ju slått igenom så mycket att nu börjar den skapa en viktig större politisk debatt. Så att... Jag tror absolut på den typen av organisering, men jag tycker att, jag tycker inte om när vi skammar folk. Jag tycker att det är bra att vi är förebilder men jag tycker inte om när vi trycker ned folk som inte är förebilder, för det skapar exkludering.</p>	<p>“JOHANNA: I do think that this no-flying movement has created a political change. Or it has broken through and it is creating an important larger political debate. So I definitely believe in this type of organizing, but I don’t like when we are shaming people. I think it is good when we are role models, but I don’t like when we put people down because it creates exclusion.”</p>
<p>JOHANNA: Ja, därför tror jag att om man hade pratat om det mer som en social rättvisefråga och mer en klassfråga och kanske dragit in det mer i den feministiska eller den antirasistiska rörelsen som har blivit stor eller vänsterns rörelse, liksom. Jag tycker ju att det är både en vänster och en högerfråga så jag vill ju att den ska vara överallt. Men... Men. Ja men då hade det varit mycket lättare att förstå sig på den. Men. I: Kan man säga att man får en känslomässig koppling genom det? JOHANNA: Aa. Ja precis. För det är ju faktiskt så att om vi pratar om det utifrån ett globalt solidaritetsperspektiv så är det ju faktiskt så att fattiga människor drivs bort av stora företag för att de vill skydda skog eller urfolk diskrimineras på grund av att de lever av naturen och forslas bort. Så att vi har ju det, rättviseperspektivet liksom. Man måste inte hålla på att prata ppm i atmosfären, hur mycket koldioxidutsläpp vi har, för det är mer vetenskapligt och det krävs en viss kunskapsnivå för att förstå.</p>	<p>“JOHANNA: Yes, that’s why I think that if we spoke about it more as a social justice issue and more of a class issue, and perhaps pulled it into the feminist or the anti-racist movement. I think it is both a right-wing and a left-wing issue, I want it to be everywhere. But... Yes well then it would have been much easier to understand it. I: Could you say that that way you get an emotional connection to it? JOHANNA: Yes exactly. But it is actually so that if we talk about it from a global solidarity angle, then it is actually poor people that are being expatriated by large corporations because they want to protect forest, or indigenous people are discriminated because they life off of nature and they are taken away. So we have it, the justice perspective. You don’t have to talk about PPM in the atmosphere, how much carbon emissions we have, because it is more scientific and requires a certain level of knowledge to understand.”</p>
<p>“LINNÉA: Men jag tycker liksom att många såhär, mycket såna individuella grejer är symboliska i att, det kanske inte, vad jag gör kanske inte är jättejätteviktigt om man kikar just på, utsläppsmässigt, men det säger till, bland annat, mina politiker att jo jag bryr mig om det hära för då borde ni också bry er om det hära. För om inte vi visar våra politiker att vi bryr oss om klimatförändringar då kommer de inte heller bry sig om klimatförändringar”</p>	<p>“LINNÉA: But I think that many individual things are symbolic in that they might not, what I do might not be very important if you look at emissions, but it says to my politicians that yes I care about this and you should care about this. Because if we don’t show our politicians that we care about climate change, then they never will care about climate change either.”</p>

<p>“LOUISE: Dom gjorde den hära aktionen mot [Natural Gas Plant] som var för ett ett, ett och ett halvt år sedan är det väl, som var några som bröt sig in på [Natural Gas Plant] som är såhär, naturgasanläggning i [stad], men det var väl mer symboliskt, för jag tror inte att det var kraftverket, eller vad det är, var i gång, utan, för det är någon såhär reservanläggning typ, så det var mer symboliskt, för det var ett såhär, IPCC-möte i [stad] samma vecka, så då anordnade [aktivistgrupp] lite småaktioner, men det här var ändå lite större, för det fick ändå... rättsliga påföljder”</p>	<p>LOUISE: They did this action against [Natural Gas Plant] which was one and a half year ago I think it was. It was some people that broke into [Natural Gas Plant] that is a natural gas plant in [city], but it was more symbolic, because I don't think it was the power plant, or what is it, was running, but this was some kind of reserve. So it was more symbolical, because there was an IPCC meeting in [city] the same week, so then [Activist Group] arranged a few small actions, but this one was a bit bigger, because it got legal repercussions after all.</p>
<p>“LOUISE: Produktionen blir ju stoppad för att det liksom är någonslags säkerhetsrisk då, och att man helt enkelt inte kan köra iväg det. Men ja, det, man ser det väl lite som, det är väl en symbolisk grej liksom.”</p>	<p>“LOUISE: The production is stopped because it is some type of security hazard then, and they can simply not export it [the carbon]. But yeah, it is seen as a symbolic thing.”</p>
<p>LUDWIG: ... det ryktades också liksom att de på arbetsplatsen hade liksom, räknat med detta och sparat upp med gas och, för att de visste att vi skulle komma, och till och med gett arbetarna ledigt på de dagarna liksom, typ planerat för det liksom. Så på det sättet var det lite antiklimax liksom.</p>	<p>“LUDWIG: There were rumors that at the plant they had counted on this and saved gas, because they knew we were coming, and they even gave workers a days off those days, planning for it. So, in that regard it was a little bit of an anti-climax.”</p>
<p>LINNÉA: det är ju en större systemändring som vi skulle behöva se, som jag inte har särskilt stort hopp om att det kommer hända, men jag skulle ju definitivt vilja se det själv.</p>	<p>LINNÉA: We need to see a bigger system change, which I don't have any great hope that will happen, even if I myself would definitely want to see it.</p>
<p>“LOUISE: Alltså vi har gjort mycket så hära [skratt] föreläsningar och skriver texter och sådära, eehh... Om... I: Du skrattar? R:1 [skratt] Jaa alltså det känns... Det känns banalt på något sätt, när det är så allvarligt läge, men vi har också gjort lite såhär... aktioner”</p>	<p>“LOUISE: Well we have done a lot of [laughter] lectures and we write texts and so on. I: You're laughing? LOUISE: [laughter] Yes well it feels. It feels so banal somehow, when the situation is so serious. But we have also done some actions...”</p>
<p>“AXEL: Jag måste engagera mig på något sätt, och det handlar egentligen inte om jag kan åsamka någon meningsfull förändring, det är bara det att det här är vad jag måste göra ändå. Så att. Mm. I: Så att då är man, dels känner man att man måste göra något men man vet heller inte om man har någon effekt i det man gör, men är tvungen att göra det ändå. AXEL: Ja lite... Absolut! Det är alltid svårt att veta om man har någon meningsfull effekt i det stora hela. Jag menar... Jag utgår nästan från att jag inte har det. Jag har väl kanske blivit, jag är väl något av en, ja många av mina vänner skulle nog beskriva mig som en cyniker. Jag är nog i alla fall inte en optimist”</p>	<p>“AXEL: I have to get engaged somehow, it isn't even about whether I can cause any meaningful change, it is just that this is what I have to do any way. So yeah... I: So then you're, partly you feel that you have to do something but at the same time you don't know if it has any effect, but you have to do it anyway? AXEL: Yes, absolutely. It is always hard to know if you have any meaningful effect in the bigger picture. I mean. I almost assume that I don't. I guess I have become, well my friends would describe me as a cynic. I'm not an optimist at least.”</p>

<p>“ANNA: Det är först nu på det senaste, ja året, som jag har börjat gå med i föreningar och grupper och försöker engagera mig lite mer kollektivt, så. I: Varför? ANNA: Därför att.. Jag tänkte hela tiden att jag skulle vilja engagera mig i någonting, eftersom det känns som att det ger mer kraft och motivation. Jag läser miljövetenskap och det känns ofta så deppigt liksom, men det känns som att det ger lite mera, något utav det, att få göra saker tillsammans med andra människor liksom. Så även om det inte alltid känns kanske som att man kommer kunna förändra så jättemycket, så är det i alla fall nice att träffa folk som tänker likadant och som, vill göra någonting, liksom. Så man ändå känner att man gör någonting, typ.”</p>	<p>“ANNA: It is just this last year that I have been joining associations and groups and am trying to be more active in a more collective way. I: Why? ANNA: Because I was always thinking that I should get engaged in something, because it gives more force and motivation. I study environmental science and it often feels quite depressing, but it feels like it is more rewarding to do things together with other people. Even if it doesn't always feel as if you can change very much it is at the very least nice to meet people that think the way you do and do something. So that you feel that you're doing something.</p>
<p>“LUDWIG: ... det är ju ofta sant också att ens eget agerande inte har sådär jättestor betydelse, globalt, liksom [skratt]. Det är svårt att intala sig. Men samtidigt är det ju det här att få med sig kollektivet liksom, att få med sig den stora massan liksom, så, aa. I: Så du blandar ändå någon såhär, halvuppgiven känsla med ett aktivt engagemang, att du försöker ändå förena de två. LUDWIG: Ja men precis, och jag ser liksom heller inte alternativet till att inte... Eh engagera mig, liksom. Även om det mesta talar för att det kommer bli ganska illa liksom. Redan nu ser vi klimatförändringarna liksom, och vi har redan nu en halv grad som, liksom är redan inlåsta av de utsläpp vi redan har gjort liksom, som kommer komma.</p>	<p>“LUDWIG: ... it is often true as well that ones own actions don't have great importance, globally [laughter]. It is difficult to tell oneself. But at the same time the point is getting the collective on your side, to get the masses on board. I: So you are mixing a kind of half-beaten down feeling with an active engagement, you are trying to combine those two? LUDWIG: Yes exactly, and I don't see an alternative to being engaged. Even if most reports say that it will get pretty bad. Already now we are seeing climate changes, and we already have half a degree [celcius] that are already locked in by the emissions we have emitted, that will come.”</p>
<p>JOHANNA: Det tror jag är det jag tar med mig mest, vilken liksom känslan av att ha makt, och att kunna påverka bara man gick ihop med några kompisar och var lite smart och humoristisk så kunde man, aa. Och vi lyckades ju faktiskt när det kom till hela den här frågan om att lyfta, liksom, naturskyddet i Sverige och liksom, gruvexploateringen i Sverige, bland annat med den här folkrörelsen vi ordnade i skogen men vi lyfte det även på andra, så här. Det skapade en hel rörelse i Sverige och har faktiskt, det har verkligen lett till förändring, både på politisk nivå i särskilda rättsfall med liksom</p>	<p>“JOHANNA: What I think that I take with me most of everything is the feeling of having power, that be able to influence things if only you joined forces with some friends and was a little bit smart and humoristic. We actually succeeded when it came to this issue about raise awareness about natural protection in Sweden and mining in Sweden, partly through this grass roots movement that we arranged in the [Ojnare] forest, but we also raised it elsewhere. It created an entire movement in Sweden and has actually led to change, both at a political level and in particular legal cases.</p>

<p>I: Hur kändes det när det var klart, var det som ett projekt som ni ansåg lyckat, vad fick nu för reaktioner?</p> <p>LUDWIG: Mm jag tycker att det blev extremt lyckat. Det var väldigt många som var intresserade och undrade vad vi höll på med, kom fram och pratade med oss liksom [...] jag tror också att det gav liksom lite såna här tankar åt, ja men som jag nämnde innan, många började plötsligt reflektera över - så här: var ska man jobba då? Vad ska man ägna sig åt egentligen? Jag vet inte, jag tänker att det ändå sådde ett frö bland ganska många, att man kan vara samhällsengagerad som civilingenjör också.</p>	<p>I: How did it feel when you were done, was it a project that you considered successful, what reactions did you get?</p> <p>LUDWIG: Mm I think it was extremely successful. There were many people interested who wondered what we were doing, that came up to us and talked [...] I think it also gave a few thoughts to, well as I mentioned earlier, that many started reflecting about like 'Well where should you work? What should you actually dedicate yourself to?'. I don't know, I think it planted a seed among many, that you can be committed to societal issues also as an engineer.</p>
<p>LUDWIG: Jag tror att det är väldigt för klimaträttviseskampen liksom, att vi har varandra för att stötta varandra och övertyga varandra, för ibland, ibland sviktat det, det är inte så konstigt egentligen, när man försöker göra någonting som aktivt strävas emot, jag menar, kapitalismen bygger på att det här, typen av resursutvinning fungerar.</p>	<p>LUDWIG: I think it is very important for the climate justice fight that we have each other to support each other and convince each other, because sometimes, sometimes the energy wanes. It is no wonder really, when you're trying to do something that is being actively resisted. I mean, capitalism builds on this type of resource extraction functioning.</p>
<p>EMIL: Det var väldigt uppbyggande liksom, och, nä men sen under själva aktionen så var vi ju tusentals människor samlade, det var enorm känsla av gemenskap och av ett gemensamt mål liksom, och väldigt väldigt bestämda över det här liksom, att fan, fan nu stänger vi ner den här skiten liksom, det var enormt</p>	<p>“EMIL: It was very constructive, and then during the action we were thousands of people gathered, it was an enormous feeling of community and of a common goal, and we were very firm that lets do this, like 'Fuck, fuck, let's close this shit down'. It was huge.”</p>
<p>JOHANNA: Jaa, jag tar med mig massa och det har format mig jättemycket. Och den starkaste känslan tror jag att är, för vi brukade göra väldigt, ofta var det väldigt spontant många grejer. Och att vi hade liksom inga pengar, vi hade inte så mycket resurser, men att vi kunde få otroligt stor uppmärksamhet men faktiskt slå igenom och komma ut med vårt budskap ändå, och det tror jag är det jag tar med mig mest, vilken liksom känslan av att ha makt, och att kunna påverka bara man gick ihop med några kompisar och var lite smart och humoristisk så kunde man, aa.</p>	<p>“JOHANNA: Yes I take lots with me and it shaped me a lot. And the strongest feeling I think is that we used to do very spontaneous stuff, and we had no money, we didn't have much resources, but we could get incredible amounts of attention and break through with our message anyway. What I think that I take with me most of everything is the feeling of having power, that be able to influence things if only you joined forces with some friends and was a little bit smart and humoristic.”</p>

<p>I: Mm... Hur var det att vara på Ende Gelände? ELIN: Det var, första gången var det jättestärkande. För det är också, det är också förknippat med väldigt mycket sorg. För det är ju så att bara för att man är engagerad så har man hopp, det har jag verkligen inte. Det, det är jättejobbigt, att se politiker ta skitdåliga beslut år efter år och media hyllar det som att det är framsteg. Men... Så det var jättestärkande att vara där med, liksom, tusentals människor som alla var superengagerade och faktiskt få göra något konkret, att se, att, eh, aa. Att den delen av kolindustrin stängdes ned, även om bara för några timmar liksom.</p>	<p>“I: Mm. Hur var det att vara på Ende Gelände? ELIN: The first time it was really strengthening. Because it is also connected with a lot of sorrow. Because just because you’re engaged doesn’t mean you have hope, I really don’t. It is really hard to watch politicians take shitty decisions year after year and media praises them as if they were progressive. So it was really strengthening to be there with thousands of people that are really engaged and have the chance to do something tangible. That that part of the industry was shut down, if only for a few hours.”</p>
<p>ANNA: Jag kände verkligen det att nu har jag hittat min inre aktivist, nu ska jag börja så här blockera grejer. Ja men det gav verkligen jättepust liksom, att få göra något sånt tillsammans med. Just det alla där var så väldigt brann verkligen för det, och väldigt engagerade, det var jättekul. I: Var det en push som du kände att du behövde? ANNA: Jo men det var det nog. Alltså jag var ju redan aktiv och hade varit det ändå, men det gav lite mer så hära, aa, kämparglöd liksom.</p>	<p>ANNA: I really felt that now I have found my inner activist, now I will begin blocking stuff. Yes it really gave me a big push, to be able to do stuff together. That everyone there really was dedicated, and really engaged, it was a lot of fun. I: Was it a push that you felt that you needed? ANNA: Yes it probably was. I mean I was already active and I would have been either way, but it gave me more of a fighting spirit.</p>
<p>AXEL: Det var väl inte bara att jag klev in i den, det var väl framförallt kanske att jag hade sett under så många år att bara bristen på ansvarstagande av det, jag hade bara förlorat mitt förtroende för, ja, alla som, jag känner mig väldigt hård när jag säger det här, men speciellt när jag, jag har lite förlorat mitt förtroende för att de flesta över 40 egentligen kan jag förstå och agera i enlighet med klimatet. Jag blir gärna motbevisad på den punkten, mer än gärna,</p>	<p>“AXEL: It wasn’t as if I walked into it, it was more that I for years have watched the lack of responsibility, I had lost my faith for, well, I feel very tough when saying this but I have sort of lost my faith that most people over 40 actually can understand and act in accordance with the climate. I am happy to be disproven on that point, more than happy.”</p>
<p>I: Men det är ändå någon slags förändring av hela ramverket som behövs, då? Ytterligare modernisering och teknikoptimism är inte vägen? EMIL: Nä. <i>Är det det mot all förmodan så kommer jag bli väldigt lycklig, men det finns inga bevis som tyder på det.</i> [emphasis mine]</p>	<p>I: But it is some type of change of the entire framework that is needed, then? Further modernization and technological optimism isn’t the way. EMIL: No. <i>And if against all odds it is, I will be very happy, but there is no evidence to suggest that.</i> [emphasis added]</p>

<p>LOUISE: Fast man kan ju kanske hävda att jag, till exempel också, tjänar på hur det är nu liksom med tanke på hur gott ställt jag har det liksom. I: Ja... Det går ingen nöd på dig? R: Nää. Eller det gör det. Men... [skratt] I: Berätta! LOUISE: Nä men det är väl inte så kul att leva i kapitalismen, tycker jag. Men samtidigt som jag liksom, <i>jag får äta vad jag vill, hela tiden kan jag bara gå och köpa vad som helst, och olika såndärna grejer som kanske skulle tas ifrån mig då, i det här andra systemet som jag... Eller i en annan samhällsordning så skulle jag inte ha det så gott.</i> [emphasis mine]</p>	<p>LOUISE: But perhaps you could argue that I also benefit from the state of affairs given how well off I am. I: Yes... Things are okay for you? LOUISE: No. Or they are, but [laughter] I: Do tell! LOUISE: No but it isn't so fun to live under capitalism, I think. But at the same time that <i>I can eat what I want, all the time I can just go and buy whatever I want, and all those things that might be taken away from me in this other system that I... [envision]. Or in another society I might not be as well off.</i> [emphasis mine]</p>
<p>EMIL: Klimataktivism är inte det enda sättet, jag tycker att det är lika mycket värderat med de människor som väljer att leva utanför samhället. För det är också en form av aktivt ställningstagande mot samhället som driver runt det här hjulet, liksom,</p>	<p>EMIL: Climate activism isn't the only way, I think it is just as valuable that people choose to live outside of society. Because that is also a form of active statement against the society that is running this machinery [of exploitation, emissions]</p>
<p>EMIL: Jag tycker att alla bitar som vi pratade om, runt om dem, har en viss gynst [sic] i dem. Jag är personligen ganska trött på plastdebatten, men på ett sätt så ger det också, öppnar det ändå, det är som en liten lättsam ingångspunkt för människor att förstå att okej, vi gör något med klimatet. Det är ju inte den viktigaste punkten, jag ser hellre att folk blockerar infrastruktur [skratt] och den... Liksom. Tar plasten på alldeles för stort allvar. Även om det kräver ju, det är ju ett allvarligt problem alltså, jag försöker inte förminska det på något sätt, men jag tycker att det fått en, klimatet kräver mycket mer än så.</p>	<p>EMIL: I think that every part that we talked about, have a certain benefit. I'm personally pretty tired of the plastic debate, but in a way it also allows for an easy way in for people do understand that, okay, we are doing something [bad] to the climate. It isn't the most pressing issue, I'd rather see people blocking infrastructure [laughter]. Plastic is being taken too seriously, even if it too is a serious problem, I'm not trying to diminish it, but I think that it has gotten a... The climate requires much more than that.</p>
<p>“IDA: Folk kommer med saker som miljöbilspremier eller nattåg, och är så här “Det är kommer lösa klimatkrisen” och man är så här “Nä, det är absolut inte ett dåligt steg” och jag tycker absolut att man ska ta alla små steg man kan, men det är också små steg liksom.”</p>	<p>“IDA: People are suggesting things like ‘green car’ subsidy or night trains, and it’s like ‘No, this won’t solve the climate crisis’ but you’re like ‘No, it is definitely not a bad step’ and I think you should take every small step possible, but they are also small steps...”</p>
<p>Jag tycker ändå att klimataktivismen är någonting av det mest meningsfulla jag gör, det tycker jag absolut. Det får mig verkligen att känna, jag vet inte, någonslags inre frid, att jag gör något meningsfullt med mitt liv. Vad ska jag annars liksom, göra typ, ska jag bara vara en spelare i maskineriet, liksom?</p>	<p>I do think that the climate activism is the most meaningful thing I do, I really do. It makes me feel, I don't know, some sort of inner solace, that I am doing something meaningful with my life. What would I do otherwise, you know, should I just be a cog in the machine?</p>

<p>LINNÉA: Men det tycker jag, att ansvar och rättvisa borde vi prata om mycket mer i klimatfrågan, alltså det borde ta upp mer, för det tror jag ändå är väldigt viktiga komponenter om vi ska lyckas liksom.</p> <p>I: Precis. Jag har tänkt lite att rättvisa är liksom ett sånt värde som ganska många ställer upp på</p> <p>LINNÉA: Ja men precis och då kan man ju länka det till väldigt mycket andra grejer som människor bryr sig om också, så då behöver det ju inte vara att de bryr sig om klimatet, men de kanske bryr sig om jämställdhet, de kanske bryr sig om fattigdom, alla de här grejerna, alltså, de hör ju ihop, så, och då är det ju lättare att dra med sig folk. För bryr du dig om en viss fråga och jag kan bevisa att klimatförändringarna kommer att definitivt påverka den här frågan, då är det ju lättare för dig att bry dig om det också. Ehm. Så vi behöver nog länka det mera, till större, till andra rättvisefrågor.</p>	<p>LINNÉA: I think that we should talk more about responsibility and justice in the climate debate, because I think those are important components if we are to succeed</p> <p>I: I have thought about that justice is one of those values that many people support.</p> <p>LINNÉA: Exactly and then you can link it to many other things that people care about. Then it doesn't have to be that they care about the climate, but perhaps they care about equality, or maybe they care about poverty, all these things they are linked. Then it is easier to attract people, because if you care about one issue and I can prove that climate change will for certain affect this issue, then it is easier for you to care about it too. So we should probably connect it to other justice issues.</p>
<p>LINNÉA: Sverige är ju absolut en av de större utsläpparna av koldioxid, för, på grund av vår livsstil liksom och då tycker jag att det är vårt ansvar att se till att vi fixar det. Speciellt när vi inte är de som får ta konsekvenserna, det är ju det som gör att det är väldigt svårt att motivera människor också. Hade det varit fel, men även våra konsekvenser, så tror jag att det hade hänt mycket mycket mer. Nu är det vårt fel men vi känner inte av det, så då är det mycket svårare att motivera människor</p>	<p>LINNÉA: Sweden definitely is one of the largest emitters of CO2 because of our lifestyles and because of that I think it is our responsibility to make sure we fix it. Especially since we are not the ones taking the consequences, that's what makes it so hard to motivate people as well. If it had been our fault but also our consequences, then I think a lot more would be happening. Now it is our fault, but we don't experience it, and then it is much harder to motivate people.</p>
<p>ELIN: Det är helt sjukt när man går där, alltså, oskyddade personer liksom, som blir batongade och pepparsprejade för att man sitter ned i, liksom, en kolgruva, eller vad det är. Det är verkligen sjukt. När forskningen vet att det är vi som har rätt, och det är de som är de våldsamma och som förstör hela planeten</p>	<p>ELIN: It is completely crazy when you're sitting there, unprotected people, who get hit with batons and pepper sprayed because you're sitting down in a coal mine, or whatever it is. It is completely crazy. When the research says that we are right, and they are the violent ones destroying the entire planet.</p>
<p>EMIL: Det finns liksom inga tekniska lösningar som magiskt kommer kunna lösa oss. Om vi investerar i det ytterligare så kommer det innebära ytterligare mineralutvinningar på andra områden som kommer ytterligare att åsidosätta människor, naturen...</p>	<p>EMIL: There are no technical solutions that will magically solve this. If we invest in it [solar panels and wind power] further it will mean further mineral extraction elsewhere that will further put aside people, nature...</p>