Culture Unbound:

Journal of Current Cultural Research

Thematic Sections:

Climate Change Exemplarity

Edited by

Kyrre Kverndokk and Marit Ruge Bjærke

Thrift, Dwelling and TV

Edited by

Aneta Podkalicka and Alexa Färber

Volume 11, Issue 3–4 2019

Linköping University Electronic Press
Culture Unbound: ISSN 2000-1525 (online)
URL: http://www.cultureunbound.ep.liu.se/

***Culture Unbound*, Volume 11, Issue 3–4 2019**

Thematic Section: Climate Change Exemplarity

***Culture Unbound*, Volume 11, Issue 3–4 2019**

Thematic Section: Thrift, Dwelling and TV

Culture Unbound
Journal of Current Cultural Research

Introduction: Exemplifying Climate Change

By Kyrre Kverndokk & Marit Ruge Bjærke

The latest special report from IPCC, on the 1.5 degree target of the Paris Agreement from 2015, repeats what has been commonly known for a couple of decades, that "[w]arming from anthropogenic emissions from the pre-industrial period to the present will persist for centuries to millennia and will continue to cause further long-term changes in the climate system, such as sea level rise […]"(Allen et al. 2018: 7). The scale and range of this simple description seems overwhelming. What does global sea level rise imply? What are the consequences for the next generation, in the next century, or thousands of years from now? How will anthropogenic emissions affect the environment? How will it affect the different ways people live their lives? And how is it possible to solve or meet the global climate crisis?

The IPCC defines climate change as "a change in the state of the climate that can be identified (e.g., by using statistical tests) by changes in the mean and/or the variability of its properties and that persists for an extended period, typically decades or longer" (IPCC 2014: 120). It is apparent from this definition that a major challenge in communicating the severity of climate change to a larger audience is that it is not directly observable. Climate change as defined by the IPCC is about means, variability and statistical tests, and the measuring and calculation of global climate change depends on advanced computing and huge amounts of global scale data. In her book, *Mediating Climate Change,* media scholar Julie Doyle states:

> To understand the urgencies of climate change is not simply a question of understanding or communicating the science better. […] [W]e need also to understand how climate change is *made meaningful* in order to be able to better address this issue. How climate change is perceived – individually and collectively – depends upon how it is made socially and culturally meaningful to particular audiences. (Doyle 2011: 2)

One way of making climate change meaningful is to focus on the specific effects of contemporary and future climatic changes. Climate researchers, policy makers, politicians, and popular media all use examples of such effects extensively. While the climate-changed future is personalized through the trope of "our children",

Kverndokk, Kyrre & Marit Ruge Bjærke: "Introduction: Exemplifying Climate Change", Volume 11, issue 3–4, 2019: 298–305. Published by Linköping University Electronic Press: http://www.cultureunbound.ep.liu.se

often exemplified through the authors' own children and grandchildren, specific heat waves, hurricanes, droughts, and floods are used as examples of the disastrous effects of climate change. In this thematic section of *Culture Unbound,* we therefore explore the uses of examples as an approach to examining how the cultural meaning of climate change is produced and maintained.

Exemplifying examples

Chapter 3 in the already mentioned IPCC Special Report on the 1.5 degree target adds textboxes containing a number of examples of how a warmer climate will affect different regions of the world to the highly synthesized body text (Hoegh-Guldberg et al. 2018). The textboxes on the consequences of rising temperature in sub-Saharan Africa, increased vulnerability of water supplies for small island states, decline of warm water coral reefs, and the impact of climate change on the global economy all tell the same story: A global temperature rise of 2 degrees at the end of this century will have huge impacts on nature and society, while the impacts of a 1.5-degree rise will be more moderate. The information presented in the textboxes does not differ substantially from the descriptions in the body text of the report. The difference is that the figures and numbers are substituted by examples.

One of the textboxes is entitled "Droughts in the Mediterranean Basin and the Middle East". It presents the area as "an example of a region with high vulnerability where various adaption responses have emerged" (Hoegh-Guldberg et al. 2018: 200). The textbox continues:

> The long history of resilience to climatic change is especially apparent in the eastern Mediterranean region, which has experienced a strong negative trend in precipitation since 1960 (Mathbout et al., 2017) and an intense and prolonged drought episode between 2007 and 2010 (Kelley et al., 2015). This drought was the longest and most intense in the last 900 years (Cook et al., 2016). Some authors (e.g., Trigo et al., 2010; Kelley et al., 2015) assert that very low precipitation levels have driven a steep decline in agricultural productivity in the Euphrates and Tigris catchment basins, and displaced hundreds of thousands of people, mainly in Syria. Impacts on the water resources (Yazdanpanah et al., 2016) and crop performance in Iran have also been reported (Saeidi et al., 2017). Many historical periods of turmoil have coincided with severe droughts, for example the drought which occurred at the end of the Bronze Age approximately 3,200 years ago (Kaniewski et al., 2015). In this instance, a number of flourishing eastern Mediterranean civili-

> zations collapsed, and rural settlements re-emerged with agro-pastoral activities and limited long-distance trade. This illustrates how some vulnerable regions are forced to pursue drastic adaptive responses, including migration and societal structure changes. (Hoegh-Guldberg et al. 2018: 200)

The textbox concludes that "[r]isks of drying in the Mediterranean region could be substantially reduced if global warming is limited to 1.5 degree compared to 2 degrees or higher levels of warming [...]. Higher warming levels may induce high levels of vulnerability exacerbated by large changes in demography" (Hoegh-Guldberg et al. 2018: 201). Thus, the collection of examples of drought in the eastern Mediterranean brings a threefold lesson: The change in precipitation from 1960 and onwards illustrates a global climatic tendency, the description of the drought between 2007 and 2010 as the "longest and most intense" in 900 years indicates the size of this tendency, and the reference to the drought 3,200 years ago shows the possible consequences for civilization. The historical description of droughts in the Middle East constitutes the background for future predictions on drought in the region, as well as for the societal consequences of such droughts.

One reason why these examples work so efficiently is that they are presented as facts. The drought between 2007 and 2010 is indisputable. It was observed and measured, and millions of inhabitants in the region experienced it. Thus, a seemingly unquestionable reality is brought into a text that otherwise contains statistics, graphs and abstract conclusions about the development of the global climate. The drought works as "a way of gesturing outside the pure discourse of the speaker/writer toward support in a commonly accepted textual or referential world", to use the words of literary scholar John Lyons (Lyons 1989: 28). This is, according to Lyons, one of the rhetorical qualities of an example.

Lyons further remarks that examples are not naturally given, but carefully selected, framed and presented in order to make a clear point (Lyons 1989: 33–34). The authors of the IPCC report choose to focus on periods of drought in the Middle East and connect them to "periods of turmoil", rather than, for instance, focusing on the large-scale fires in countries such as Portugal and Greece. The text does not explicitly claim that the drought between 2007 and 2010 was one of the factors that facilitated the Syrian civil war. Yet by stating that "[m]any historical periods of turmoil have coincided with severe droughts", it implies that it was likely. With the Syrian war as a backdrop, the descriptions of droughts are turned into alarming examples of the consequences of climate change. Thereby, they also demonstrate how the practice of selecting and framing examples is a useful rhetorical strategy for persuasion.

However, these examples of drought are more than cleverly framed illustrations of a point. They are also epistemological tools. The drought in 1960, the drought period between 2007 and 2010, and the drought 3,200 years ago do work as three inductive examples demonstrating the vulnerability of the region. But when the text moves on to discuss the future "potential evolution of drought conditions", they also work as a basis for predicting the societal effects of droughts in the future (Hoegh-Guldberg et al. 2018: 201). Even though the IPCC does not spell it out, both the drought that caused the collapse of "a number of eastern Mediterranean civilizations", and the drought between 2007 and 2010, with its implied connection to the Syrian civil war, work as models for imagining the future.

According to literary scholar, Alexander Gelley, there are two distinctly different logics of exemplarity. One is where the examples are used inductively to illustrate a tendency or a general statement. And the other is where the example works as a paradigmatic ideal or a model. Gelley terms these Aristotelian and Platonic logics of exemplarity, respectively (Gelley 1995: 1–2). Anne Eriksen et al. (2012: 13) have, however, remarked that these logics are often entangled. "The example is *both* one of a series and one of a kind, and it is in this doubleness that its power resides. Functionally, the example is a point of exchange between the regular and the exceptional, and from this stems its cultural and rhetorical energy," writes Anne Eriksen, in her contribution to this thematic section of *Culture Unbound*. The examples of drought from the eastern Mediterranean region illuminate this duality; they are at the same time illustrations of a series of droughts in the past, and warnings of what may happen in a climate-changed future.

This duality is the main reason why we claim that examples are so important in climate change discourses; in political speeches and popular media; and even sometimes in scientific texts, as Svensen, Bjærke and Kverndokk show in their contribution to this thematic section. As we have demonstrated by using the IPCC report on the 1,5 degree target as a case, examples may seem like concrete snippets from real life directly turned into text. They seem to be useful devices for researching and communicating a phenomenon that is, at the same time, both concrete and abstract. However, since they work as both illustrations and models, they become something more than pedagogical devices and tools for persuasion. They retain their role as epistemological models, not only innocently illustrating, but at the same time answering questions of what is right and wrong.

Exploring three analytical shifts

Climate change is an entangled academic, political and societal field, which is highly normative. Texts produced within this field constantly balance between emphasizing scientific uncertainty and trying to convince an audience, and they very often do this by using examples. The uses of examples, however, may imply some almost unnoticeable analytical shifts. The articles in this thematic section of *Cultural Unbound* explore three such shifts facilitated by using examples: an epistemological one, from probability to an emphasis on exemplarity; a temporal one, from chronological to non-chronological temporalities; and a discursive one, in the sense that examples of climate change also tend to dominate neighboring environmental discourses. The articles also demonstrate how these epistemological, temporal and discursive shifts are often interconnected.

Several of the contributions show how the uses of examples imply a shift away from an argument based on probability and uncertainty towards an argumentation based on exemplarity. Kyrre Kverndokk's article, "Risk Perception through Exemplarity: Hurricanes as Climate Change Examples and Counterexamples in Norwegian News Media", examines how news media present extreme weather events as examples of a climate-changed future. Extreme weather events such as hurricanes are used by newspapers as examples of climate change or the climate crisis, but are also used by climate skeptics. Kverndokk argues that the usage of hurricanes as examples of climate change "is a way of producing an experienced basis for imagining and predicting the unpredictable future, where both weather patterns and the climate will change fundamentally." The article shows how these hurricanes, through the rhetorical use of them by mass media, are incorporated in a global web of disasters. Kverndokk argues that such example-based reasoning may be understood as a certain kind of risk perception involving both a temporal and spatial entanglement of the future and the present and an entwining of actual, emerging and potential disasters. This rhetorical practice represents a notion of cultural catastrophization by calling upon a fear of an uncontrollable disastrous future. In this light, the climate change skeptics' attempts to turn hurricanes into normal and local phenomena, independent of human action, may also be regarded as attempts to de-catastrophize contemporary society.

The article "The Past as a Mirror: Deep Time Climate Change Exemplarity in the Anthropocene", by Henrik H. Svensen, Marit Ruge Bjærke and Kyrre Kverndokk, also explores an epistemological shift towards reasoning through exemplarity. It examines how the deep past is used in understanding the present and planning for the future. Pursuing the claim of historian Dipesh Chakrabarty that "[t]he discussion about the crisis of climate change can [...] produce affect and knowledge about collective human pasts and futures that work at the limits of historical understanding" (Chakrabarty 2009: 221), the authors ask how deep time geological events are made relevant for the present and the future. This question is answered through an analysis of how a period of rapid global warming 56 million years ago, the so-called Paleocene-Eocene Thermal Maximum (PETM), is used as an example in texts representing different scientific genres. The article argues that the way the PETM is used as an example has formal similarities with the early modern notion of history, often termed historia magistra vitae. The deep geological history works as an authority to consult in order to avoid a disastrous future, both in a scientific and in a moral way. In this way, the article shows how old ways of engaging with the past might be actualized in the Anthropocene.

The *historia magista vitae* topos, discussed by Svensen, Bjærke and Kverndokk, is also examined by Anne Eriksen in her article "History, Exemplarity and Improvements: 18th Century Ideas about Man-Made Climate Change". The article provides a historical depth to the discussion of examples in contemporary climate change discourses. Eriksen describes how the Norwegian historian, Gerhard Schøning (1722–1780), discussed the possibility of changing the Norwegian climate by cutting down forests, arguing that this would improve the climate and increase crops. Schøning's argument was based on examples from Greek and Roman history. This way of arguing draws on the *historia magsistra vitae* topos, where history is regarded as a reservoir of examples from which to learn. Eriksen shows how historical examples were used in social planning in the late 18th century, and demonstrates how historically-specific notions of temporality are embedded in notions of the climate and climatic changes.

The connection between examples, climate change, and temporality is also elaborated in John Ødemark's contribution, "Touchstones for Sustainable Development: Indigenous Peoples and the Anthropology of Sustainability in *Our Common Future*", although his aim is to highlight the struggle over *space* within discussions of the Anthropocene. Through a close reading of the report, *Our Common Future* (1987), he demonstrates that "indigenous and tribal peoples" are construed as living examples of the sustainable management needed to face new ecological challenges. Even though, as he writes "this may seem like just another case of the much-commented upon 'noble' or 'ecologically noble savage'," Ødemark's main argument is that the particular conceptions of "culture" and "ecological" wholes that are part of this exemplarity enable a translation between vastly different scales in the report – between local and "bounded" indigenous cultures, and the earth as a blue marble suspended in cosmic space.

The use of examples may also facilitate shifts of focus between different environmental discourses. Mass extinction and biodiversity loss is currently an intensely debated topic in environmentalism as well as in popular media. Marit Ruge Bjærke's article, "Making Invisible Changes Visible: Animal Examples and the Communication of Biodiversity Loss", discusses how examples of threatened species are used in texts on biodiversity loss. Bjærke contends that the choice of examples affects the understanding of the size of an environmental problem as well as of what the solution might be. It matters whether the example of biodiversity loss is a ptarmigan, important for recreational hunting, or a cuckoo, connected historically to magic and bad omens. Bjærke shows that biodiversity loss is often presented as a local effect of global climate change, pointing towards future effects of climate change, but overlooking present pressures such as changes in land use.

One challenge when exploring examples is the way the examples themselves seem to pop up everywhere in our own texts. We simply cannot avoid using them; neither when we try to show how examples are used, nor when we try to show what the various examples do. Still, we contend that the five articles in this thematic section demonstrate that examples are not merely simple pedagogical illustrations of climate change, but are integrated parts of the processes of giving climate change meaning, in the interface between science, politics and popular media. They show how notions of climate change are related to a range of societal and cultural fields, such as understandings of traditional culture and sustainability, understandings of biodiversity loss, imaginaries of disasters and expectations of the future. In other words, examples are not just illustrations of general principles of climate change, they are also devices for interpretation and cognition. Herein lies the power of examples.

*

The contributors to the thematic section participate in the ongoing research project "The Future is Now: Temporality and Exemplarity in Climate Change Discourses", funded by the The Research Council of Norway. The project lasts from 2017 to 2020, and one of its main objectives is to use exemplarity as a methodological approach to understand notions of time and temporality, and how the past, present and future interconnect in vernacular, media and scientific discourses on climate change.

Kyrre Kverndokk is Professor of Cultural Studies, University of Bergen, at the Department of Archaeology, History, Cultural Studies and Religion. He has published on the practice and politics of Second World War memory, the history of folklore studies in Norway and the cultural history of natural disasters. He is currently leading the research project "The Future is Now: Temporality and exemplarity in climate change discourses" E-mail: kyrre.kverndokk@uib.no

Marit Ruge Bjærke is a postdoctoral research fellow in Cultural Studies at the Department of Archaeology, History, Cultural Studies and Religion, University of Bergen. Her research interests lie within the environmental humanities, with a focus on biodiversity loss and climate change. Bjærke is currently part of the research project "The Future is Now: Temporality and exemplarity in climate change discourses". E-mail: marit.r.bjerke@uib.no

References

Allen, Myles R. et al. (2018): Summary for Policymakers. In Allen, Myles R. et al.: *Global warming of 1.5°C: An IPCC Special Report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways, in the context of strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change, sustainable development, and efforts to eradicate poverty*, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, pp. 1–26.

Chakrabarty, Dipesh (2009): "The Climate of History: Four Theses". *Critical Inquiry* 35(2), pp. 197–222.

Doyle, Julie (2011): *Mediating Climate Change*, Farnham: Ashgate.

Eriksen, Anne, Ellen Krefting & Anne Beate Rønning (eds.) (2012): *Eksempelets makt: Kjønn, representasjon og autoritet fra antikken til i dag,* Oslo: Scandinavian Academic Press.

Gelley, Alexander (ed.) (1995): *Unruly examples: On the rhetoric of exemplarity.* Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Hoegh-Guldberg, Ove et al. (2018): Chapter 3: Impacts of 1.5°C of Global Warming on Natural and Human Systems. In Allen, Myles R. et al.: *Global warming of 1.5°C: An IPCC Special Report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways, in the context of strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change, sustainable development, and efforts to eradicate poverty*. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, pp. 175 – 311.

IPCC (2014): *Climate Change 2014: Synthesis Report. Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* [Core Writing Team, R.K. Pachauri and L.A. Meyer (eds.)]

Lyons, John D. (1989): *Exemplum: The rhetoric of example in early modern France and Italy,* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Culture Unbound
Journal of Current Cultural Research

Risk Perception through Exemplarity: Hurricanes as Climate Change Examples and Counterexamples in Norwegian News Media

By Kyrre Kverndokk

Abstract

This article explores how hurricanes are used in news media to exemplify the consequences of climate change. This is done by a close reading of Norwegian newspaper articles on the hurricanes Katrina (2005), Sandy (2012), Harvey and Irma (both 2017). The geographical distance between the disaster areas and the media audience enables an exploration of how these weather events are made meaningful across long distances, as global concerns. The article shows how these hurricanes are textualized and turned into signs in nature that are pointing towards a climate-changed future, and how they work as modelling examples for imagining the possible disastrous state of such a future. It further argues that reasoning with hurricane examples is a certain kind of risk perception involving a temporal and spatial entwining of the future and the present, that represents a notion of cultural catastrophization by calling upon a fear of an uncontrollable disastrous future.

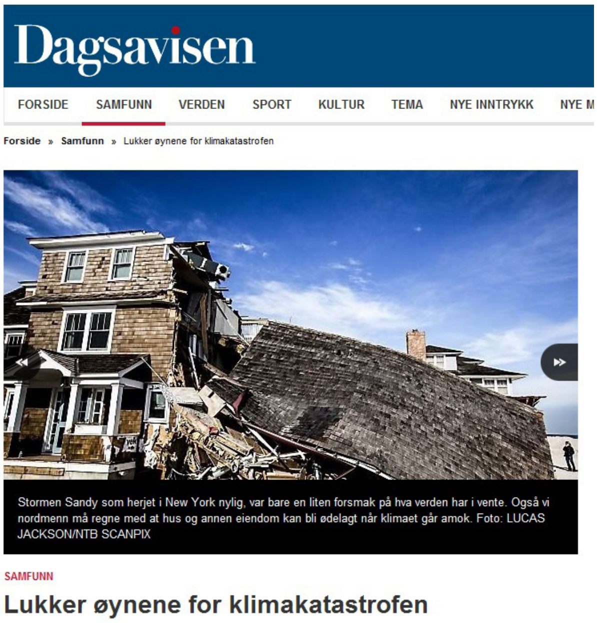
The uses of the hurricane example in news media imply an epistemological shift from probability to exemplarity. This shift provides an argumentative space for climate change skeptics to perform counterarguments that juggle between probability and exemplarity. The article explores how this is done, and how statistics and mentioning of other hurricanes are used to argue that hurricanes Sandy, Harvey and Irma were not extraordinary events in terms of intensity, and thus that they cannot possibly be fueled by climate change. The climate change skeptics' attempts to claim these hurricanes to be local and normal phenomena, independent of human action, may be regarded as attempts to de-catastrophize contemporary society.

Keywords: climate change, hurricanes, risk perception, exemplarity, risk society, semiotic worldview

Kverndokk, Kyrre: "Risk Perception through Exemplarity: Hurricanes as Climate Change Examples and Counterexamples in Norwegian News Media", *Culture Unbound*, Volume 11, issue 3–4, 2019: 306–329. Published by Linköping University Electronic Press: http://www.cultureunbound.ep.liu.se

Introduction

In December 2012, the political leaders of the world were once again gathered to negotiate global climate politics and possible agreements. This time the UN Climate Change Conference was held in Doha, the capital of Qatar. A few days in advance of the meeting, the Norwegian daily Dagsavisen published a critical article on what to expect from the upcoming meeting, entitled "Closing their Eyes to the Climate Catastrophe". The introduction to the article is rather pessimistic: "The politicians of the world are unable to save the world. The emission of greenhouse gases continues to increase. It is therefore likely that there will be a catastrophic rise in temperature of up to five degrees" (Sandberg 2012). Then follows a short interview with the research director of CICERO, the Norwegian Center for International Climate Research, Knut H. Alfsen, describing the dystopic future prospects. "The world will be ugly, ugly, ugly, ugly with a temperature rise of five degrees. The last time it was four degrees warmer than now, Europe was a swampland. The world will not be possible to recognize", says Alfsen (Sandberg 2012). The article continues by referring to recent numbers from the Global Carbon Project documenting that if the contemporary emission rates of greenhouse gasses continued, it would lead to a five degree rise in temperature by the end of the century. This dramatic message is illustrated by a picture of a building that had collapsed, obviously due to severe wind. The caption reads: "The storm Sandy that devastated New York recently was only a small preview of what the world has in prospect. Even we Norwegians have to expect that houses and other property can be damaged when the climate runs amok" (Sandberg 2012).



Facsimilie from *Dagsavisen 2012-12-03.*

The way this news article moves between Doha, Norway and New York City illustrates how popular climate change discourse is globalized. A weather incident in the USA might be used as an example to illustrate the climate-changed future in a totally different country, while political decisions made at a third location might have implications about whether or not the prediction will be turned into reality. Such rhetorical use of extreme weather events as examples of climate change effects are common in news media. In this article I will examine how extreme weather examples are used in news media to exemplify climate change. This will be done through an analysis of texts on hurricanes from Norwegian newspapers. I will discuss how the hurricanes are made "culturally meaningful for a particular audience" (Doyle 2011: 2, see also the introduction to this thematic section of *Culture Unbound*), in this case an audience on the other side of the Atlantic. The geographical distance between the disaster areas and the media audience enables an exploration of how these weather events are made meaningful across long distances, as global concerns.

Geographer Mike Hulme has suggested that climate might not merely be understood as a statistical description of weather over a period of time. While weather is in flux, climate has until recently been considered as a stable entity. Thus, climate, according to Hulme, might be understood:

> as an idea which mediates between the human experience of ephemeral weather and the cultural ways of living which are animated by this experience. The idea of climate introduces a sense of stability or normality into what otherwise would be too chaotic and disturbing an experience of unruly and unpredictable weather (Hulme 2017: 4).

The stable aspect of climate also includes a sense of predictability and security, according to Hulme. This is threatened when the climate changes, and there is no such thing as an ordinary climate anymore. In that regard, the climate involves affects, more or less dystopic imaginaries of the future, and also ethical concerns. The aim of this article is to explore some of the imaginaries, affects and ethics involved when specific weather events are being associated to climate change. This will be done by examining how "the hurricane", is textually produced and used *as an example* of climate change effects, and the article asks: What sort of understandings of the relationship between weather disasters, climate change and society are unveiled through uses of hurricanes as exemplifications of climate change?

Theoretical approaches and empirical basis

Examples might in general be regarded as rhetorical devices that establish connections between something specific and a general argument. They have the ability to relate a concrete case to an abstract statement (Eriksen et al. 2012: 9). There are two main kinds of example, those working as paradigmatic or modelling examples and those working as inductive or serial examples (Gelley 1995: 1–2). When arguing with examples, these kinds are often combined in more or less complex ways (Eriksen et al. 2012: 13). In order to work efficiently, both kinds of examples have to be based on common ground. They are rhetorical devices that are seemingly external to the text or communicative situation where they are used, or as literary scholar John Lyons puts it:

> Example is a way of gesturing outside of the pure discourse of the speaker/writer toward support in a commonly accepted textual or referential world. As external to discourse, or as a unit of discourse separated from the unqualified enunciation of the speaker alone, example can be conceived as something that speaker and audience, writer and reader look toward as possible common ground. In this case example would be outside the 'inside' constituted by the discourse of direct assertion and would itself be a closed entity, which would present itself to be beheld by the public. (Lyons 1989: 28)

This claim draws on his study of the uses of examples in French and Italian renaissance literature. It may, however, also be said to characterize the example as a rhetorical figure in general, including the ways examples are used today in everyday communication, in politics, for educational reasons and by popular media (cf. Eriksen et al. 2012). In the newspaper article referred to in the introduction, Hurricane Sandy functioned as a "closed entity", gesturing towards "a commonly accepted […] referential world". The example is not merely referring to the actual hurricane, it also gestures towards a climate-changed future. This gesture might only work rhetorically if the readers acknowledge the severe consequences of anthropogenic climate change. This exemplification would be regarded as meaningless or even a false claim, from the point of view of climate change skeptics.

Like all examples, the hurricanes have to be textualized in order to work rhetorically. They must be framed and presented as "closed entities" that are possible to transfer between different discourses and texts. The hurricanes must be "cut out" from the constant flow of weather and be entextualized as meaningful units. Folklorists Richard Bauman and Charles Briggs have defined entextualization as "the process of rendering discourse extractable, of making a stretch of linguistic production into a unit – a *text* – that can be lifted out of its interactional setting" (Bauman & Briggs 1990: 73, their italics). The process of entextualization, does not only include the production of a text, it also includes processes of decontextualization and recontextualization. Bauman and Briggs emphasize that contexts are not fixed, predefined units but are rather co-produced as part of the entextualization process. In line with Bauman and Briggs, I regard the process of turning an extreme weather event into an example of climate change as a process of rendering an event extractable by making it into a textual unit. This process also requires carefully performed processes of (re)contextualization of the textualized weather event in order to work sufficiently as a rhetorical figure.

Following this analytical strategy, the article will examine Norwegian newspaper texts on four American hurricanes, Katrina (2005), Sandy (2012), Harvey and Irma (both 2017). These hurricanes are selected because they immediately turned into international media events and were associated to climate change. I have gone through the media coverage of these hurricanes by using the Norwegian media monitoring service Retriever. The names of the hurricanes and "climate"/"climate change" have been used as search queries. Retriever covers all Norwegian newspapers and media houses with one exception. In addition to news media, the database also covers some periodicals and press releases from larger organizations and think tanks. I have limited the corpus of texts to editorials, columns, news articles and letters to the editor published in paper-based or web-based news media, excluding feature articles and journalistic fields such as business, sports, culture and entertainment.

The search result has been used to identify some patterns in the usage of hurricanes as examples of climate change effects. Three main uses of the hurricane example have been identified and will be examined through close readings of a limited number of texts: The extreme weather event as a sign in nature previewing a climate-changed future, the weather related disaster as a demonstration of climate change risk and the hurricane as a counterexample used to argue against the notion of anthropogenic climate change.

The Hurricane as a Rhetorical Figure in Popular Climate Change Discourse

"The hurricane" has become a key symbol in popular climate change discourse, partly due to its dramatic character (see Kverndokk 2015: 219–235). While other natural phenomena associated with climate change, such as the melting of the Greenland ice sheet and the decrease in Arctic sea ice, are located in the far north wilderness, hurricanes bring the consequences of climate change into populous Western cities. They are, in science journalist Chris Mooney's words, "monstrous citysmashers" (Mooney 2007: 9). Hitting American cities, they have a potential for being broadcast live, reminding a global media audience how climate change fuels societal vulnerability.

The practice of naming them also facilitates hurricanes for being used as rhetorical devices. This practice goes back to the Second World War and was formalized in 1953. The hurricanes were given female names until 1979, and from that year the naming also included male names as every second one (Fitzpatrick 2006: 14–15). The US National Hurricane Center makes an alphabetic list of 21 hurricane names in advance of the hurricane seasons. The names may be re-used several times, but are taken out of circulation if the hurricane becomes a media celebrity. The name Katrina has, for instance, been used six times, but not after 2005. The naming transforms a hurricane from being just another occasion of more or less disastrous wind and heavy rain to unique event. They become clearly defined, textual objects, which makes them easy to refer to as singular events.

Hurricanes have been associated with climate change at least since the beginning of the 1990s, but it was Hurricane Katrina that turned them into a main topic in transnational popular climate change discourse (Boykoff 2011: 136, Mooney 2007: 150). Already on the day of the landfall, 29 August 2005, *Time Magazine* posed the question "Is Global Warming Fueling Katrina?" (Kluger 2005). The environmentalist Ross Gelbspan followed up two days later in *The New York Times* by claiming: "The hurricane that struck Louisiana and Mississippi on Monday was nicknamed Katrina by the National Weather Service. Its real name is global warming" (Gelbspan 2005).

The dramaturgy of the disaster partly explains why this particular hurricane was framed by popular media and environmentalists as a climate change event. In the essay "Global Storm Warning," the environmentalist Mark Hertsgaard explains it in this way:

> It's hard to imagine a more clear-cut wake-up call than Hurricane Katrina; environmentally speaking, it was nearly the perfect storm. In a single catastrophic event, it brought together the most urgent environmental problem of our time – global warming – with the most telling but least acknowledged environmental truth: When the bill for our collective behavior comes due, it is invariably the nonwhite, nonaffluent members of society who pay a disproportionate share. And who said Mother Nature has no sense of irony? Katrina (and then Rita) struck at a major production site for America's oil and natural gas – the two carbon-based fuels that, along with coal, help drive global warming. (Hertsgaard 2006: 17)

Hurricane Katrina was simply the perfect extreme weather event to be used as an example of climate change effects. According to Hertsgaard, it almost made itself. Yet, what Hertsgaard actually does in this quote is to pinpoint some major aspects of how and why this hurricane could rhetorically be framed as an example; the location of the disaster, its victims and the national and international political context. By describing the hurricane as a scene exposing the relationship between social vulnerability and climate change, he turns the disaster into a narrative with the people in New Orleans as victims, the oil industry and "our collective behavior" as villains, and nature as the driving force of the story. It is a narrative in need of heroic action – not merely as relief work – but rather as severe reorientation of national and global environmental politics. The quote may almost be regarded as a recipe for how to use Hurricane Katrina as a rhetorical figure in climate change discourse.

Hurricane Katrina as an Object Lesson

The framing of Hurricane Katrine as a climate change event also dominated the Norwegian media coverage of the disaster. Already on 31 August, less than two days after the hurricane hit New Orleans, the tabloid *Dagbladet*, the third largest newspaper in Norway 2005, published an editorial entitled "Even more Extreme Weather". This is a larger excerpt:

> Katrina has caused severe damage in New Orleans and put larger parts of the city under water. […]
>
> Katrina's ravages provide an object lesson in what happens when the weather becomes extreme. The experts are careful not to directly link this particular hurricane to global warming. This year's hurricane season can become one of the worst, yet it may be a part of a 50 to 60-year weather cycle. But, however, only various supporters of the oil industry, found among politicians and scientists, doubt that climate gas emissions are warming the planet, causing climate change and extreme weather. Hurricanes are not the only form of extreme weather.
>
> Warm, still weather that causes drought can be even more destructive.
>
> Extreme weather in our own country manifests itself as summer storms in the Western regions [of Norway]. Or we see it as bushes and small trees growing in the mountain plateaus where we are used to alpine vegetation. The Minister of Environment, Knut Arild Hareide, promises that as long as his government is allowed to stay in power, the loss of Norwegian nature as we know it will be halted during the next Parliamentary term. This is an impressive promise that Hareide will be unable to keep when nature strikes back.
>
> Katrina has struck New Orleans hard. On a local level, human activity has contributed to making the city more vulnerable when storms hit. Combined with an influx of water in the Gulf of Mexico, the construction of dams and development of real estate, oil extraction, and other

> industries have made the water levels in the Mississippi Delta rise by almost a meter.
>
> The time came long ago to stop listening to the oil industry's claqueurs who deny the now well-documented connections between emissions and future extreme weather, whether they are politicians or scientists. The goals of the Kyoto agreement are far from adequate in order to stop the increase in climate gas emissions. Extreme weather is a reminder of what awaits us if we don't do much, much more. Now. (Dagbladet 2005: 2)

This editorial textualizes the disaster as a specific rhetorical figure by claiming that "Katrina's ravages provide an object lesson in what happens when weather becomes extreme". The term "object lesson" refers to the pedagogical ideas of Johan Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746–1827). He emphasized the importance of using physical objects or visualizations as pedagogical devices. By terming the disaster an object lesson, *Dagbladet* launches the disaster as a pedagogical example, demonstrating what a climate-changed future will be like.

In order to fully work as such an example there must be some sort of causal connection between climate change and the hurricane. However, this is difficult to claim from a scientific point of view. Meteorological research may calculate the risk for stronger and more frequent hurricanes due to increased ocean temperatures, but such research cannot directly prove that single events are caused by climate change (cf. Field et al. 2012: 127). Hence, in line with climate research, the editorial is careful not to draw a direct causal link between climate change and the hurricane. Instead of going into a discussion on likelihood and probability, the editorial turns to an argumentation based on examples. The term that enables this shift is "extreme weather".

This term emerged in the USA in the 1980s. The new genre of weathertainment developed by TV-channels such as *The Weather Channel* used it to describe spectacular weather events such as hurricanes (Nielsen 2014: 22–23). "Extreme weather" appeared for the first time in Norwegian press in 1994, as a term for describing a heavy storm (Halden Arbeiderblad 1994). It was defined and given formal content a year later by The Norwegian Meteorological Institute. The term was then launched as a weather category to be used in a new forecasting procedure notifying weather events that could cause severe societal damages. "Extreme weather" was then not defined by meteorological criteria, but by the societal and economic risks. It was a formal preparedness category that included all sorts of weather events that could cause severe societal damage, such as storms, storm surges, heavy rainfalls and other weather conditions causing possible floods, avalanches and landslides (Nilsen & Vollset 2016: 389–395). Thus, the category "extreme weather" brings different weather phenomena together, seemingly transforming them into phenomena of the same kind. This was also the intention by coining it as a preparedness category. At the same time, this way of bringing together different types of weather also makes "extreme weather" an efficient rhetorical figure, far beyond a preparedness system.

The same year as "extreme weather" was coined as a preparedness category, it also appeared in Norwegian media as a term associated with climate change. According to STS-scholar Marianne Ryghaug, it eventually became a dominant trope in Norwegian climate journalism (Ryghaug 2006: 204–205). This seems to have happened in the mid-2000s, partly due to the storm Gudrun that caused severe damage in Southern Scandinavia in January 2005 and Hurricane Katrina in August the same year (Nasjonalbiblioteket). Hence, the lay and media use of the term "extreme weather" has at least three connotations. It may at the same time connote the causes (climate change), the unfolding (spectacle) and the consequences (as a preparedness category) of a weather event. This adds a rhetorical plasticity to the term.

This plasticity is visible in how the term is used in the editorial from *Dagbladet*. Hurricane Katrina is first exposed as a spectacle, as "Katrina's ravages". It is this spectacle that is named an object lesson. In the following sentences, however, it is made clear that it is not the storm as such that is of interest, but rather the trinity of a weather spectacle, its climatic causes *and* its societal consequences, summed up in the term "extreme weather". By claiming that "[h]urricanes are not the only form of extreme weather", the article explicitly unites different kinds of weather phenomena appearing at different locations around the world; Hurricane Katrina, drought, summer storms in Norway and "bushes and small trees grow in the mountain plateaus where we are used to alpine vegetation". These phenomena are brought together as indicators of global warming. They seemingly work as a list of observable evidences of climate change, which could almost be mistaken for a list of statistic data. Yet, in this case they primarily work as a list of examples of climate change effects. These examples serve two functions. They are contemporary exemplifications of climate change effects and they are "reminder[s] of what awaits us if we don't do much, much more. Now." In the latter regard, the listed examples work as communicative signs pointing towards a climate-changed future. Hence, regarded as signs they bring a message from *nature* to the *humankind* about the *future*. They are a list of forewarnings of a larger, climate disaster that will emerge "when nature strikes back". This argumentative pattern has striking similarities with an older way of reasoning – omen reading.

Reading Signs in Nature

The art of reading omens was both an intellectual and a vernacular practice in early modern Europe. In the early modern semiotic worldview, nature was understood as a divine text. It was considered possible to read God's plan out of nature, by using the Bible as the code for interpreting the signs (cf. Frye 1982, Gilje & Rasmussen 2002: 203–233). Rare phenomena and dramatic events such as weather events and disasters were read in light of eschatological verses of the Scripture and were regarded as prefigurations of forthcoming major disasters, most often Judgment Day. The eschatological interpretations of such signs were often also authorized by listing a number of ominous signs occurring more or less at the same time. These signs could in principle occur at totally different locations around the world. The Lisbon earthquake of 1755 was, for instance, interpreted around Europe as an omen predicting the emergence of the Last Days. The earthquake was not only seen in relationship to other earthquakes around the world; the eschatological interpretation was also supported by listing other peculiar occurrences that were considered as typical omens, such as floods in France, a blood-red rainfall in Switzerland, a comet observation in Sweden, and five moons observed in the sky over Poland. Each one of these incidents was perceived as remarkable. Linked together they formed an ominous semiotic pattern, predicting the end of the world (Kverndokk 2019).

The early modern and late modern knowledge regimes are fundamentally incomparable. Yet, despite the fundamental differences between the way the editorial in *Dagbladet* argues and the early modern reading of omens, there are three striking similarities. First, the contemporary extreme weather events are also read as signs. Both the early modern and late modern natural occurrences are constituting semiotic patterns pointing towards a disastrous future, though leaning on quite different authorities. The early modern interpretations of signs were authorized by the Bible, while those in *Dagbladet* are authorized by references to science. Second, none of these signs, neither the early modern ones nor the ones listed in the editorial, appeared without reason. Each one of the early modern disasters were regarded to be caused by sin that triggered the wrath of God locally. At the same time, a semiotic inter-spatial pattern of such extraordinary events indicated a universal reason; human beings as sinners, with their inherited original sin. The editorial from *Dagbladet* also explains the causes for "Katrina's ravages" to be two-leveled. The direct cause of the disaster is explained to be local vulnerability due to "the construction of dams and development of real estate, oil extraction, and other industries [that] have made the water levels in the Mississippi Delta rise by almost a meter." While the final cause is explained as being "that climate gas emissions are warming the planet, causing climate change and extreme weather". And third, the forthcoming disastrous futures, the early modern apocalypse and the disastrous climate-changed future, are presented as the consequences that will occur if not the destructive (sinful) human behavior does not end very soon. In both cases the specific disasters or natural incidents are at the same time understood as self-blamed incidents and warnings that call for action. In that regard, the natural incidents in both omen readings and in the text from *Dagbladet* imply a moral aspect.

The intricate play between the disastrous events as punishments and as warnings are similar in early modern readings of omens and the editorial from 2005. Historian Gerrit Jasper Schenk has argued that what he terms "a secular theology of punishment" is present in contemporary climate change discourse (Schenk 2009: 12). He draws a line from the notion of divine punishment in early modern theology to the emphasis on the moral connection between human action and natural disasters in contemporary climate change discourse. Historian David Larsson Heidenblad has argued in similar terms. He claims that the early modern notion of divine punishment and the moral figuration of poplar climate change discourse both draw on so-called "moral causality" (Heidenblad 2012). In late modern popular texts on climate change, nature is no longer a tool used by God to punish sinners. Nature is instead given agency as an autonomous force. The editorial from *Dagbladet* is quite typical in that regard. Nature is presented as an authority punishing or "striking back", while it at the same time also is warning humans not to bring it out of balance. Such potential imbalance between nature and society is a frequently returning motif in popular climate change discourse. This motif is unveiling a notion of nature as a gatekeeper of the limits for human exploitations of the environment (cf. Holm 2012: 24–26). Throughout the modern era "nature" has been ascribed a self-authorized indisputable moral authority, according to historians of science, Lorraine Daston and Fernando Vidal (cf. Daston & Vidal 2004: 5–6). This moral aspect of nature serves as the basis for its gatekeeping position in texts such as the editorial from *Dagbladet.* Hence, as an object lesson, Hurricane Katrina is connecting the future to the present through moral causality, by demonstrating the obligation of immediate action to avoid a climate-changed, disastrous future. This way or reasoning must be regarded as a kind of risk perception, but not primarily in terms of calculations of uncertainty and probability. This is rather a way of reasoning that evokes a general sense of danger connected to contemporary carbon emissions, by pointing to a number of warnings.

Exemplifying Cultural Catastrophization

The textualizing of Hurricane Katrina as an object lesson in climate change, underscores how a local disaster also is perceived as a global concern, and how the lesson learned even might be relevant for a Norwegian audience. This way of connecting disasters to everyday life of audiences far away is common in popular climate change discourse. Another example is the newspaper article from *Dagsavisen* which I presented in the introduction. By claiming that Hurricane Sandy was "a small preview of what the world has in prospect", this article makes the hurricane relevant for audiences on the other side of the globe, while it at the same time makes it relevant for international climate politics. These connections are established through reading the hurricane as a sign in nature, pointing towards a disastrous future. In that regard, the hurricane example establishes both trans-spatial and trans-temporal connections.

The headline of the article is, as mentioned: "Closing their Eyes to the Climate Catastrophe" (Sandberg 2012). The term "the climate catastrophe" is commonly used in several European languages. It is most often written in singular and in the definite form. In that way it includes all possible disastrous effects of climate change. In other words, it incorporates quite different natural processes and events taking place at different times and places around the world and turns them into aspects of one all-embracing forthcoming disaster. The term is in that regard apocalyptic. The apocalyptic figuration of a climate-changed future has been widely examined (e.g. Anshelm & Hultman 2015, Cochet 2015, Hörnfeldt 2018, Hulme 2008: 10–13, Johns-Putra 2016, Lilly 2016, Northcott 2015). The climate apocalypse is, however, often referred to by scholars in rather simplified terms, as a metaphor for an emerging societal collapse (Skrimshire 2014: 237–239). The apocalyptic framing of a climate-changed future is of course metaphoric, in the sense that it is a secular imaginary and is thus not describing a transition from an earthly to a heavenly world. But it is more than just a metaphor. It is also a temporal structure organizing the relationship between the present and the end. Literary scholar Frank Kermode terms this temporal structure kairos, which is one of two Greek words for describing time. The word chronos means "passing time", while Kermode describes kairos as "a point of time filled with significance, charged with a meaning derived from its relation to the end" (Kermode 1967: 47). The apocalypse is in other terms as much about the significance of the present as it is about the future. The usage of hurricanes Katrina and Sandy as examples in the editorial from Dagbladet and the article from Dagsavisen follows this temporal structure. In both cases they exemplify how present-day events are "charged with a meaning derived from [their] relation to the end".

The temporal and spatial entwining of the future and the present in these texts also implies an entwining of risk and fear for actual, emerging, potential and predicted natural disasters around the globe. It can be argued that this kind of rhetoric reflects what sociologist Ulrich Beck has termed *the risk society*. According to Beck, the risk society is characterized by hazards and risks that are uncalculatable, uncontrollable, trans-local and even global, such as climate change effects. It might also be argued that the practice of reading hurricanes as signs prefiguring a disastrous future is catastrophizing everyday life, in the sense that it calls upon a fear for an uncontrollable disastrous future, and likewise encourages a safety-desiring state of emergency (cf. Ophir 2010). Such a cultural catastrophization is not necessarily demotivating, it might just as well motivate for political action. Beck argues that the notion of globalized and imminent risks might generate a globalized commonality of anxiety, from which a "*solidarity from anxiety* arises and becomes a political force" (Beck 1992: 49, Beck's italic). The way the hurricanes are used as examples of climate change effects in the two texts close read so far, might be regarded as a rhetorical strategy to call upon such a globalized solidarity by appealing to a sense of anxiety of the uncontrollable climate-changed future.

Exemplary Climate-Changed Spectacle

The science journalist Bjørn Vassnes publishes a weekly column in the leftist newspaper *Klassekampen*, commenting on current scientific debates or discoveries. On 7 September 2005 the column was dedicated to Hurricane Katrina, climate change and risk perception. The article is entitled "We All Live in New Orleans", emphasizing that the hurricane also has relevance for Norwegian newspaper readers. This article is in contrast to the two texts examined so far, not reading the hurricane as a sign in nature. It is instead placing the disastrous scenes from New Orleans at the center of the argumentation.

Vassnes opens the article by claiming that "[n]o matter how urban we think we are, we will never get away from nature", before he demonstratively turns the disaster in New Orleans into a rhetorical figure:

> What happened in New Orleans is more than a natural disaster, it is a metaphorical event of historical dimensions, which can hopefully lead a way for a new realism both in the USA and around the globe. Located below sea level, with too fragile protections against the forces of nature, the drowned city has become a symbol of the whole world, and for the contemporary USA in particular. The destiny of the city is a metaphor for what may hit all of us if we continue our mindless denial of nature. We have for a long time pushed environmental problems and an accelerating greenhouse effect under the carpet, constructed higher and higher levees against reality, and not realized that we have just made

> ourselves even more vulnerable when the flood eventually appears. (Vassnes 2005)

A metaphor is in general a rhetorical device that implies a resemblance between what it denotes and what it is supposed to illustrate. By doing so, the metaphor has the capability to mediate between different phenomena, events, utterances and texts. It establishes connections between different domains of meaning, and it also opens for entanglements of concepts, descriptions, associations and imaginaries in between these domains (Turner 1974: 25–30, Lakoff & Johnson 1980). Thus, the use of terms such as "metaphor" and "symbol" is a way of textualizing the hurricane and works as a linguistic and narrative gate opener.

What Vassnes calls "[t]he destiny of the city" is not just the simple fact that the hurricane caused severe damages in New Orleans. It also brings associations to the stories that had been displayed to a transnational audience through ten days of intensive news coverage. The news from the disaster area was first and foremost portraying chaos and the absence of the authorities and was structured through a limited number of narrative motifs, such as looting and snipers shooting at helicopters (cf. Dynes & Rodríguez 2007: 24–25). The football stadium Superdome was used as a temporary shelter, even though it had no electric power, no functioning air condition, and terrible sanitary conditions. As the days went along, more than 30 000 people gathered there, and descriptions of the terrible conditions went around the world, including rumors about murders and rapes. Norwegian media used metaphors such as a "war zone" and analogies to specific war zones like Bagdad, Somalia and Afghanistan to illustrate the situation. One profiled news commentator even compared the conditions in the Superdome with the Thunderdome, the gladiatorial arena in the post-apocalyptic *Mad Max* movies from the 1980s (Kverndokk 2015: 197–210). Thus, by claiming that "[w]hat happened in New Orleans […] is a metaphorical event of historical dimensions", Vassnes does more than just refer to the despair, he also opens for associations to chaos, violence, lawlessness, rape, murder and war zone-like conditions. It is these things that "may hit all of us, if we continue our mindless denial of nature".

As a rhetorical device, a metaphor merely portrays likeness between two objects, it does not claim any necessary connection between them. In this text, however, Vassnes claims more than just coincidental similarity between "[w]hat happened in New Orleans" and a climate-changed future. Claiming that "[t]he destiny of the city is a metaphor for what may hit all of us if we continue our mindless denial of nature" he also implies referentiality. Thus, Hurricane Katrina is in this case not just a metaphor. The sentence rather presents the hurricane as an exemplification of how a disastrous climate-changed future might look like.

The hurricane works as such an exemplification in two senses. First, it exemplifies how climate change might unfold as post-civilized scenes. Vassnes returns to the analogy between the spectacle from New Orleans and a devastating climate-changed future in the concluding paragraph of the article:

> [W]e all live in New Orleans: No matter how modern and urban we think we are, we will never get away from nature, whether it is as flood, drought or epidemics. And the more we forget this, the stronger will the shock be when nature breaks through the levees. (Vassnes 2005)

"[W]e all live in New Orleans", does not primarily express empathy with the victims. It rather emphasizes the possibilities for similar scenes as those in New Orleans to unfold at other locations in the future. In that regard, Hurricane Katrina is used as an instructive narrative, a warning to take example from.
Second, the hurricane also works as a serial example that illustrates how climate change might cause natural disasters: "Katrina is exactly what many climate scientists have predicted: that storms and hurricanes will increase in intensity as the ocean temperature rises. What gave Katrina its power was the extremely high temperatures in the Gulf of Mexico, around 30 degrees" (Vassnes 2005). The pedagogical quality of this example is underscored by using the adverb "exactly". This adverb might also imply a direct causal link between climate change and the hurricane. Yet, as a science journalist, he is aware of the scientific uncertainty and multicausality that makes such a claim difficult. His intention is, however, not to discuss uncertainty, but risk.

This risk has both quantitative and qualitative dimensions. Vassnes claims that "[w]e can no longer afford to gamble that the extreme weather that almost the entire globe is experiencing (it is just as much in many other places) is a random variation". Hence, he is referring to risk in terms of frequency. While when he claims that the disaster in New Orleans "a metaphorical event of historic dimensions" he also includes the scenes from the disaster area in his notion of risk.

Risk and Ethics

By focusing on increased risk rather than uncertainty, Vassnes turns the attention away from meteorological processes towards ethical concerns. He uses two examples from quite different societal fields to illustrate his point; one medical example about smoking and one legal example about drinking and driving:

> One can never know exactly what will trigger cancer. A deadly mutation can emerge even if one does not smoke. If a heavy smoker dies of lung cancer, it is therefore possible to claim that it has not been proved

> that it was the smoking that caused the disease. But we still have enough sense to try to limit the smoking, because we know that smoking causes higher risk.
>
> One who has run over a person under the influence of alcohol will probably also claim that it is not possible to prove that it was the alcohol that made him do the wrong maneuver. In theory, that might have happened anyway. But he would probably not get any understanding for this view in court, because he should know that drinking increases the risk of traffic accidents. (Vassnes 2005)

These examples involve commonly accepted risks and are easy to agree on. Vassnes uses them as parallels to climate change risk. They are not just comparable in terms of frequency and probability. They are also demonstrating an equal lack of judgement. The medical example is simply presented as a question of "hav[ing] enough sense to try to limit the smoking". While the legal example is rhetorically more powerful by also including risks of injuring or even killing others. Vassnes emphasizes the ethical parallel by linking the drinking and driving example directly to the situation in the USA:

> But the elected President of the USA will nevertheless continue to 'drink and drive', with the rest of the world as involuntary passengers or victims. He will not do anything drastic regarding the greenhouse [gas] emissions. And until now he has been supported by the population: Nobody would get elected for President if they promised to triple the gasoline prices. (Vassnes 2005)

By using the metaphor "drink and drive" Vassnes makes the parallel to the lack of climate change politics by the Bush administration explicit, in terms of poor risk perception, lack of judgment and moral responsibility. He is underscoring the ethical aspect by referring to Germany's Minister of the Environment, Jürgen Trittin, from the Green Party, who a few days earlier had stated that: "the USA probably must have itself to blame for this natural disaster, because they are leading the way in the gigantic experiment with life, health, climate and nature, which is the ever-increasing greenhouse gas emissions" (Vassnes 2005). Thus, the moral responsibility concerns both the risk for future disasters and the guilt for this specific disaster.

The paring of risk perception and a notion of moral responsibility enables Vassnes to use Hurricane Katrina not only to criticize the Bush administration, but also to point towards everyday practices around the world, including Norway. People are in general morally responsible for future disasters by not being willing to change their lifestyles, he concludes.

There are several similarities between the way the hurricane is framed and used as an example this column, the editorial from *Dagbladet* from 2005 and the news article from *Dagsavisen* from 2012. The hurricane is in all these cases used in a pathos-driven and affective argumentation, making climate change a fundamentally ethical concern. All the texts stress the ethical aspect of nature, by describing nature as a righteous moral force, correcting and punishing humans when interfering the balance between society and nature. Hence, they all include a complex temporal structure, by entwining future and present-day disaster. Even though Vassnes' does not read the hurricane as a sign in nature, his argument still involves more than just increased likelihood and frequency of disasters. In his text, the scenes from New Orleans also work as reminders of the thin line between civilization and chaos, as such the disaster works as a scary, modeling example for imagining climate related disasters that might hit anywhere at any time in the future. In that regard this column also reflects a catastrophized notion of emergency in the risk society.

Undermining the Exemplarity of the Hurricane

I will now move to how the hurricane is rhetorically used to argue against the likeliness of anthropogenic climate change. There has been published a number of studies the last decade on climate change skepticism. They cover a specter of related phenomena from repression of the problem in everyday life to organized, politically and economically motivated skepticism (e.g. Dunlap & McCright 2011, Nordgaard 2011, Schlosser 2018). This research has also shown how active skeptics often emphasize the uncertainty of climate change research and some actors are even manufacturing data to underscore the uncertainty (Dunlap & McCright 2010). My contribution to this field of research will be on the rhetoric of skepticism.

I have shown that there is an observable epistemological shift from probability to exemplarily in the editorial "Even more Extreme Weather" (Dagbladet 2005). I have further argued that Vassnes' notion of risk perception is not limited to frequency and probability. His framing of the hurricane as an event to take example from has obvious similarities with Mark Hertsgaard's claim that the hurricane was "nearly the perfect storm" (Hertsgaard 2006: 17). Thus, Vassnes' argument is also involving a similar epistemological shift from probability to exemplarity. This shift opens an epistemological gap between probability and exemplarity that enables climate change skeptics to perform counterarguments by juggling between probability and exemplarity.

Climate change skeptics wrote letters to the editors of local and national newspapers in the aftermath of both Hurricane Sandy in 2012 and hurricanes Harvey and Irma in 2017. One main argument in these letters was that the hurricanes were not extraordinary by strength. After Hurricane Sandy, a reader of the local newspaper *Telen*, published in the town Notodden, wrote:

> The editor's leading article in Telen on 30 October appears to me to be pure scaremongering. He, and larger parts of the Norwegian media, had pulled 'the climate card' even before Hurricane Sandy hit land. Excessive claims have been made, such as: 'The biggest hurricane of all time'. 'Never before in history have we seen a hurricane of such a large size', 'The monster Hurricane Sandy', 'We can expect more extreme weather in the future', etc. etc ... and everything is due to man-made climate change!
>
> What the media 'forget' to mention, in their attempts to be politically correct according to the government's climate policy, is that the time frame of 'history', which is so often talked about, really is a microscopic part of human history. How reliable are the claims when it turns out that the phrase 'the most powerful of all time' really just concerns the last 100 years of the history of the Earth? They also 'forget' to mention that there actually have been several more powerful hurricanes during the last century. Ca. 8000 people died in the Galveston Hurricane in the year 1900, and between 600 and 800 people died in the Atlantic Gulf Hurricane in 1919. These [hurricanes] were surely not a result of man-made climate change? (Rønning 2012)

While a reader of the national newspaper *Aftenposten* commented the uses of hurricanes Harvey and Irma (2017) as climate change examples in this way: "On a list of hurricanes by strength, Irma is listed at seventh place and Harvey at eighth – the latter [the eighth place] shared with hurricanes Georgia (1898) and Hazel (1954). This will be difficult to explain by CO_2 and rise in temperature" (Eklund 2017). It is, however, not given any information about the survey the list is based on, what period of time it covers and whether or not it is restricted to Atlantic hurricanes.

In a column in the right-wing online news magazine *Reset* in October 2017, Professor emeritus of chemistry Ole Henrik Ellestad stated that:

> For nearly 30 years, the IPCC and the Norwegian public have worked systematically to present increased extreme weather [as something] caused by man-made climate change. [….] But Norwegian extreme weather statistics after 1994 show no increased tendencies […]. The IPCC-report on extreme weather from 2012 concluded that in a global

> perspective, extreme weather will be dominated by natural variations for the next 20–30 years. No increased tendencies concerning hurricanes, tornadoes, droughts, or other impacts were confirmed in the 2013 report. (Ellestad 2017)

These three articles demonstrate how the hurricane examples are excessive, and to some extent uncontrollable (cf. Lyons 1989: 34). As a rhetorical device, an example is based on an assumption that it represents a common ground, as piece of unquestionable reality (Lyons 1989: 28). Yet, an example might also be turned the other way around and be used to dispute such common ground. This is done in these three texts. They undermine the exemplarity of the hurricanes by referring to a list of other examples (Rønningen 2012), a statistic-based list of the hurricane intensity (Eklund 2017) and weather statistics (Ellestad 2017). The listed examples and the statistics work as seemingly neutral facts, as measurable and historical truth, demonstrating that the hurricanes Sandy, Harvey and Irma were not extraordinary. By doing so, these articles try to undermine the basis for claiming that these hurricanes were caused by climate change. At the same time, they also produce a shared counterexample. Their opponents' way of arguing is turned into an example of tendentious and unreliable reasoning, performed with the purpose of fooling the public opinion. The addressees of the critique are the core participants in the public climate debate. The reader of *Aftenposten* criticizes climate change researchers, the letter from *Telen* claims that Norwegian media are presenting "pure scaremongering", while, the column in *Reset* attacks politicians, the Norwegian public and "those supporting IPCC" in general terms.

Several scholars have argued that climate change skepticism is often related to an embracement of industrial modernity (e.g. Anshelm & Hultman 2015: 100–119, Dunlap & McCright 2011, Schlosser 2018). This might also be the case with these texts, at least they repudiate any attempt to understand the present as a crisis of modernity. Hurricanes Sandy and Harvey do not represent anything more than themselves and do not have any significance, other than causing local disasters. These hurricanes are even claimed to be quite ordinary events, as events that simply happen from time to time. They have no relevance for understanding the future of the globe or the humanity. Paradoxically, by claiming the ordinariness of these storms, such reasoning also attempts to de-catastrophize contemporary society, in the sense that it rejects letting contemporary weather events generate risk and fear for potential and future disasters.

Conclusion: Risk Perception through Exemplarity

Anthropologist Mary Douglas and political scientist Aaron Wildavsky open their book *Risk and Culture* in this way:

> Can we know the risks we face, now or in the future? No, we cannot; but yes, we must act as if we do. Some dangers are unknown; others are known […]. Hence, no one can calculate precisely the total risk to be faced. How, then, do people decide which risks to take and which to ignore? On what basis are certain dangers guarded against and others relegated to secondary status? (Douglas & Wildavsky 1983: 1)

With these words they raise some fundamental questions about risk and demonstrate how risk perception is a cultural phenomenon. This also counts for risk perception concerning climate change. The risks connected to climate change are just to some degree possible to model and calculate. The art of calculating the effects of climate change on the natural environment is complex and multivariate, and so are the uncertainties of these calculations. It is even more difficult to predict the societal effects of a warmer climate. How society develops in a climate changed future depends on far more than Earth system changes. It also depends heavily on factors that are impossible to scientifically model or calculate numerically, such as culture, religion and politics (cf. Hulme 2011: 165–166). Hence, dealing with the risk of a future climate-changed world requires more than knowledge offered by the hard sciences. To use the words of Douglas and Wildavsky, not even scientists "can calculate precisely the total risk to be faced." While it is difficult for scientists, it seems like an almost impossible task for non-scientists.

The use of the hurricane as a climate change example in the media must be regarded as risk perception in the interface between the dissemination of science and vernacular reasoning. The combination of the severity of climate change and the many factors of uncertainty concerning a climate-change future facilitates an epistemological shift from probability to exemplarity. To use hurricanes as contemporary exposures of a disastrous future might be helpful for imagining and describing some possible consequences of climate change. It is a way of producing an experienced basis for imagining and predicting the unpredictable future, where both weather patterns and the climate will change fundamentally.

The reading of weather events as signs in nature pointing towards a climate-changed future might also indicate that the Western world never really left a semiotic worldview. Natural phenomena are still read as signs, even though the signs are no longer perceived as divine, just signs of the emerging imbalance between nature and culture. This kind of reasoning implies a trans-temporal and trans-spatial notion of disasters, risk and responsibility. It represents a wider tendency of cultural catastrophizion of contemporary society by spinning a web of contemporary and future disasters, and through that web invoking an existential anxiety for an emerging disastrous world (cf. Kverndokk 2015: 264–269). I have argued that the temporal structure of such example-driven rhetoric can be termed *kairos*, emphasizing the present as "a point in time filled with significance, charged with a meaning derived from its relation to the end" (Kermode 1967: 47). The future is moved into the present, and the long-term consequences of climate change is condensed into a moment of either action or ignorance. Thus, there is an eschatological undertone in this way or arguing, transforming the present moment to both a "time of judgement" and a "time of repentance" (Northcott 2015: 108, cf. Smith 1969).

I have also shown how reasoning with hurricane examples enables the production of counterexamples to be used by climate change skeptics. These counterexamples are devices for dividing between natural and environmental risks, and nature and morals. Hence, they also work as devices for de-connecting the hurricanes from any trans-local and trans-temporal catastrophic pattern. This counter-reasoning is based on a plain chronological temporal structure, where the present is nothing more than a just a brief moment in the history of progress and development. Such de-catastrophization of society constitutes a basis for arguing that we might as well go on living our lives as usual, being fundamentally unconcerned about the future of the world. This is the flipped side of climate change risk perception through exemplarity.

Kyrre Kverndokk is Professor of Cultural Studies, at the Department of Archaeology, History, Cultural Studies and Religion, University of Bergen. He has published on Second World War memory, the history of folklore studies in Norway and the cultural history of natural disasters. He is currently leading the research project "The Future is Now: Temporality and Exemplarity in Climate Change Discourses". E-mail: kyrre.kverndokk@uib.no

Acknowledgements
I acknowledge support from the Research Council of Norway to *The Future is Now: Temporality and Exemplarity in Climate Change Discourses*, project number 268094. I would like to thank Anne Eriksen, John Ødemark, Lone Ree Milkær, Camilla Asplund Ingemark, Henrik H. Svensen, Marit Ruge Bjærke, Diane Goldstein, and Hall Bjørnstad for stimulating discussions about climate change exemplarity.

Notes

[1] All the translations from Norwegian are done by the author, except the editorial "Even more Extreme Weather!", translated by Heidi Støa and the author.
[2] The newspaper *Dagens Næringsliv* terminated the cooperation with Retriever in September 2017.
[3] Atlantic hurricanes thus have a far higher potential of being turned into transnational media events than hurricanes, cyclones and typhons that hit the Indian subcontinent, Pacific states, Central America and Caribbean islands (cf. Kverndokk 2015: 10–12).
[4] The letters Q, U, X, Y and Z are not used. The Greek alphabet is used as a supplement if the number of hurricanes during a season exceeds 21.
[5] Carl Lindahl and others has shown that these rumors were just rumors, no killing or rapes has been reported (see for instance Lindahl 2012). This is however not significant for my analysis.
[6] I prefer the term climate change skepticism rather than denial, due to the problematic connotations to Holocaust discourse by the use of the noun denial.

References

Anshelm, Jonas & Martin Hultman (2015): *Discourses of Global Climate Change: Apocalyptic Framing and Political Antagonism*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge.
Bauman, Richard and Charles L. Briggs (1990): "Poetics and Performances as Critical Perspectives on Language and Social Life," *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 59–88.
Beck, Ulrich (1992): *The Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*. London: Sage.
Boykoff, Maxwell T. (2011): *Who Speaks for the Climate: Making Sense of Media Reporting on Climate Change.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Cochet, Yves (2015): "Green Eschatology," Clive Hamilton, François Gemenne, & Christophe Bonneuil (eds.): *The Anthropocene and the Global Environmental Crisis: Rethinking modernity.* Abingdon: Routledge, 112–119.
Dagbladet (2005): "Enda mer ekstremt vær," 31 August, 2005, 2. [Editorial]
Daston, Lorraine & Fernando Vidal (2004): "Doing What Comes Naturally," Daston, Lorraine & Fernando Vidal (eds.): *The Moral Authority of Nature*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1–23.
Douglas, Mary &Widavaky, Aaron (1983): *Risk and Culture: An Essay on the Selection of Technological and Environmental Dangers*. Berkeley, Ca: University of California Press.
Doyle, Julie (2011): *Mediating Climate Change.* Farnham: Ashgate.
Dunlap, Riley E. & Aaron M. McCright (2010): "Climate Change Denial: Sources, Actors and Strategies," Lever-Tracy, Constance (ed.): *Routledge Handbook of Climate Change and Society*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 240–259.
Dunlap, Riley E. & Aaron M. McCright (2011): "Organized Climate Change Denial," Dryzek, John S. Richard B. Norgaard & David Schosberg (eds.). *The Oxford Handbook of Climate Change and Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.: https://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199566600.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199566600-e-10, (accessed 11/19/19).
Dynes, Russell & Havidán Rodríguez (2007): "Finding and Framing Katrina: The Social Construction of Disaster," Brunsma, David.L., David Overfelt & J. Steven Picou (eds.): *The Sociology of Katrina: Perspectives on a Modern Catastrophe.*

Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 23–33.
Eklund, Trygve (2017): "Synlige klimadebattendringer," *Aftenposten*, 2 October, 2017, 17.
Ellestad Ole Henrik (2017): "Orkaner i USA – manipulert valgkampformidling," Reset, 4 October 4, 2017, October, 2017: https: //resett.no/2017/10/04/orkaner-i-usa-manipulert-valgkampformidling/, (accessed 03/08/19).
Eriksen, Anne, Ellen Krefting & Anne Birgitte Rønning (2012): "Eksempelets makt," Eriksen, Anne, Ellen Krefting & Anne Birgitte Rønning (eds.): *Eksempelets makt: Kjønn, representasjon og autoritet fra antikken til i dag*. Oslo: Scandinavian Academic Press, 9–38.
Field, Christopher B., Vicente Barros, Thomas F. Stocker, Dahe Qin, David Jon Dokken, Kristie L. Ebi, Michael D. Mastrandrea, Katharine J. Mach, Gian-Kasper Plattner, Simon K. Allen, Melinda Tignor & Pauline M. *Midgley* (eds.) (2012): *Managing the Risk of Extreme Events and Disasters to Advance Climate Change Adaption*: *Special Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* [IPCC]. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Fitzpatrick, Patrick J. (2006): *Hurricanes: A Reference Handbook*. Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio.
Frye, Northrop (1982): *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
Gelbspan, Ross (2005): "Hurricane Katrina's real name," *New York Times*, 31 August, 2005: http: //www.nytimes.com/2005/08/30/opinion/30iht-edgelbspan.html?_r=1 , (accessed 01/25/19).
Gelley, Alexander (ed.) (1995): *Unruly examples: On the rhetoric of exemplarity.* Stanford: Stanford University Press.
Gilje, Nils & Tarald Rasmussen (2002): *Tankeliv i den lutherske stat: Norsk idéhistorie, vol. 2.* Oslo: Aschehoug.
Halden arbeiderblad (1994): "Ikke storm da havariet fant sted," 29 September, 1994, 8.
Heidenblad, David Larsson (2012): *Vårt eget fel: Moralisk kausalitet som tankefigur från 00-tallets klimalarm till förmoderna syndastraffsföreställningar.* Höör: Agerings bokförlag.
Hertsgaard, Mark (2006): "Global Storm Warning", Reed, Betsy (ed.): *Unnatural Disaster: The Nation on Hurricane Katrina*. New York: Nation Books, 17–21.
Holm, Isak Winkel (2012): "The Cultural Analysis of Disasters," Carsten Meiner & Kristin Veel (eds.): *The Cultural Life of Catastrophes and Crises*. Berlin: de Gruyter, 15–32.
Hulme, Mike (2008): "The conquering of climate: Discourses of fear and their dissolution," *The Geographical Journal*, 174:1, 5–16.
Hulme, Mike (2011): "Reducing the Future to Climate. A Story of Climate Determinism and Reductionism," *Osiris,* 26:1, 245–266.
Hulme, Mike (2017): *Weathered: Cultures of Climate*. London: Sage Publications.
Hörnfeldt, Helena (2018): "The End of the World: Apocalyptic Narratives in Children's Fears," *Ethnologia Scandinavica*, 48*,* 153–170.
Johns-Putra, Adeline (2016): "'My Job Is to Take Care of You': Climate Change, Humanity, and Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*," *MFS Modern Fiction Studies* 62:3, 519–540.
Kermode, Frank (1967): *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction*. New York: Oxford University Press.
Kluger, Jeffrey (2005): "Is Global Warming Fueling Katrina?," *Times Magazine*, 29 August, 2005: http: //www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,1099102,00.html, (accessed 01/25/19).
Kverndokk, Kyrre (2015): *Naturkatastrofer: En kulturhistorie*. Oslo: Scandinavian Academic Press.

Kverndokk, Kyrre (2019): "The End of the World: From the Lisbon Earthquake to the Last Days," Jordheim, Helge & Erling Sverdrup Sandmo (eds.): *Conceptualizing the world: An Exploration across Disciplines*. New York: Berghahn Books, 226–239.

Lakoff, George & Mark Johnson (1980): *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lilly, Ingrid Esther (2016): "The Planet's Apocalypse: The Rhetoric of Climate Change," Kelly J. Murphy and Justin Jeffcoat Schedtler (eds.): *Apocalypses in Context: Apocalyptic Currents through History*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 359–379.

Lindahl, Carl (2012): "Legends of Hurricane Katrina: The Right to Be Wrong, Survivor-to-Survivor Storytelling, and Healing," *Journal of American Folklore*, 125: 496, 139–176.

Lyons, John D. (1989): *Exemplum: The Rhetoric of Example in Early Modern France and Italy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Nasjonalbiblioteket [The National Library of Norway]. "NB N-gram Beta": https://www.nb.no/sp_tjenester/beta/ngram_1/#ngram/query?terms=ekstremv%C3%A6r&lang=all&case_sens=0&freq=rel&corpus=avis, (accessed 01/24/19).

Nilsen, Yngve (2014): "Fra storm til ekstremvær: En 150 år lang historie," *Tidsskrift for kulturforskning*, 13:3, 22–35.

Nilsen, Yngve & Magnus Vollset (2016): *Vinden dreier: Meteorologiens historie i Norge*. Oslo: Scandinavian Academic press.

Norgaard, Kari Marie (2011): *Living in Denial. Climate Change, Emotions, and Everyday Life*. Cambridge, Ma: The MIT Press.

Northcott, Michael (2015): "Eschatology in the Anthropocene: From the chronos of deep time to the kairos of the age of humans," Clive Hamilton, François Gemenne & Christophe Bonneuil (eds.): *The Anthropocene and the Global Environmental Crisis: Rethinking modernity.* Abingdon: Routledge, 100–111.

Mooney, Chris (2007): *Storm World: Hurricanes, Politics, and the Battle over Global Warming.* New York: Harcourt.

Ophir, Adi (2010): "The Politics of Catastrophization: Emergency and Exception," Didier Fassin & Mariella Pandolfi (eds.): *Contemporary States of Emergency: The Politics of Military and Humanitarian Interventions.* New York: Zone Books, 59–88.

Ryghaug, Marianne (2006): "'Some like it hot': Konstruksjon av kunnskap om klimaendringer i norske aviser," *Norsk medietidsskrift*, 13:3, 197–219.

Rønning, Ole Chr. (2012): "Tidenes kraftigste orkan, kjære redaktør?," *Telen*, 11 November, 2012, 11.

Sandberg, Tom (2012): "Lukker øynene for klimakatastrofen," *Dagsavisen,* 3 December, 2012, 10.

Schenk, Gerrit Jasper (2009): *Katastrophen von Undergang Pompejis bis zum Klimawandel*, Ostfildern: Thorbecke.

Schlosser, Kolson (2018): "Geohumanities and climate change skepticism," *Geography Compass*, 12:10: e12402.

Skrimshire, Stefan (2014): "Climate change and apocalyptic faith," *WIREs Climate Change* 2014:5, 233–246.

Smith, John E. (1969): "Time, Times, and the 'Right Time': 'Chronos' and 'Kairos'," The Monist, 53:11, 1–13.

Turner, Victor 1974. *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University

Vassnes, Bjørn (2005): "Vi bor alle i New Orleans," *Klassekampen*, 7 September, 2005, 9.

Culture Unbound
Journal of Current Cultural Research

The Past as a Mirror: Deep Time Climate Change Exemplarity in the Anthropocene

By Henrik H. Svensen, Marit Ruge Bjærke & Kyrre Kverndokk

Abstract

During the past decades, notions of Earth dynamics and climate change have changed drastically, as anthropogenic CO_2-emissions are linked to measurable Earth system changes. At the same time, Earth scientists have discovered deep time climate changes triggered by large scale and natural release of CO_2. As the understanding of past climatic changes improved, they were used to envision what might happen in the near future. This article explores the use of deep time climate examples by analyzing publications on a 56-million-year-old greenhouse gas-driven rapid global warming event, the Paleocene-Eocene Thermal Maximum (PETM). We explore how the PETM is framed and used as an example of "extreme climatic warming" in four cases across different scientific genres. The scientific knowledge about the PETM is considered too uncertain to draw conclusions from, but our analysis shows that, by being presented as an example, the PETM may still contribute to the scientific understanding of ongoing climate change. Although the PETM is regarded as too uncertain to guide present day climate change modeling, it is still considered morally significant, and is allowed to influence public opinion and policy making. We argue that the PETM is used as an example in ways that have formal similarities with the early modern historia magistra vitae topos. The PETM example highlights the ambivalence that characterizes the Anthropocene as a temporal conception. The Anthropocene is "completely different", but at the same time pointing to the similarity between the present and the deep past, thereby allowing for comparison to past geological events. Thus, the Anthropocene is not so "completely different" after all. Just a little bigger, a lot faster, and a lot scarier to humans.

Keywords: temporality, historicity, historia magistra vitae, exemplarity, Anthropocene time, the PETM, deep time climate change

Svensen, Henrik H., Marit Ruge Bjærke & Kyrre Kverndokk: "The Past as a Mirror: Deep Time Climate Change Exemplarity in the Anthropocene", *Culture Unbound*, Volume 11, issue 3–4, 2019: 330–352. Published by Linköping University Electronic Press: http://www.cultureunbound.ep.liu.se

1. Introduction

1.1 Past climates and their relevance for understanding contemporary and future climate change

The Earth sciences, in particular aspects related to deep time rapid climatic and environmental changes, have gained a renewed interest. Part of the reason is the improved methods for reconstructing past climates, and proxies that can make climate models more certain. Moreover, the Anthropocene concept has roots in Earth science and the geological timescale, where, by definition, ongoing Earth system changes are compared to past events in order to be better constrained and understood. Since climate change is an integral part of Earth system science, it has implications for how we think about the present and the future. In this sense, Earth system science has had an impact on contemporary scholarly, popular and, indirectly, political debates on entanglements between human actions and geological processes, such as anthropogenic climate change.

Research on past climates used to focus on the origin of the ice ages in the last 2–3 million years. The term *deep time* is used when investigating the state of the Earth millions of years ago, providing a spatial analogy that may help understand Earth history on timescales vastly exceeding the human experience. The ice ages were believed to represent cold dips from a normal and steady warm climate state. The greenhouse effect and its theoretical basis has been known for more than a century, but no natural mechanisms were believed capable of releasing sufficient quantities of CO_2 to the atmosphere to trigger global warming (e.g. Brooks 1926, Schwarzbach 1963). Climate change was thus restricted to processes such as the changing positions of continents over time, elevation changes of the Earth's crust, or shifts in the Earth's orbit around the Sun (ibid.). However, during the past three decades, Earth scientists have discovered deep time rapid climatic changes, and developed models for their initiation and development (e.g. Summerhayes 2015), building on the theoretical and methodological insights from present day climate studies.

Many of the deep time examples involve natural release of carbon dioxide (CO_2) or methane (CH_4), and these climate changes are recorded as geochemical anomalies in the so-called sedimentary archives, both in organic matter deriving from continents and the oceans, and as mineralogical changes. The best understood deep time climate change is the Paleocene-Eocene Thermal Maximum (PETM), that took place 56 million years ago, and was triggered during a short time period (2,000–5,000 years). This was followed by almost 200,000 years of elevated global average temperatures (e.g. Sluijs et al. 2007). Studies of sedimentary archives from this time period, at numerous localities across the world, have shown that in addition to the global temperature increase, the global hydrological cycle changed, leading to increased erosion and runoff from the continents. Moreover, the climate change resulted in the extinction of deep marine species, coral reef disappearance, ocean acidification, reduction in body size of terrestrial mammals, and potentially a complete destruction of vegetation in equatorial regions, as the average temperature soared to 36–37 degrees Celsius (Frieling et al. 2017).

The PETM was discovered in the late 1980s and was early on suggested to represent a period of warm climate that was caused by the release of methane from gas hydrates stored in the shallow seafloor (e.g. Dickens et al. 1995). Gas hydrates are marine equivalents of terrestrial permafrost. Several other hypotheses have been put forward to explain the PETM, including degassing of volcanic CO_2 and metamorphic CH_4 following the eruption of an enormous volcanic province in the North East Atlantic (Svensen et al. 2004), and comet impacts (Schaller et al. 2016). There is, however, currently a consensus in the Earth science community about a greenhouse gas trigger of the PETM, and that the source of the carbon was not gas hydrates or permafrost. Topics that are still debated include the magnitude of the carbon release during the ca. 200,000 year duration of the PETM (the CO_2 emissions per year), and the climate sensitivity (that is, the temperature response following a doubling of the atmospheric CO_2 concentration). Moreover, the potential catastrophic aspects of the PETM are still poorly understood; for example, the environmental stress in various parts of the paleo-world, including the tropics. Despite these uncertainties, the PETM is still the most studied and best understood deep time greenhouse gas-related climate change (cf. Summerhayes 2015) that may provide knowledge about how the Earth responds to large and rapid injections of carbon from the Earth's crust into the atmosphere.

1.2 Notions of temporality and historicity in the Anthropocene

Over the last decade, it has been frequently argued that the possibility of the Anthropocene as a new geological epoch has fundamental implications for contemporary notions of temporality. A main argument has been that the recognition of humankind as a geological force, implied in the concept of the Anthropocene, also means that the modern distinction between historical and geological timescales has collapsed. The Anthropocene has inscribed humankind into a long geological time span (Chakrabarty 2009, 2018, Latour 2017, Robin & Steffen 2007, Robin 2013). The human present must be seen in relationship with the deep past and the far future. This also has implications for the notion of history and historicity. According to one of the leading historians on theorizing Anthropocene temporality, Dipesh Chakrabarty "[t]he discussion about the crisis of climate change can [...] produce affect and knowledge about collective human pasts and futures that work at the limits of historical understanding" (Chakrabarty 2009: 221). This might be the case, yet, it is still to be empirically investigated. What does this claim imply? How are deep time geological events relevant for the present and the future? How are deep time geological events made relevant for the contemporary society, and how are such events used to anticipate a climate-changed future?

1.3 The aim of this contribution

The main objective of this article is to investigate how the PETM throws light on notions of historicity concerning anthropogenic climate change. In the 2007 IPCC Fourth Assessment Report, *The Physical Science Basis*, the PETM was referred to as "a striking example of massive carbon release and related extreme climatic warming" (Jansen et al. 2007: 442). In this article we examine how the PETM is used as such an example, with the 2007 IPCC report as a starting point. In addition to this report, we examine a modeling paper comparing past and present CO_2 emissions (Zeebe et al. 2016), the short-format review article "A heated mirror for future climate" (Alley 2016), and the popular science book *The Storms of my Grandchildren* by James Hansen (2009).

We discuss how the PETM is framed and used as a climate event with relevance for contemporary climate change research, and how it might inform predictions of a climate-changed future. By doing so, this article will contribute to the discussion of notions of temporality and historicity in the Anthropocene.

2. Approach and theoretical background

2.1 Perspectives on historicity

Historic understanding is normally understood as how the past, the present and the future are seen in relation to each other. Reinhart Koselleck has used the terms *space of experience* and *horizon of expectations* to describe this relationship. He describes experience as:

> […] present past, whose events have been incorporated and can be remembered. Within experience a rational reworking as included together with unconscious modes of conduct which do not have to be present in awareness. There is also an element of alien experience contained and preserved in experience conveyed by generations or institutions (Koselleck 1985: 272).

Expectations on the other hand, is defined by Koselleck as "the future made present; it directs itself to the not-yet, to the non-experienced, to that which is to be revealed" (Koselleck 1985: 272). None of these categories are understood as individual. Koselleck is instead concerned with experiences and expectations on a societal and cultural level. His theoretical claim is that the relationship between "present past" and "the future made present" is not fixed, but historically changing (Koselleck 1985: 272).

Koselleck claims that, in early modern Europe, the *space of experience* and *horizon of expectations* were more or less overlapping categories. The future was not regarded as fundamentally different from the past, and expectations of the future were based on past experiences, regardless of age. The world was changing chronologically, but the fundamental problems and challenges that humans were facing were regarded as constant (cf. Eriksen 2017: 184). The notion of historical progress and development had not yet emerged, and the timescale of the world was fixed within the framework of God's plan. In this period of time, history was not regarded as a temporal process, but as a collection of narratives to learn from. Koselleck argues that the early modern notion of history could be summed up in the formula *historia magistra vitae* (Koselleck 1985: 22). This formulation, borrowed from Cicero, emphasized the authority of history; it was regarded to be instructive as a 'teacher of life'. Textbooks in history were, for instance, structured as collections of good and virtuous examples. These were presented as model examples, meant to instruct the students in how to handle similar situations (Eriksen 2017). Historical examples also informed political theory and political decisions. For instance, both Queen Christina of Sweden and Charles XII of Sweden mirrored their life and work on the life history of Alexander the Great (Hellerstedt 2009: 128). History was a resource for "repeat[ing] the successes of the past instead of committing earlier mistakes in the present" (Koselleck 1985: 22).

However, this way of thinking was not exclusive to that which today is regarded as human history. The distinction between human history and the history of the Earth emerged in the latter part of the 18th century. Up until then, Genesis was the starting point of both human and natural history. Natural history was explored though the notion of exemplarity. Biblical narratives were used to interpret geological observations, as well as astronomical phenomena and weather events. And events in nature were also used as instructive examples for human behavior. For instance, the 17th century Uppsala University Professor Johannes Schefferus included natural occurrences as examples to learn from in the collection of examples *Memorabilium Sueticae gentis exemplorum liber singularis* (A Book about the Memorable Examples of the Swedish People) (Schefferus [1671] 2005: 45). His book demonstrates how exemplarity was a way of thinking and reasoning that exceeded what later became a distinction between the ontological spheres of nature and culture (cf. Latour 1991). Thus, natural phenomena were regarded as parts of God's plan, and the overlapping of the *space of experience* and *horizon of* *expectations* also counted for early modern understandings of geology and natural phenomena (Kverndokk 2019).

A tension between *the space of experience* and *the horizon of expectation* emerged in the mid-18th-century, according to Koselleck. He relates this to the decline of the early modern eschatological world view, and the appearance of a new, open future without a fixed end (Koselleck 1985: 276–277). The emergence of this open future was paired with the new notion of progress, that set history in motion, so to speak. At the same time, natural history was excluded from the notion of history. The history of the earth was no longer regarded as being incorporated into a human space of experience. The idea of geological flux was introduced in the mid-18th century, and uniformitarianism gradually replaced catastrophism as the dominating geological doctrine (Rappaport 1997; Eriksen 2007). The biblical timescale was questioned by scientists like Buffon. The calculations of the age of the world became a scientific issue, and the idea of what is today termed "deep time" eventually developed.

The historian Francois Hartog has argued that the emerging awareness of a global ecological crisis during the 1980s and 1990s changed Western notions of historicity, yet, his argument is seemingly different from Chakrabarty's. Hartog argues that the present and future are now considered fundamentally different from the past. We live in an omnipresent present, he argues, where the past seems to be irrelevant for contemporary lives and future predictions. The past is evaluated by using the present as the standard. This also counts for how the future is evaluated, he argues. Concerns about the future are transformed into present concerns and demands for immediate political action. The present is transformed into a commenced future, or the future is approached as an extended present. In this way, he has argued that the tension between *space of experience* and *horizon of expectation* has come to a breaking point (Hartog 2015: 203–204). Drawing on Koselleck, Hartog depicts a linear description of the development of Western notions of historicity, from an early modern to a late modern one.

Chakrabarty, on the other hand, argues that the emergence of the Anthropocene might again change notions of time and historicity. The intertwining of geological and historical timescales that are implied in the notion of the Anthropocene also implies a change in how expectations and experiences are related. In his article "Anthropocene Time", Chakrabarty seems to recognize Hartog's presentism as a social phenomenon. He refers to Hartog to criticize scholars claiming that that the *Anthropocene* should rather be replaced by terms such as the *Capitalocene* or *Econocene* (cf. Malm & Hornborg 2014; Moore 2016). According to Chakrabarty, such attempts are narrowing down the complex concern reflected in the term Anthropocene to "more immediate factors" – the capitalist system (Chakrabarty 2018: 11). When Chakrabarty claims that the discussion about a climate crisis produces "knowledge about collective human pasts and futures that work at the limits of historical understanding", however, he implies a severe expansion of the human *space of experience* and *horizon of expectation*, by also including geological timescales (Chakrabarty 2009: 221). He does not, however, show empirically how the geological past works as a space of experience.

In this article, we use the categories *space of experience* and *horizon of expectations* as a methodological approach for exploring how the PETM is used in climate change discourse.

2.2 Examples and exemplarity

Inspired by how the PETM was coined by the IPCC ("a striking example of massive carbon release and related extreme climatic warming", Jansen et al. 2007), we read four selected cases of studies on the rhetoric of examples and exemplarity. Aristotle calls the example a rhetorical induction, that is, an argument based on a number of similar cases, and they are used today for the same reasons that Aristotle used them; to illustrate a point, to explain something, and, first and foremost, to persuade someone (Aristotle *Rhetoric*: Chap. 2). However, the problem with keeping such a view of examples is that since antiquity, there have existed two different ways of applying them; the Platonic, where the example is used as an ideal, and the Aristotelian, where the example is used as an illustration, and examples always contain an innate ambivalence between the two functions (Gelley 1995: 1). Examples, including those that are meant to have an illustrative function, hover between being an illustrating element among many, and being a unique model (Eriksen et al. 2012: 9).

In early modern Europe, with the understanding of history as a collection of narratives for instructing people on the present, examples provided the empirical basis for science as well as theology and politics. Although, in the 18th century exemplary reasoning in the natural sciences was replaced with numerical reasoning, statistics and mathematical probabilities, Eriksen (2016: 214, 2018: 37) has shown how numerical arguments remained entangled with arguments from exemplarity into the 19th century. Thus, the exemplary way of thinking lingered when both a "quantifying spirit" and instrumentalism were well established. The transfer went both ways; individual cases, that is, examples, were used as evidence and calculations could be turned into metaphors and transferred to an exemplary context (Eriksen 2016: 215). Today, exemplary reasoning has seemingly vanished from the natural sciences. The exemplary way of thinking, however, has remained explicit in political, pedagogical and vernacular discourses, and examples are still important parts of the rhetorical mode of such texts.

Gelley (1995: 5) has argued that exemplarity constitutes an "answer position" that has been kept on despite the fact that the rhetorical and religious reasoning behind it has disappeared. This means that the authorization of the example, the "why" it can teach us something, is to a certain degree left unexplained in the contemporary use of examples, while the texts still draw authority from them. Because of this, examining the way the PETM is used as an example can give important empirical information on the notions of historicity at play in the Anthropocene.

Rhetorically, examples can be understood as parts of a text that are made to stand out of the text and point towards reality (Lyons 1989: 28), but although the examples seem to be just pieces of reality added into the conversation, they are, of course, artificial. They are created, shaped, and chosen in a process where the example is "transformed from 'itself' into an 'example of'" (Lyons 1989: 33). One of the aspects of this transformation process is that examples are taken out of one context and placed into another (Lyons 1989: 31). Only parts of the current knowledge about the PETM are brought into the texts that comprise the source material of this article. Both the question of what parts are considered relevant and the contexts or frames they are placed in will vary from text to text, affecting whether and how deep time historical knowledge is made relevant to the present.

2.3 The empirical cases

The choice of literature is based on 1) contributions from leading scientists in their fields; 2) scientific contents or methods that are not controversial but reflect the research front; and 3) genres representing different knowledge platforms, from a scientific consensus report (Jansen et al. 2007) to a popular science book (Hansen 2009). Although three of the selected texts have first authors from the USA, we stress that the PETM represents an international research topic.

The four selected texts are all based on scientific knowledge, and are produced by well-renowned scientists. However, the choice of selecting publications produced within different genres is based on an assumption that different genre conventions imply different ways of arguing, and might also facilitate slightly different conclusions. Both a review article such as Alley (2016) and the 2007 IPCC report are syntheses of a range of scientific texts. Yet, a review article is not restricted by the obligations to inform policy making in the way an IPCC report is. While the task of an IPCC report is to present scientific consensus, the review article is a genre that sums up the best available and relevant research, something that is not necessarily equal to consensus. A review article also, to some extent, allows for claims in ways that are impossible in a report format. While the IPCC report operates as an interface between science and politics, the review article is supposed to inform a scientific audience about the research front. Popular science is a less restricted genre. It not only allows for catchy formulations, but also for personal narration, balancing scientific knowledge with personal claims. This is the case with Hansen's book. It transforms science into a well-told story, appealing to a general audience. The peer-reviewed scientific article by Zeebe et al. (2016) is different from all of these forms. It is the only text written within a strict scientific genre, implying that it is driven by a research question and is methodologically stringent. Hence, the four publications cover a wide range of possible ways to argue and to use the PETM as an example in climate change discourse.

3. Analysis

3.1 The PETM and climate sensitivity

The 2007 IPCC report included, for the first time, a separate chapter dedicated to lessons from paleoclimate research (Jansen et al. 2007). The work was led by Eystein Jansen, Professor of Geoscience at the University of Bergen, Norway, and includes 15 co-authors. The paleoclimate presentation is thematically organized in four parts, starting with the pre-Quaternary climate (i.e. prior to 2.6 million years ago), the climate of the ice ages, the Holocene climate, and ending with the climate evolution of the past 2,000 years. Part of the motivation behind the paleoclimate chapter is to use lessons from the past to better understand future changes in the climate system. The report claims that:

> [A]n examination of how the climate system has responded to large changes in climate forcing in the past is useful in assessing how the same climate system might respond to the large anticipated forcing changes in the future. (Jansen et al. 2007: 438)

One of the challenges in climate modeling is to evaluate the model performance for CO_2 concentrations much higher than at present. The climate sensitivity is poorly constrained and may not be constant as CO_2 concentrations continue to increase. This is where the PETM becomes relevant for the IPCC 2007. Can the PETM be used to improve the understanding of the climate sensitivity, as the PETM background CO_2 concentration was much higher than the pre-industrial level of 280 ppm? When reviewing the available reconstructions of CO_2 concentrations before, during, and after the PETM, Jansen et al. (2007) stress that the reconstructions are highly uncertain, and give values across the 300 to 3,000 ppm range. The reason for this is that CO_2 reconstructions are very challenging, and the results are highly dependent on which methods are used.

Although the PETM is argued to be relevant because of "some similarity with the ongoing rapid release of carbon into the atmosphere by humans", and the magnitude of released carbon is comparable, there is still a poor match between data and model output. The conclusion of Jansen et al. (2007) is that more work is needed to obtain more accurate information from the PETM, but at the same time, that the PETM has something to offer. The full quote, from which we used an excerpt in our introduction, is:

> Although there is still too much uncertainty in the data to derive a quantitative estimate of climate sensitivity from the PETM, the event is a striking example of massive carbon release and related extreme climatic warming. (Jansen et al. 2007: 442)

The PETM is relevant because it represents a striking example of an event from the past that may happen again in the future.

In the following IPCC report, published in 2013, the PETM is mentioned as one of several interesting paleoclimate events (Masson-Delmotte et al. 2013). Even though new estimates about the PETM emissions and the temperature response is better constrained compared to the status in 2007, the PETM is still regarded as too uncertain to be of use as a quantitative case: "Uncertainties on both global temperature and CO_2 reconstructions preclude deriving robust quantitative estimates from the available PETM data" (Masson-Delmotte et al. 2013: 339).

What does it mean that the PETM is an example, yet, there is "still too much uncertainty in the data to derive a quantitative estimate of carbon sensitivity"? The noun "example" might in this case mean one possible scenario of extreme climate warming. Yet, the use of the adjective "striking" indicates that it is not understood as just one of a range of possible scenarios. It could be understood as the best available case in the paleoclimatic history for "assessing how the same climate system might respond to the large anticipated forcing changes in the future". Another possibility is that it is a qualitatively useful example (cf. Eriksen 2018). Regardless of the uncertainties, the way it reveals climate sensitivity of the Earth system might still work as a warning of what might possibly be the consequences of the anthropogenic emissions of CO_2 and other greenhouse gases. This is left open for interpretation by the IPCC working group.

3.2 The current "no-analogue state"

The starting point for the study of Zeebe et al. in their article from 2016, entitled "Anthropogenic carbon release rate unprecedented during the past 66 million years" is that "geologic analogues from past transient climate changes could provide invaluable constraints on the response of the climate system to such perturbations" (Zeebe et al. 2016: 325). The authors, Richard E. Zeebe, Andy Ridgwell, and

James C. Zachos are the leading experts in their fields (carbon cycle- and paleoclimate modeling, and temperature reconstructions). Zachos is one of the scientists behind the iconic sea surface temperature reconstruction for the past 66 million years (the so-called Zachos-curve).

Both the abstract and the main text start with evoking the present, stating that anthropogenic carbon release rates reached a record high in 2014, and that rapid reductions in these carbon emissions seems unlikely. Thus, the starting point for the investigation is not the PETM in itself, but its value in making future climate projections.

The sentence cited in the beginning of this section continues as follows: "but only if the associated carbon release rates can be reliably reconstructed." Thus, Zeebe et al. set up a limitation for the possible use of geologic analogies. In the introduction, they state such a limitation specifically for the PETM, claiming that "[d]etermining the release rate is critical" for drawing future inferences from this event (Zeebe et al. 2016: 325).

The approach of Zeebe et al. (2016) is to make new estimates of how much carbon was emitted into the atmosphere during the first phase of the PETM (the first 4,000 years), and to compare the results with the anthropogenic carbon release. Since the PETM is the largest global warming event for the past 66 million years, it represents a benchmark example for the applicability of deep time climate change. When estimating the PETM carbon flux, the results are about ten times less compared to the anthropogenic situation, that is, about 1 gigaton of carbon per year (PETM), compared to ca. 10 gigatons of carbon per year (anthropogenic). The overall conclusion is that the current carbon release rate is "unprecedented during the past 66 million years." As a consequence, Zeebe et al. use the term 'no-analogue state' for the anthropogenic carbon emission scenario, resulting in "a fundamental challenge in constraining future climate projections."

Zeebe et al. discuss whether or not the PETM could pose a state that is analogous to the present or near future. They are concerned with the process of figuring out what would make it applicable as science, and state early on that the key is the CO_2 emission rates. If these are not comparable, there is no analogy. When Zeebe et al. conclude that CO_2 emission rates during the PETM must have been much lower than present day emission rates, they conclude that the present is a no-analogue state, it cannot be inferred from the past. Thus, it would seem that the authors of the article postulate the present and near future as a breach, not only from human history, but also from geological history (as far back as 66 million years). This would seem to imply that there are no direct lessons to be learned from Cenozoic climate change.

However, after drawing this conclusion, Zeebe et al. still seem to consider the PETM useful. Although the PETM cannot be used for constraining future climate projections, the no-analogue state of the near future means that the consequences of the anthropogenic emissions will likely be more severe than what happened during the PETM, and Zeebe et al. (2016: 328) state that:

> Regarding impacts on ecosystems, the present/future rate of climate change and ocean acidification is too fast for many species to adapt, which is likely to result in widespread future extinctions in marine and terrestrial environments that will substantially exceed those at the PETM. (Zeebe et al. 2016: 328)

A similar view is also stated in the abstract, where Zeebe et al. (2016: 325) state that "future ecosystem disruptions are likely to exceed the relatively limited extinctions observed at the PETM".

Thus, in the last few sentences of the article and the last sentence of the abstract, the PETM is used in another way than in the rest of the article. It is not used as an analogy or as a non-analogy, but as an Earth history experience to learn from. What we can learn is that ecosystems are going to become more disrupted than they have been during the last 66 million years, and that there will be more species extinctions than during the PETM. Zeebe explains this himself following the publication of the paper, in an interview in the newspaper, the *New Zealand Herald*:

> The analogy between the PETM and the present, then, is less than perfect – and our own era may be worse in key ways. 'The two main conclusions is that ocean acidification will be more severe, ecosystems may be hit harder because of the rate of carbon release', says Zeebe. (New Zealand Herald 2016)

The uniqueness of the anthropogenic climate-changed future is argued by the use of deep time data, but at the same time this uniqueness is used for presenting the PETM as something to learn from. In the terminology of examples, this discrepancy is the result of two different ways of "cutting out" the PETM in the same article. When the analogue state is discussed, the PETM is framed quantitatively, focusing on emission rates, while in the last sentences of the article, the PETM is instead presented as a qualitative example of a past extinction event caused by climate change. Thus, the future can be a no-analogue, and at the same time deep history can be relevant. In the qualitative "extinction" frame, the uniqueness of the present and near future consists only of it being "worse", and the changes "more severe".

3.3 The PETM as a mirror for near future changes

In 2016, Richard Alley wrote a short summary paper in *Science* about the PETM and what is known about the climate change and the resulting environmental changes (Alley 2016). Alley is a climate scientist with a focus on ice age climates and ice core research in particular. The basis for the summary is a reading of the key literature about the PETM, and the motivation is apparently to understand what may happen in the future following massive anthropogenic CO_2 emissions:

> The possible effects of rapid carbon dioxide (CO_2) release may be clearest from the Paleocene-Eocene Thermal Maximum (PETM) about 55.9 million years ago, when a large, natural CO_2 release drove strong warming that caused amplifying feedbacks, dwarfing of large animals, ecosystem disruptions, soil degradation, water-cycle shifts, and other major changes. (Alley 2016: 151)

Like the 2007 IPCC report, Alley raises the question about past climate sensitivity, and he uses new results to imply that the climate sensitivity during the PETM may have been higher than previously believed. If so, this has implications for the future, as "temperatures may rise more than currently projected" (Alley 2016: 151). Thus, knowledge about past climates where the background CO_2 concentration was higher than today may be used to modify our understanding of future climates. Alley still considers the uncertainties related to reconstructions of the climate during the PETM as problematic, but claims research is on the right track for improvements.

Like Zeebe et al., Alley starts his article with a reference to the present and future: "Climate has always changed naturally, and this is not good news when contemplating a human-forced future", he writes, before turning to discuss the PETM (Alley 2016:151). The main point is whether the past can help us to understand the present. Also like Zeebe et al., Alley evaluates whether the PETM example is relevant by stating similarities and differences between the PETM and the present situation. However, while for Zeebe et al. the specific aim of their article is to contribute to such an evaluation of whether the PETM is relevant, restricting other descriptions of the PETM to the last few lines of the article, for Alley, this consideration is a starting point for a much broader presentation of what the world looked like during the PETM. Thus, while Zeebe et al. (2016) use most of their article to present the PETM in a way that makes similar rates of CO_2-emissions the crucial factor for it being a useful analogy, Alley, as illustrated by the title of this review article, regards the PETM as a "heated mirror for future climate", stating that "Climatic changes 55.9 million years ago resemble those expected in the future" (Alley 2016: 151).

The way Alley starts with the present, combined with the title of the article "A heated mirror for future climate", and the descriptions of nature during the PETM, show that he considers this information relevant for understanding the future. He uses words like "confirming", "suggests" and "likely" when describing knowledge from the PETM applied to present conditions. The CO_2 emission rates pose a constraint for what the PETM can be used for, but does not seem to suggest very much on the possible use of it, and there is no mention of a no-analogue state.

However, Alley also underlines the fact that the future will probably be different from the PETM. The difference consists in an enhanced severity, compared to the PETM: "Hence, the biological impacts of the PETM were likely less severe than those of human-caused emissions under a business-as-usual scenario," Alley writes (2016: 152). This is also highlighted in the caption following the article's only illustration. This caption starts with a question "Clues to the future?". The question mark indicates an uncertainty as to whether the future will be like the past, and like in Zeebe et al. it is the CO_2 rates that are the cause of the question mark: "Today, greenhouse gas concentrations are rising even faster than they did then", Alley writes (2016: 152). Still, the past does represent a mirror, in which we can look and see the future, he claims.

As a summary paper, Alley's article does not have to subscribe to the strict requirements of a scientific article, and the descriptions of the PETM from the scientific references are extremely detailed in some points: "PETM plant leaf fossils from the Bighorn Basin are almost twice as likely to show insect damage as the average from before and after; one PETM leaf shows 10 different types of damage" (Alley 2016: 151). Although Alley does not use the word 'example' for the PETM, he uses the PETM in a way that is recognizable as an example – that is, as a concrete instance to support a general statement. The PETM is claimed to be a mirror for future climate, presenting an event, not from traditional history, but from geological history, that we can learn from, although biological impacts in the future will probably be more severe. During the PETM, there could be ten different types of insect damage on one leaf – in the future we may expect worse.

In the last sentence of the article, there is a change in focus from nature and science to humans: "The history of the PETM shows that our decisions will have large and long-lasting consequences" Alley states, (2016: 152), and in the text he also argues for the direct use of the PETM in policy making:

> Narrowing the uncertainties about this important climate event and other similar features in the geologic record could provide additional valuable insights to inform decisions on our energy future. (Alley 2016: 152)

Here, Alley uses the PETM as a typical historical example, an instructive narrative from which it is possible to draw lessons, and which should inform political decisions. Thus, the PETM is not only a mirror in which to see future climate change, but a mirror in which we humans can see ourselves. The term "mirror" highlights a similarity between the use of the PETM and the medieval and early modern rhetorical practice of using stories about the life and work of historical persons as models for contemporary political depictions – as "historia magistra vitae". In this tradition, "the mirror" was used as a metaphor equal to"the example". The mirror metaphor was, for instance, used in the medieval and renaissance literary genre of "mirrors for princes", from which young rulers were meant to learn how to conduct themselves by historical examples (Kjus et al. 2011: 59–63, Koselleck 1985: 24–25).

There are, in other terms, similarities between the way Alley argues and the historia magistra vitae topos. One major difference is that the relevant example is offered by deep geological history. Although early modern examples could be non-human and even be taken from the early history of the Earth, there were still no distinction between human history and Earth history. They both had the biblical Genesis as the starting point, and were intertwined from the start. In the way Alley perceives the PETM, however, the example from which humans may learn is taken from a past millions of years before human history began.

3.4 The concerned environmentalist and the climate crisis

In 2009, the director of the NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies, James Hansen, published the popular science book *Storms of my Grandchildren* as an introduction to climate change research. It is a highly personal account of climate research and his career as a climate scientist, activist and government advisor. The different chapters vary between depictions of his experiences from Senate hearings, reflections upon American climate politics, and popular natural science. In chapter 8, entitled "Target Carbon Dioxide: Where Should Humanity Aim?" he is discussing the appropriate target level of CO_2 in the atmosphere. In this chapter, he discusses the PETM and the relevance of the PETM for today's global climate crisis (Hansen 2011: 140–171).

The question concerning the appropriate target level for CO_2 was addressed to him by the profiled environmentalist Bill McKibben in 2007. McKibben himself had suggested 450 ppm. His plan was to open a website called 450.org to emphasize the importance of such a target level, and wanted to check with Hansen if the number was correct. Hansen promised that he would have an answer for him by the end of the year (Hansen 2011: 140, 164). The chapter "Target Carbon Dioxide: Where Should Humanity Aim?" is formed as a story that leads the readers through how he finally got an answer for McKibben.

The number 450 ppm was not taken out of thin air, it was based on a scenario study published by Hansen and his colleagues in 2000 (Hansen et al. 2000). This paper concluded that 450 ppm would give an additional rise of 1 degree Celsius, compared to the average global temperature at the turn of the millennium (Hansen 2011: 140–141). Hansen wanted to give McKibben an updated answer, yet, also wanted to "have a good science rationale – otherwise the number would have little meaning" (Hansen 2011: 140). To get this answer, Hansen turned to paleoclimatic research on the relationship between global climate fluctuations and atmospheric CO_2 fluctuations during the last 66 million years, and combined this data with data on ice cap melting and rising sea levels. At the time he got the question from McKibben, Hansen and his colleagues worked on a new paper that concluded that 450 ppm was a more dramatic target limit than previously presumed (Hansen et al. 2008). "A striking conclusion from this analysis is the value of carbon dioxide – only 450 ppm, with estimated uncertainty of 100 ppm – at which the transition occurs from no large ice sheet to a glaciated Antarctica" (Hansen 2011: 160). Hence, it would be "foolish and dangerous" to have 450 ppm, as a target goal for climate politics.

After using several pages on discussing changes in climate during the Cenozoic era, he introduces the PETM by suddenly addressing his readers:

> Okay, I know, this is getting long, but for the sake of your children and grandchildren, let's look a little more closely at another story in figure 18 [the Zachos-curve], one that is vitally important. I refer to the PETM, the Paleocene-Eocene thermal maximum, the rapid warming of at least 5 degrees Celsius that occurred about 55 million years ago and caused a minor rash of extinctions, mainly of marine species. (Hansen 2011: 161).

There are several interesting aspects in the way he introduces and frames the PETM as a paleoclimatic event "that is vitally important". Hansen explains that one reason why the PETM is of such vital importance is that it was caused by a carbon release, which, according to Hansen, was "almost as much as the carbon in all of today's oil, gas, and coal" (Hansen 2011: 161). This comparison makes it meaningful in a contemporary context. However, the phrase "for the sake of your children and grandchildren" still stands out compared to the timescale and scientific content in the rest of the paragraph. The entanglement of scale between deep time and generational time and family concerns is typical for the rhetorical use of generational time in Hansen's book. It is however, more than a rhetorical device. The phrase "for your children and grandchildren" is an efficient way to dramatize Hansen's message; that the current situation is severe. And, even if not explicitly explained by Hansen, it is also an illustration of the radically different rate of today's emissions, compared to the natural emissions of carbon in earlier Earth history and during the PETM. Even though the emissions that caused the PETM happened at a much faster pace than average in Earth's history, they were still much slower than the contemporary human-made emissions. Thus, the reference to children and grandchildren is also a description of entangled timescales and an acceleration of Earth processes.

It is implied in Hansen's argument that if the PETM should work as a relevant comparative scenario, it has to be calibrated for the differences of duration. In other words, in order for the PETM to work sufficiently as "present past" in the Earth history, as a geological experience of relevance for contemporary climate research, activism and politics, its pace has to be turned on turbo. The fossil resources of the world might all be burned in just a few decades, releasing a total amount of carbon that more or less equals the quanta that caused the PETM (Hansen 2011: 161). In this way Hansen demonstrates how deep time and human time entangle in the 21st century (cf. Chakrabarty 2009).

Another point that gives the PETM additional contemporary relevance to Hansen is that paleoclimate data "unambiguously point to the methane releases [that caused the PETM] being a [climate] feedback" (Hansen 2011: 162). In other words, that a warming climate caused additional release and accelerated the global warming. The contemporary warming of the climate may again cause such a feedback reaction if global temperatures get too high: "[I]t is practically a dead certainty that business-as-usual exploitation of all fossil fuel would cause today's frozen methane to melt – it is only a question of how soon" (Hansen 2011: 162). Hansen claims this to be the point of no return, and also states that the Earth's methane reserves today are larger than they were before the PETM (Hansen 2011: 162–163), indicating that in the long run, anthropogenic climate change could even be more dramatic than the PETM.

At the end of the chapter, Hansen reveals what he eventually answered McKibben; it was not 450 ppm, but 350 ppm. The conclusion was partly based on the paleoclimatic knowledge on the likely target level for a glaciated Antarctica, and partly on the PETM research, with an emphasis on climate feedback reactions. Although the data did not give an exact answer, Hansen, based on a precautionary principle and the wish to find a level that ensures avoiding feedback mechanisms, regarded the number to be way under 450 ppm. Also taking contemporary data on ice melting into account, he concluded that the number had to be less than the contemporary level of 387 ppm, and landed on 350 ppm (Hansen 2011: 164–166). McKibben responded by opening the webpage 350.org and starting an international environmental organization also entitled 350.org, which has as its goal to reduce the concentration of atmospheric CO_2 to 350 ppm (350.org).

In this way, paleoclimatic knowledge is used as a space of experience that is paired with knowledge of contemporary climatic phenomena and processes. Data on the PETM does not give an exact quantitative answer to McKibben's question, but it informs the answer qualitatively, as a historical demonstration of how a warmer climate might cause methane feedback effects. The uses of deep historical data in Hansen's book, and the way a paleoclimatic analysis works as a basis for climate activism demonstrate clearly how deep time and historical time, natural phenomena and technical processes, the ontological zones of culture and nature are intertwined in climate activism and politics (cf. Latour 2017). It demonstrates how the climate crisis requires knowledge that "work at the limits of historical understanding" (Chakrabarty 2009: 221). This case not only demonstrates that the climate crisis challenges the limits for historical understanding, it also exceeds every possible human experience. Just like in Alley's article, the historical experience is far beyond human history, the analysis demonstrating how the climate crisis establishes a non-human space of experience to model possible human futures.

4. Conclusion

The four publications examined in this article are produced within four different genres. Some of their striking differences are due to genre conventions and the audiences they are addressing. The starting points for all of the four publications are, however, similar. They are all discussing the usefulness of the PETM in informing knowledge production on anthropogenic climate change, thus investigating how the deep geological past can inform the present and the future. Even though the conclusion in Zeebe et al. (2016) is different from the others, in that they consider the near future a no-analogue state, the starting point is the same: to investigate if paleoclimatic data and past climatic events in Earth history might contribute to the understanding of anthropogenic climate change. When Zeebe et al. state that the future is a 'no-analogue' state compared to the PETM and any other climate event the last 66 million years, they do not reject that the past might inform the current situation. The conclusion concerning the uniqueness of the anthropogenic carbon release is itself a result of a systematic comparison of climatic events in Earth history. Finding that there is no analogous event in the last 66 million years of Earth history leaves the scientific community and humankind with no comparable Earth experiences to draw future expectations from. "It's a bit scary", to quote from the interview with Richard Zeebe. The past is regarded as a valuable authority; the "scary" part is that the proportions and pace of the current situation exceeds this authority. The past can no longer inform, just warn.

The scientific uncertainty is discussed in all of the publications. Neither Alley

(2016) nor Hansen (2009) question that the quantitative data are uncertain, or that the current carbon release rate seems to be much higher than during the PETM. Yet, in line with the 2007 IPCC report, the PETM is used in all the three other papers as an event informing the current situation, not quantitatively, but qualitatively: The biological impacts of anthropogenic climate change may be "more severe" than during the PETM (Alley 2016: 151), and a future climate feedback due to methane releases similar to the PETM is "practically a dead certainty" (Hansen 2011: 162). The qualitative information is, however, not only of a scientific nature. To Alley and Hansen, the PETM also has the power to inform human actions. The PETM "could provide valuable insights to inform decisions on our energy future" (Alley 2016: 152) and thus ought to inform international policy making; while in Hansen's text, the insight the PETM gives on the severity of feedback effects gives a background for his evaluation of an appropriate CO_2 target level. The lesson Hansen professed to learn from the PETM has directly influenced international environmentalism through the founding of 350.org.

It is not surprising that paleoclimatologists look at past events to understand the current situation and future development of the Earth system. The physical and chemical principles of the climate system are the same. Yet, it is interesting to note that, although not sufficiently well studied to inform climate change modeling, the PETM is regarded not only as qualitatively significant, but as morally significant as well. This is spelled out in the concluding sentence by Alley: "The history of the PETM shows that our decisions will have large and long-lasting consequences" (Alley 2016: 152). The PETM then, has become a deep past experience, and as such has become "present past" in the terms of Koselleck. Earth history is configured as a space of experience, or more precisely, a reservoir of events that has the potential to teach the international community about climate change processes. Thus, the PETM is used as an example, in ways that have formal similarities with the early modern magistra vitae topos. In both Alley and Hansen, the PETM is used as an example in the Platonic sense, as a narrative that can inform humans in making the right decisions, and navigate us away from a disastrous future. Thus, deep geological history provides the authority necessary to authorize the example as an "answer position" similar in both form and function to early modern historical examples. The history again works as an authority to consult. Our analysis shows that practices of arguing by examples have not vanished from the natural sciences. When scientific knowledge is too uncertain, examples may still be used, not as data and models, but to warn and to inform.

The entanglement of human-historical and geological timescales in the Anthropocene facilitates a range of ways of engaging with the past and the future. New ways of understanding the relationship between the past, present and future may occur, but as we have argued in this article, old ways of engaging with the past might just as well be actualized. Rather than thinking about the history of the notion of historicity as a linear developing process, as Koselleck and Hartog both do, where "the rise of new forms of engagement with the past implies the fall of all that came before", we argue in line with the historian Judith Pollmann, that it is more productive to regard it as "a cumulative process" (Pollmann 2017: 72).

The four publications on the PETM show that different ways of engaging with the past exist side by side in the Anthropocene. The climate crisis and the emergence of the Anthropocene as a geological epoch has added a geological layer of not only time, but also of Earth history, to human timescales and historicity. While presentism might characterize a number of societal fields, as Hartog convincingly has shown, the notion of the Anthropocene opens up a more ambivalent conception of historicity. On one hand, the Anthropocene epoch is completely different from before, a no-analogue state, with humans cast as a geological force. On the other hand, as geological time, the Anthropocene points to the similarity between the present and the deep past, thereby opening up to comparison with past geological events. One implication is that since humans make up the threat, the PETM provides a moral lesson as well as a scientific one. Thus, the Anthropocene is not so completely different from the PETM after all. Just a little bigger, a lot faster, and a lot scarier to humans.

Henrik H. Svensen is a research professor at the Centre for Earth Evolution and Dynamics, University of Oslo. His main research focus is the role of volcanism in triggering mass extinctions and rapid climatic changes, specialized in events such as the Paleocene Eocene Thermal Maximum, and the end-Permian mass extinction. E-mail: hensven@geo.uio.no

Marit Ruge Bjærke is a postdoctoral research fellow in Cultural Studies at the Department of Archaeology, History, Cultural Studies and Religion, University of Bergen. Her research interests lie within the environmental humanities, with a focus on biodiversity loss and climate change. Bjærke is currently part of the research project 'The Future is Now: Temporality and exemplarity in climate change discourses'. E-mail: marit.r.bjerke@uib.no

Kyrre Kverndokk is Professor of Cultural Studies, University of Bergen, at the Department of Archaeology, History, Cultural Studies and Religion. He has published on the practice and politics of Second World War memory, the history of folklore studies in Norway and the cultural history of natural disasters. He is currently leading the research project 'The Future is Now: Temporality and exemplarity in climate change discourses'. E-mail: kyrre.kverndokk@uib.no

Acknowledgements
We acknowledge support from the Research Council of Norway to *The Future is Now – Temporality and exemplarity in climate change discourses*, project number 268094. We would like to thank Anne Eriksen, John Ødemark, Lone Ree Milkær, Camilla Asplund Ingemark, Diane Goldstein, and Hall Bjørnstad for stimulating discussions about climate change exemplarity.

5. References

350.org: History: https://350.org/about/#history (accessed 1/19/19).
Alley, Richard B. (2016): "A heated mirror for future climate", *Science*, 352, 151–152, DOI: 10.1126/science.aaf4837.
Aristotle. *Rhetorics*. *Translated by W. Rhys Roberts* [online]. Available from: http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/rhetoric.html , (accessed: 2/27/ 2018).
Brooks, Charles E.P. (1926): *Climate through the Ages: A Study of the Climatic Factors and Their Variations*. London: Ernst Benn Limited.
Chakrabarty, Dipesh (2009): "The Climate of History: Four Theses", *Critical Inquiry*, 35:2, 197–222.
Chakrabarty, Dipesh (2018): "Anthropocene Time", *History and Theory*, 57: 1, 5–32.
Dickens, Gerald R., O'Neil, James R., Rea, David K., Owen, Robert M. (1995): "Dissociation of oceanic methane hydrate as a cause of the carbon isotope excursion at the end of the Paleocene", *Paleoceanography,* 10:6, 965–971.
Eriksen, Anne (2007): *Topografenes verden: Fornminner og fortidsforståelse*. Oslo: Pax.
Eriksen, Anne (2016): "Advocating inoculation in the Eighteenth Century: Exemplarity and Quantification," *Science in context,* 29:2, 213–239.
Eriksen, Anne (2017): "Time and Exemplarity," *Journal of Early Modern Studies*, 6, 183–204.
Eriksen, Anne (2018): "Eksemplarisk usedelighet; Eilert Sundts bruk av eksempler i Om sædelighedstilstanden (1857)," *Tidsskrift for kulturforskning*, 17:1, 25–38.
Eriksen, Anne, Ellen Krefting & Anne Birgitte Rønning (eds.) (2012): *Eksempelets makt: Kjønn, representasjon og autoritet fra antikken til i dag*. Oslo: Scandinavian Academic Press.
Frieling, Joost, Holger Gebhardt, Matthew Huber, Olabisi A. Adekeye, Samuel O. Akande, Gert-Jan Reichart, Jack J. Middelburg, Stefan Schouten, & Appy Sluijs (2017): "Extreme warmth and heat-stressed plankton in the tropics during the Paleocene-Eocene Thermal Maximum", *Science Advances*, 3:3, E1600891.
Gelley, Alexander (ed.) (1995): *Unruly examples: On the rhetoric of exemplarity.* Stanford: Stanford University Press.
Hellerstedt, Anders (2009): *Ödets teater: Ödetsföreställningar i Sverige vid 1700-talets början.* Lund: Nordic Academic Press.
Hansen, James [2009] (2011): *Storms of my Grandchildren: The Truth About the Coming Climate Catastrophe and Our Last Chance to Save Humanity*. New York: Bloomsbury Press.
Hansen, James, Makiko Sato, Reto Ruedy, Andrew Lacis & Valdar Oina (2000): "Global warming in the twenty-first century: An alternative scenario," *PNAS*, 97:18, 9875–9880.
Hansen, James, Makiko Sato, Pushker Kharecha, David Beerling, Robert Berner, Valerie Masson-Delmotte, Mark Pagani, Maureen Raymo, Dana L. Royer & James C. Zachos (2008). "Target Atmospheric CO_2: Where should Humanity Aim?", *The*

Open Atmospheric Science Journal, 2: 1, 217–231.
Hartog, François (2015): *Regimes of Historicity. Presentism and Experience of Time*. New York: Columbia University Press.
Jansen, Eystein et al. 2007: "Palaeoclimate", Solomon, Susan et al. (eds.): *Climate Change 2007: The Physical Science Basis. Contribution of Working Group I to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.
Kjus, Audun, Ines Espås Bartolo, Anne Eriksen, Ellen Krefting, Lise Camilla Ruud, Anne Birgitte Rønning, Jon Vidar Sigurdsson & Kristoffer Vadum (2011). "Autoritet og eksempel", *Rhetorica Scandinavica*, 58, 57–78.
Koselleck, Reinhart (1985): *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time.* Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
Kverndokk, Kyrre (2019): "The End of the World: From the Lisbon Earthquake to the Last Days," Jordheim, Helge & Sandmo, Erling Sverdrup (eds.): *Conceptualizing the world: An Exploration across Disciplines*, New York: Berghahn Books, 226–239.
Latour, Bruno (1991): *We Have Never Been Modern*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
Latour, Bruno (2017)*: Faci
ng Gaia. Eight Lectures of the New Climate Regime*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
Lyons, John D. (1989): *Exemplum: The rhetoric of example in early modern France and Italy.* Princeton: Princeton university press.
Malm, Andreas & Alf Hornborg (2014): "The geology of mankind? A critique of the Anthropocene narrative," *The Anthropocene Review*, 1:1, 62– 69.
Masson-Delmotte et al. (2013): "Information from Paleoclimate Archives", Stocker, Thomas F. et al. (eds.): *Climate Change (2013): The Physical Science Basis. Contribution of Working Group I to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.
Moore, James W. (ed.) (2016): *Anthropocene or Capitalocene? Nature, History and the Crisis of Capitalism*. Oakland: Kairos.
New Zealand Herald (2016): "Earth is entering a no-analogue state – and it's a bit scary," *New Zealand Herald* 22 March 2016: https://www.nzherald.co.nz/world/news/article.cfm?c_id=2&objectid=11609800 (accessed 27/2/2019).
Pollmann, Judith (2017): *Memory in Early Modern Europe, 1500–1800*. Oxford: Oxford University Press,
Rappaport, Rhoda (1997): *When Geologists Were Historians, 1650–1750*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
Robin, Libby (2013): "Histories for Changing Times: Entering the Anthropocene?," *Australian Historical Studies,* 44:3. 329–340.
Robin, Libby & Will Steffen (2007): "History for the Anthropocene," *History Compass,* 5:5, 694–1719.
Schaller, Morgan F., Megan K. Fung, James D. Wright, Miriam E. Katz & Dennis V. Kent (2016). "Impact ejecta at the Paleocene-Eocene boundary", *Science*, 354:6309: 225–229.
Schefferus, Johannes [1671] (2005): *En bok om det svenska folkets minnesvärda exempel*. Stockholm: Atlantis.
Schwarzbach, Martin (1963): *Climates of the Past: An Introduction to Palaeoclimatology*. London; Princeton.
Svensen, Henrik, Sverre Planke, Anders Malthe-Sørenssen, Bjørn Jamtveit, Reidun Myklebust, Torfinn R. Eidem & Sebastian S. Rey (2004): "Release of methane from a volcanic basin as a mechanism for initial Eocene global warming", *Nature*, 429: 542–545.
Summerhayes, Collin P. (2015). *Earth's climate evolution*. OXford: Wiley Blackwell.

Sluijs, Appy, Gabriel J. Bowen, Henk Brinkhuis, Lucas J. Lourens & Ellen Thomas (2007): "The Palaeocene-Eocene thermal maximum super greenhouse: biotic and geochemical signatures, age models and mechanisms of global change", Williams, M., Haywood, A. M., Gregory, F. J. & Schmidt, D. N (eds.): *Deep time perspectives on Climate Change: Marrying the Signal from Computer Models and Biological Proxies*. The Micropalaeontological Society, Special Publications. London: The Geological Society, London, 323–347.
Zeebe, Richard E., Andy Ridgwell, & James C. Zachos (2016): "Anthropogenic carbon release rate unprecedented during the past 66 million years", *Nature Geoscience*, 9, 325–329.

Culture Unbound
Journal of Current Cultural Research

History, Exemplarity and Improvements: 18th Century Ideas about Man-Made Climate Change

By Anne Eriksen

Abstract

Can grain crops be increased? The issue was heatedly debated in 18th century Denmark-Norway, both for patriotic and economic reasons. The historian Gerhard Schøning (1722–80) answered affirmatively. Chopping down much of the forests that covered Norway would change the climate radically for the better. As a consequence of the warmer weather, the fertility of the soil would improve. Crops would increase, and new and even more delicate types of plants could be introduced. Schøning's argument was nearly entirely built on examples from Greek and Roman history, cited to demonstrate that since classical times, this kind of changes had already taken place in other parts of Europe.

Climate interested a number of 18th century writers. It was not only a part of geotheory, but also included in theories about the history of society, law and culture as well as in medical thought. Ideas about a human-made climate change similar to Schøning's can be found in texts by e.g. Hume and Buffon.

The argument relied on a quantity of examples, as well as on the uncontested exemplarity of classical literature itself. Schøning's examples represent both series and ideals. The cases he cites are numerous (serial) instantiations of the same general mechanism: The effect of human interventions in nature. Yet at the same time they are models to follow, even if it will take some effort. Norway will never be as warm and fertile as southern countries, but Schøning exhorts his compatriots to "take courage and start!" History consisted of examples to learn from and models to follow.

Keywords: Gernhard Schøning; climate theory; examples; exemplarity; notions of history; 18the century.

Eriksen, Anne "History, Exemplarity and Improvements: 18th Century Ideas about Man-Made Climate Change", *Culture Unbound*, Volume 11, issue 3–4, 2019: 353–368. Published by Linköping University Electronic Press: http://www.culture-unbound.ep.liu.se

Introduction

Can grain crops be increased? This was a heatedly debated issue in 18th century Denmark-Norway. The historian Gerhard Schøning (1722–80) answered affirmatively. Chopping down much of the forests that covered Norway, Schøning argued, would change the climate radically for the better. As a consequence of the warmer weather, the fertility of the soil would improve. Crops would increase, and new and even more delicate types of plants could be introduced.

The aim of this article is not to examine the validity of Schøning's argument, but to investigate his presentation of it. From where did he get his ideas about human-made climate change and its many advantages? What kind of empirical material did he invoke to support the claim? Examples and exemplarity stand at the core of Schøning's argument, and the article will investigate what types of example he chose, as well as the structure of the argument that they were employed to construct. Increasing crops and improving agricultural methods were important concerns in the period, debated among the authorities as well as by the general public. Successful improvements would increase food supplies and reduce the risk of famines, but were also related to leading economic theory. In physiocrat thought, agriculture represented a country's only real source of wealth and its potential for economic expansion. Improving agriculture meant to improve the state. As a public issue, contributing to this work, or at least to an enlightened debate about it, gained patriotic meaning as a way of performing 'public virtue' (Damsholt 2000:102). To citizens in the northern part of the Danish-Norwegian kingdom, the issue gained yet another layer of meaning. The debate over agriculture, soil and climate contributed to a more precise and detailed knowledge about Norwegian topography and the natural conditions of the country. In this way, the significant differences between the landscape in rocky and mountainous Norway versus the flat and fertile Denmark did not only carry agricultural and economic meaning, but did also become symbols of a national character. From this emerged a specific kind of "patriotic nationalism", emphasizing national particularities within the frames of the composite state and its absolute reign (Storsveen 1997:18).

This was also the backdrop for Schøning' small work *Velmeente Tanker om Agerdørkningens muelige Forbedring i Norge,* published in 1758 ('Well intended thoughts on the possible improvement of grain cultivation in Norway', hereafter VTA). In the preface, Schøning presented his book, a mere 70 pages, as one of the several "minor texts" recently published on the issue in the kingdom of Denmark-Norway. Differing from the majority of the authors, however, Schøning wanted to write particularly about Norway. Motivated by his "sincere love for his fatherland and honest wish to serve it when possible" (Schøning 1758: a3), he offered his thoughts on agricultural improvement to the reading public.

Schøning had been living in Trondheim since 1751, engaged as Rector of the cathedral school. In his spare time he studied history, and became well known for his erudition. Together with his good friend Peter Friederich Suhm, who had moved with him to Trondheim, Schøning worked with old Norse history and geography. The two friends met twice a week to solve the "deep mysteries" of ancient Nordic history, Schøning specializing in the Norwegian and Suhm in the Danish parts of it (Suhm 1781:b). The book *Forbedringer til den gamle danske og norske Historie* ("Improvements to the ancient Danish and Norwegian history") published in 1757, was the fruit of this joint venture. The year after, their work took a new turn when the newly appointed bishop, Johan Ernst Gunnerus, arrived in Trondheim and invited the two friends into a new project. Together the three of them grounded what is still known as *The Royal Norwegian Society of Science and Letters*. Natural history was Gunnerus' own prime interest, and it gained a dominant position in the new society's work, even if history and literature also were cultivated (Brenna 2009). Important methodological points of contact existed between antiquarian and natural history (Eriksen 2007), and may have been the background for the antiquarian turn in Schøning's work the following years. Likewise, the newly established society and its ambition to be useful is what inspired him to make use of his historical knowledge to contribute to agricultural improvements (Suhm 1981:b2).

The Authority of Ancient History

Schøning's analysis and argument concerning agriculture and, more precisely, grain crops in Norway, is nearly entirely built on quotes and examples from classical literature, mainly Greek and Roman history. Manufactures, arts and trade in Norway are far more easily improved than agriculture, Schøning starts his text. For what can be achieved in a country situated so far north, so filled with large mountains and with such a cold climate? Most people, Norwegians as well as foreigners, would hold it impossible "to sow and reap from hard stone", and claim that a country so far north would never be able to support its population unless it could be moved further south, or some of the pre-historic giants be re-introduced to move away the rocks (Schøning 1758:8f). It is as a contrast to this *adynaton*, or symbol of paradoxical impossibility, that Schøning presents his own bid: By means of examples from classical texts, he will show that what others hold for impossible, not only can be achieved, but actually has already been so in a majority of European countries.

He starts with Tacitus. In *Germania*, from 98 C.E., Tacitus described the land and customs of the native tribes of Germany. They must be indigenous people, for no man from Italy, Asia or Africa would settle in "such an ugly land, where the air is so sharp, the soil so sadly uncultivated and everything looking so dreary, if it was not his own fatherland" (Schøning 1758:10). Tacitus also says, according to Schøning, that even if the soil in Germany is not exclusively bad, the land is everywhere covered with large forests or hideous thickets and marshes. Cattle are small and poor, and the inhabitants do nothing but eat and sleep. They live in caves or huts, and wear animals' hides rather than proper clothes (Schøning 1758:10ff). Is this not rather like Norway and Sweden? Schøning asks. And Tacitus is not alone, he underscores. Other authors from the same period tell similar stories. Pomponius Mela and Cæsar also tell that the German tribes are nomads, they live from milk, cheese and meat, do not grow any crops and have no permanent abodes. Strabo and Seneca both say that Germany is a land of never-ending winters, bad weather and infertile soil (Schøning 1758:12ff).

So, after what has so far been said, Schøning writes, he hopes that every reader who confides in his words will have seen that Germany "in the most ancient times", was not a bit better than the poorest parts of Norway or Sweden today (Schøning 1758:16). From this, he goes on to state a rule in accordance "with nature itself as well as with experience":

> The less a country is inhabited, and the more it is overgrown with forests and covered with swamps and marshland, all of which usually accompany each other, the less will the sun be able to do its work, and the more will the air be saturated with thick vapours, the colder, more unpleasant and unstable the weather and, consequently, the soil will be less fertile, independent on the country's location on the globe. (Schøning 1758:16)

More examples support the claim, taken from the same type of sources, but applied to other tribes and countries. Ancient Gaul knew neither wine nor grain, and according to Titus Livius this was the reason why Gallic tribes crossed the Alps and settled in northern Italy: They wanted access to the wine. Even earlier, however, the situation was equally poor in both Italy and Greece. According to Diodoros Siculus, the Ligurians lived from meat and water, while the inhabitants of Corsica, Sardinia and Sicily nourished themselves on honey, milk and meat. Thycidid tells that some tribes in Greece ate raw meat.

So how did these ancient people learn to cultivate the soil, to plough, sow and reap? The Egyptians, the Sicilians and the Cretes all have claimed being the first inventors of these arts, according to Diodoros Siculus. Schøning believes the honour to go to the Egyptians, even if they too are reported to have eaten grass and wild plants and dressing in hides in the earliest times (Schøning 1758:21). From this new round of "rather elaborate" examples, Schøning can formulate a second rule. It is structured in three parts, which makes it resemble a syllogism.

First, no land, in and of itself, is capable of producing wealth, unless assisted by human efforts, Second, with diligence and good arrangements over time, other countries now abound in agricultural produce, sufficient for themselves and for export, despite being considered to be unfit for agriculture in ancient times due to their forests, mountains and bad climate. And third, as agriculture already has wandered the long distance from its birthplace in Egypt and now exists even in the north, only some final improvements are needed to finalize the process and make the northern countries fully take part in it. Schøning concludes with a maxim:

> The numerous cases supply clear examples that things which originally have occurred only in the most remote and warmest countries, and which have been imagined to be possible in no other places, have been fully elaborated over time, and reached almost to the farthest north. (Schøning 1758:25f)

He adds some final examples: Silk worms were brought from China to Europe in the time of Justinian. Wine produced in the once so uninhabitable northern Germany is now reckoned among the best, and cherries, which reached Italy only at the time of the birth of Christ, are now grown even in the northern parts of Norway (Schøning 1758:27).

Schøning's text may be read as a story of progress or development, taking place over time. It presents a narrative of humankind that still is recognized: The transition from hunters and gatherers to peasants. However, words like development or progress never occur in Schøning's text. His terms are improved, take place, be capable of, bring into being, produce, as well as goods, efforts, wealth, orderings and arrangements. And most importantly, the cases that he cites are explicitly named examples. I will argue that this is a significant clue to Schøning's way of constructing his text.

Tacitus, for example

According to literary scholar John D.Lyons, an example is "a connection between a general statement or maxim and local or specific actualization of that maxim" (Lyons 1989:x). By means of examples, the truth of the general phrase or maxim is embedded in specific and local instantiations, which makes it easier to grasp, understand and believe in. Conversely, turning the specific case into an example of something more general makes it reach beyond itself and its immediate context. It exemplifies the class to which it belongs, and this identity, rather than the uniqueness of the specific case, is what defines it. Lyons is emphatic that "examples do not happen, they are made", and investigates the methods and strategies that are employed in the production of examples. Iterativity, exteriority and discontinuity are among them: A number of related examples will often be given to *reiterate* the same maxim, as was the case with Schøning's enumeration of more or less similar statements from a variety of authors. As rhetoric devices examples point to seemingly naturally occurring phenomena that are *external* to speech itself. Even if they never supply final proofs of anything, this exteriority makes examples convincing because they seem to exist independent and outside of linguistic representation. They refer to things that "just are there". However, to work well, examples have to be carefully chosen and pruned. Only when made *discontinuous* with their original setting, they can stand forth as examples to illuminate and learn from. These example-making strategies can all be easily identified in Schøning's text. He has been mining classical texts for phrases and passages that describe land, food, housing and (lack of) agriculture among a number of peoples and tribes, and made them discontinuous with their context. He has chosen and cured the excerpts, and composed his own argument by relating them to each other. Admittedly, in Schøning's case the examples do not come from an extra-linguistic empirical world, "out there", but from other texts. These texts, however, the classics, carried strong and unquestioned authority as sources of truth.

But what kind of truth? What is the message of the examples? Literary scholar Alexander Gelley has pointed out that examples may rest on two very different rationalities. He calls them Platonic and Aristotelian respectively. According to the first, the example represents an ideal that will never be achieved, but which nonetheless is paradigmatic. The example will thus be used as a model. The second, on the other hand, sees the example as one instantiation of a more general class. From this perspective, the example is defined through seriality, and the category to which it belongs is more important than its uniqueness (Gelley 1995). Gelleys analysis is illuminating, but conceals the very important fact that the two principles he describes most often get entangled and the difference between them blurred. Rather than being either "Platonic" or "Aristotelian", examples most often are both unique models and recognizable cases, and this is what makes them rhetorically so effective. Even when presented as mere illustrations of something more general, examples are also given a paradigmatic meaning (Eriksen et al 2012:12f). The example is *both* one of a series and one of a kind, and it is in this doubleness that its power resides. Functionally, the example is a point of exchange between the regular and the exceptional, and from this stems its cultural and rhetorical energy.

Schøning's text is based on this logic. His argument becomes convincing because the examples are numerous and taken from different contexts. The lack of agriculture in Germany for instance (!), is not merely based on Tacitus, but also on several other authors. This quantity of testimonials is vital, and Schøning even seems to find it difficult to stop giving examples after having presented the rules or maxims that they illustrate. Seriality bolsters his argument. At the same time, however, his selection of texts comes not only from the lack of other historical sources, but has much to do with the authority that just these texts carried, with the uncontested exemplarity of classical literature.

History, to Schøning and his contemporaries, was not a research discipline that unearthed and critically investigated primary sources. Material evidence and physical traces were dear to antiquaries in the period, but had little impact on history. In Schøning's own work, these two traditions of knowledge were largely held separate (Eriksen 2007). Working with history very much consisted of reading and rereading well-known ancient texts, compiling, commenting, comparing and collating. The work was far from uncritical, but the energy largely spent on analyzing intertextual relations. History was a literal pursuit, which made style and rhetoric important considerations. Moreover, the evaluation of historical truth did not only concern the "wie es eigentlich gewesen" that became the credo of the new historical research from the 19th century, but the order and general probability of events, the honour and honesty of ancient authors, and the political, military or ethical insights that could be extracted. Cicero's definition of history as *magistra vitae* – "the teacher of life" – was frequently evoked, and worked both as a general saying and as a starting point for historical analysis (Koselleck 1985:23ff). History consisted of examples to learn from and models to follow. This was also the reason why reading history was an important part of the education of princes. History gave examples of political and military victories and losses, and told about the personality, virtues – and vices – of former kings, generals and statesmen. By way of example, it gave advice and taught useful lessons in strategy, politics and statesmanship. Within these frames, the classical authors held a kind of double exemplarity as models. Not only did they tell about persons, events and institutions from the Greek and Roman world that still was a European norm and model, they also represented highly admired rhetoric, literary and linguistic ideals. As such they were followed and imitated by later history writers. Schøning himself is known to have modelled his style on Polybius (Suhm 1781:b5).

Schøning's examples in VTA thus represent both series and ideals. The cases he cites are numerous (serial) instantiations of the same general mechanism: The effect of human interventions in nature. Yet they are also models to follow, even if it will take some effort. Norway will never be as warm and fertile as southern countries, but Schøning exhorts his compatriots to "take courage and start!" (Schøning 1758:23). We should at least try to follow the example of others (Schøning 1758:28). Ideals are not easy to reach, but we should nonetheless strive for them.

Climate, Determinism and Improvements

The changes that Schøning describes, or rather quotes from the classical authors, concern human cultivation – from hides and caverns to proper clothing, fixed abodes, houses and villages. This is accompanied by a cultivation of nature, from wild plants and animals to agriculture and domesticated cattle. These important improvements are nonetheless only the secondary effects of the change that is the core of Schøning's argument: The human-made climate change. His first and most fundamental "rule" (above) states this. Human efforts will not only change forests into fields and turn marshes and swamps into inhabitable areas, fit for peasant villages and cattle pasture. It will also chase the excessive snow, rain and fog that reign in uncultivated and uninhabited regions. The climate will become milder and more temperate, the sun will shine, and due to this, the soil will be more fertile. Not only grain, but even more tender plants will be grown. What his numerous historic examples most fundamentally demonstrate is therefore not the development of human tribes from a stage of hunting and gathering to that of agriculture, but a general law of nature: Human endeavour can and will impact climate and change living conditions on earth. The argument, or rather statement, is presented in three numbered points: 1) It is not the case that cold winters prevent a land from being fertile, because the examples have shown that even southern countries had hard winters in ancient times. 2) Neither is a country's cold climate and lack of fertility caused by its northern situation or high altitude, but:

> 3) The more the land is cultivated, and the more populous it gets, the more the frost will decrease and the milder becomes its climate, so that at among two countries on the same altitude, there will always be a milder air and less frost in the one that is the most cultivated and inhabited than in the other, which in itself as just as good or better, but not so well cultivated (Schøning 1758:35).

These ideas were not original to Schøning. In their preface to the recent English translation of French naturalist Georges-Louis LeClerc Buffon's *Les époques de la nature*, originally published in 1778, Jan Zalasiewicz et al present this French naturalist as a pioneer of a notion of the anthropocene (Zalasiewicz et al 2018:xviff). Their reason is that in the last of the seven epoch that consisted the earth's history, according to Buffon, human interventions have changed the climate of the globe and made it warmer. In Buffon's view, this man-made warming counter-acted the globe's natural process of cooling, and made the earth inhabitable and cultivable. *Les époques de la nature* was originally conceived as a part of the introduction to Buffon's monumental and hugely influential work *Histoire naturelle,* which was published in 36 volumes between 1749 and 1789. As an independent work it became an influential contribution to the field of earth history by describing a directional development of the globe, into which man entered only in the very last epoch. Its contents were nonetheless not particularly original, but drew on a legacy of geotheorizing reaching back to Aristotle (Rudwick 2005:140). The description of the seventh and anthropocene-like epoch was added to the work while it was already in press, Martin Rudwick points out. It had the effect of "emphasizing unambiguously the pre-human character of the earth of *all* the preceding epochs. To formulate the theory that "the whole of human history was confined to the most recent portion of a far longer temporal sequence", Buffon nonetheless sought recourse to a rather widespread idea (Rudwick 2005:146). The examples that Buffon cites to support his theory are largely the same as those in Schøning: Tacitus, Cæsar, Polybius and Strabo. Classical history plays the same role in Buffon's history of the earth as in Schøning's treatise on grain crops in Norway.

Climate was an issue that interested number of 18th century writers and thinkers in a number of different ways. It was not only a part of geotheory, but also included in theories about the history of society, law and culture as well as in medical thought. Rather than looking for their first and most original articulations, it might be fruitful to investigate the different ways ideas about climate were used, how they were adapted and modified, and what arguments and theories that they were employed to construct in the 18th century. Two main approaches dominate. Climate could be seen as a determining factor, impacting nearly everything from individual health to social institutions, and consequently explaining differences between states or societies. Montesquieu and his *l'Esprit des lois* (1748) is probably the best-known example of this type of climate theory today, but was far from unique in its own time (Berry 1974, Hulme 2011). While this perspective saw man as determined by climate, the opposite stance also was held: Climate as determined or at least shaped, by man. While only the second of these two approaches is relevant to earth history and geotheory, both perspectives can be found, often interrelated, in 18th century social theory, or, as in Schøning, in works on changes and improvements. In these cases, the idea is that man and society is determined by climate, but also that man can change both himself and his country by influencing the climate. Even if climate is important to shape both society and nature according to these theories, it is not determining in the more simplistic sense described by Mike Hulme (Hulme 2001). Moreover, to Schøning and his contemporaries, the climate issue was part of a typical Enlightenment discourse about improvements – natural as well as political – and the possibility of man to influence and shape his own conditions of life.

An influential work in this line was Jean-Baptiste Du Bos' *Réflexions critiques sur la poësi et sur la peinture* (1719). Du Bos had a reputation as a French diplomat and a historian of the French monarchy and state system. In 1720, his recent work on aesthetic theory also earned him a seat in the Académie Francaise, and he was the permanent secretary of this institution from 1722 to his death in 1742. Du Bos argued that the great historical variation in artistic creativity must be due to changes in climate over time and between countries. In this he was a determinist, but he also saw the possibility that human efforts would change the climate, and thus improve the arts. This was also what he expected would happen in America, when colonization had turned the continent into cultivated land (Fleming 1998:14). Du Bos was one of the inspirations for Montesquieu's climate determinism, but also for David Hume, who developed the other and more flexible aspect of the ideas. In his essay *On the Populousness of Ancient Nations*, from about 1750, Hume argued for man-made climate change. Du Bos had pointed out that the climate in Europe had changed and become milder since classical times, and what could explain this apart from the consequences of increased cultivation, Hume asked?

> Allowing, therefore, this remark [of Du Bos] to be just, that Europe is become warmer than formerly; how can we account for it ? Plainly by no other method than by supposing, that the land is at present much better cultivated, and that the woods are cleared, which formerly threw a shade upon the earth, and kept the rays of the sun from penetrating to it. (Hume 1826:496)

He also shared Du Bos' expectations concerning America:

> Our northern colonies in America become more temperate in proportion as the woods are felled; but, in general, every one may remark, that cold is still muck more severely felt, both in North and South America, than in places under the same latitude in Europe. (Hume 1826: 497)

The entanglement between determinism and improvement is demonstrated in James R. Fleming's overview of Enlightenment argument on "climate change, culture and cultivation". To the idea that climate determines or at least shapes culture was added an understanding that the climate in Europe had moderated since ancient times. The cause of this was held to be gradual clearing of the forest and subsequent cultivation. A parallel development could be observed in America at the time, these changes were caused by settlement. Consequently, America would gradually turn more fit for European-type civilization, and less for native cultures (Fleming 1998:18). The general debate gradually turned more particularly to the potentialities of the new American land. Fleming's sample list of authors who supported the idea that America would be improved by man-made climate change, starts with William Wood in 1634, in his work *New England's Prospect,* and ends with *Metorologische Untersuchungen* by Heinrich Wilhelm Dove in 1837 (Fleming 1998:32). In the course of these two hundred years, human-made climate change was an integral part of debates over culture, cultivation, politics and society.

Clear, Drain, and Till!

If we want Norway to become more fertile, Schøning wrote, we must "cut down the forests, drain the thickets and marshlands, and clear the land" (Schøning 1758:39). He nonetheless also underscores that the more simply and "naturally" innovations are introduced, the more successful will they be. Consequently, the clearing work should start with forests that are very large and not of practical use for anybody. The mines need firewood and charcoal, Schøning points out, and the woods that produce it, are deemed "useful" and should be saved. But forests that consist largely of small trees, bushes and thickets ought to be cleared, particularly if the land they cover is flat and located close to the already cultivated fields. The forests near the farms are often used for pasture, but Schøning argues that they are anyhow too poor to give the cattle much to eat and ought to be put to better use. Peasants in other countries feed their cattle on far more restricted areas, so this should be possible even in Norway. He has also noted that in the deep Norwegian valleys, farms tend to be situated rather high up from the river, which leaves wide areas of land along the banks, hardly used for anything but occasional pasture. This is due to the seasonal floods, but Schøning also sees peasant tradition and conservatism as part of the cause. The "forefathers" built the farms in the hillside, and nobody has since thought of changing the ancient patterns of habitation. Draining the river banks may produce good and fertile new fields in these flat areas, according to Schøning (Schøning 1758:44). Draining marshes in the forests will also give an effect, even if the soil in these cases often is barren. Getting rid of the icing water that the marshes contain, will nonetheless prevent it from flooding nearby fields and harming the crops there. The same applies to the "cold vapours" that the marshes emit. Moreover, the drained marshes will produce peat that can be used for fuel instead of wood.

Compared to his detailled knowledge about classical history, Schøning demonstrates only superficial insight in the agricultural systems of his time, and a rather limited understanding of their functionality. More important in the present context, however, is it that this part of Schøning's text is almost completely devoid of examples. His advice concerning the work to be done to clear the forests and drain the land is given in generic terms. He cites no specific cases of work that has been done or efforts made. Neither literature nor more current events is evoked to substantiate the argument. The title of the work makes it rational to expect the historical examples that have been cited so far to form the basis for proposed improvements in the present, but the section containing these pieces of advice is short and not very detailled. And rather quickly, Schøning returns to history, and to examples. Has agriculture in Norway improved since ancient times? he asks (Schøning 1758:50). After all, grain has long been grown in Norway, and according to the theory presented in the previous parts of the work, even this northern country should be thought to have taken part in the general process of slow climate change. And, Schøning admits, it may seem so, at least when one considers gardening, vegetables, flowers and other "small ornaments" (Schøning 1758:50). But if one looks at the two more important segments of farming, that is grain crops and livestock breeding, the picture will change, and the histories tell us that in most parts of the country, they were as good or better in ancient times. From the sagas of Snorre he picks the information that grain was grown in the northernmost regions of the country as early as in the time of Harald Fairhair (9th century). The island of Senja was self-supplied with grains in the time of St.Olav (11th century), and the local chief able to give several large banquets during the winter. And as an example of veritable abundance, Schøning refers to the archbishop Eystein of Nidaros, who during the 12th century obtained a royal privilege of exporting surplus grain to Iceland (Schøning 1758:53). Again, these examples combine seriality and uniqueness in Schøning's argument. They are presented as instantiations of how things "normally" were in ancient Norway, with grain grown in abundance nearly all over the country. At the same time, they also represent extreme and unique cases, claiming that grain could be grown even in the northernmost parts of the country and demonstrating the quite extraordinary wealth of the medieval archbishopric.

Unruly Examples

Do not these historical examples make Schøning argue against himself? Have not the examples in the first part of the work demonstrated that climate and cultivation gradually has improved in Europe since ancient times? With such rhetorical questions does Schøning start the last section of his text, where he explains more in detail why agriculture actually has decreased in Norway (Schøning 1758:53f). Once again he returns to historical issues. This time they are not cited as examples, however, but as significant events and subsequent structural changes. He starts with the 14th century plague, the Black Death, which left large parts of the country uninhabited and uncultivated. The remaining population sought to the coastal regions. They lived from fisheries, and bought the grain that they needed from the German Hansa merchants. The forests in the coastal areas were rapidly brought down and sold as timber, bringing ready money that made it possible to buy the foreign goods. In the inland regions, mining had the same effect of deforestation.

Producing and transporting charcoal and wood for the works gave the peasants money for the taxes and for seed corn (Schøning 1758:56f). Schøning does not agree that working at the mines makes the farmers neglect agriculture and the tending of the soil. These two types of work will not interfere with each other because the take place in different seasons. Moreover, bringing down the forests has already produced new fields and settlements.

The argument indicates that Schøning sees agriculture as the primary occupation and way of life, historically as well as normatively. Fisheries, on the other hand, are both more recent and less ideal. This fits well with physiocrat economic thought, but also with Schøning's own ideas about ancient Norwegian history. As an historian, Schøning was deeply interested in the old Norse kingdom, its powerful chieftains and kings. The saga literature, which made up his main source material, bore witness to an expansive and well-developed maritime culture. The term "Viking" did nonetheless mean pirate or robber to Schøning and his contemporaries, and was not invested with more national and cultural values until the 19th century (Eriksen 2007: 105f). Consequently, the peasants that populated it were largely interpreted in terms of territory, and implicitly of its cultivation and the wealth of ancient lords. It is this presumed agricultural society that is put forward as the paradigmatic example to follow in the present.

Turning to the present, Schøning also identifies two other important reasons for the relative decline of agriculture in Norway. The real problem is not historical events, he claims, but challenges in the present. The population is simply too small, and the lack of people "prevents the advancement and growth of several useful institutions and arrangements" (Schøning 1758: 59). Emigration depopulates the kingdom, mainly due to the "thousands" of persons who annually entered into Dutch maritime service. This draining of the work force made it difficult to run the farms in Norway (Schøning 1758: 60f). The commons represented another problem. Schøning argued that the fact the many forests in Norway were common land, also was the reason why they were badly kept and often became over-exploited. Moreover, the common ownership also prevented industrious individuals from clearing the land and cultivating it (Schøning 1758: 61ff). Schøning was neither the only nor the first to identify these two problems, they were both much debated in the period. The fear of depopulation was common in Europe. It reflected the physiocrat belief in agriculture as the only real source of wealth, and the consequent need for agricultural labour. As pointed out by Foucault and others, the population came to be considered as a resource to be managed by the state. In the same period, new tools to do this were developed, on the form of censuses and registers of different kinds (Foucault 2009, Rusnock 2002).

Despite these nods to current debates and issues, showing that he is informed about them, Schøning comes close to answering his own rhetorical questions in the affirmative: There *is* a certain inconsistence in his argument, concerning the development of agriculture in Norway since "ancient" times as well as in his advice for improving both soil and climate. One reason may be a lack of knowledge. Schøning seems remarkably ignorant of the fact that Norway already had been the object of a rather dramatic deforestation, which started in the late 17th century and reached a peak in his own time. Coastal areas in the western parts of the country had long been bared, and in the 18th century a general overtaxation of the forests became an issue. In the present context, it is nonetheless more relevant to relate the inconsistencies of Schøning's text to example theory.

John D. Lyons underscores that two important features of examples are what he calls their undecidability and their excess. Examples are open-ended, and will never supply final proof for anything. Seriality is intended to compensate for this, but one single counter-example will always be sufficient to destroy the argument. As models for future action, on the other hand, examples are based on a supposition that "similarity will prevail over difference". The risk implied is that the gap "between prediction and occurrence" becomes too wide (Lyons 1989:33). This intrinsic undecidability is further enhanced by the example's surplus of meaning. "Any element of historical reality or even any fiction adduced to support a generalization will have characteristics that exceed what can be covered by the generalization," Lyons point out (Lyons 1989:34). If the example did not say anything more than the maxim that it is intended to exemplify, it would be a mere reiteration of the general statement. Surplus information is needed, but at the same time it makes the example ambiguous. Examples are always "unruly" (Gelley 1995): They may be turned and twisted, interpreted and integrated in new setting were they are ascribed new meanings. In consequence, they may end up as examples of something very different or even contrary to the maxim that they initially were intended to illuminate. Lyons points out that the more the example is elaborated into a story, "the narrative begins to threaten the control of the generalization" (Lyons 1989:34). If the example is not made sufficient discontinuous from its original contexts, the same will happen: The richness of the example opens up a space of interpretation that is not controlled by the author. This is also what seems to happen in the latter parts of Schøning's text. The examples escape control and become undecidable and ambiguous.

Even if deforestation in Norway was becoming an acknowledged problem in the period, Schøning *could* have chosen to use it as an argument for his climate change theory. From his own argument in the first part of the text, it might easily be assumed that the deforestation of the coastal areas of Norway would cause the same type of desirable climate change as that which formerly had taken place in southern Europe. It could thus be seen as the very beginning of the efforts that Schøning so strongly advocates. But this is not the case. Instead, the baring of the coastal areas and export of timber become elements in another story. Schøning describes a continuous historical change from the presumed rich agriculture in ancient Norway to its more deplorable present state. The examples he cites are no longer models, but illustrate successive stages in this development. As such, they cannot be made discontinuous with their historical context. On the contrary, the connection between the examples and the larger process they are part of has to be maintained and underscored in terms of causality. As a consequence, the examples' undecidability and excess of meaning increase, and the examples themselves becomes unruly. It complicates the matter further that the deforestation in Norway, as Schøning recounts the story, was not related to agriculture and its improvement, but rather to the contrary: The cessation of agriculture and the transition to an inferior way of life based on fisheries, trade and ready money. The various stages and single events of this process could hardly be presented as models to follow. Within these frames, the clearing of the forests no longer represented improvements or ideals. When done for commercial reasons and in the context of agriculture in decline, its meaning is changed and its exemplarity wanes.

It may be objected that Schøning's ideas about a rich ancient agriculture is purely conjectural and that his knowledge about the present state of the forests in Norway is rather scarse. What makes the two parts of his text so different from each other is nonetheless not a lack of information, but the fact that they reflect two different narrative structures. The specific cases – or examples – serve different aims in these structures. The examples from classical literature, cited in the first sections of the text, are presented as specific, individual instantiations of a general change. This change is the *maxim* that the examples illustrate. It is historical, in the sense that it has taken place in the past, but also in the sense of representing a general rule or law whose validity is independent of time and specific circumstance. In this setting, the examples can easily combine seriality with the ideal. The examples in the second part, on their hand, are not employed to illustrate a maxim, but a *process*. They represent open-ended, gradual historical change. As such, the examples may illustrate serial events, things that have taken place more than once, like the deforestation of the coastal areas. But they cannot be made discontinuous with the process, and their ambiguity not very much reduced. In this position the examples cannot work as models, but remain open for reinterpretations and other unruly behaviour.

Anne Eriksen is a professor of cultural history. Her research interests include heritage and museum studies, collective memory, notions of history and temporality and the history of climate. Among her publications are *Musem. En kulturhistorie* (Pax publishers 2009) *From Antiquities to Heritage* (Berghahn Books 2014) and "Copies, Concepts and Time" (*Culture Unbound*, vol. 9, no. 1 2017). E-mail: anne.eriksen@ikos.uio.no

References:

Berry, Christopher 1974: "'Climate' in the Eighteenth Century. James Dunbar and the Scottish Case", *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 281–292.
Brenna, Brita et al 2009: *Aemula Lauri*. The Royal Norwegian Society of Sciences and Letters, 1760-2010, Sagamore Beach, Mass. Science History Publications.
Buffon, Georges-Louis Leclerc 2018 [1778]: *The Epochs of Nature*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
Damsholt, Tine 2000: *Fædrelandskærlighed og borgerdyd*. København, Museum Tusculanum Press.
Du Bos, Jean-Baptiste 1719: *Réflexions critiques sur la poësi et sur la peinture*. P-J.Mariette, Paris.
Fleming, James Rodger 1998: *Historical Perspectives on Climate Change*. New York, Oxford university Press.
Eriksen, Anne 2007: *Topografenes verden. Fornminner og fortidsforståelse*. Oslo, Pax forlag.
Eriksen, Anne, Ellen Krefting og Anne Birgitte Rønning 2012 (red): *Eksemplets makt.Kjønn, representasjon og autoritet fra antikken til i dag*. Oslo, Spartacus.
Foucault, Michel. 2009. *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France 1977–1978*. New York: Picador.
Gelley, Alexander 1995: *Unruly Examples. On the Rhetoric of Exemplarity*. Stanford, California, University of Stanford Press.
Hulme, Mike 2011: "Reducing the Future to Climate. A Story of Climate Determinism and Reductionism". *Osiris* vol. 26, no 1, pp.245–266.
Hume, David 1826 [1745]: *The Philosophical Works*, vol. 3, Edinburgh, Black & Tait.
Koselleck, Reinhardt 1985: *Futures Past. On the Semantics of historical Time*. MIT Press.
Lyons, John D. 1989: *Exemplum*. *The Rhetoric of Examples in Early Modern France and Italy*. Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press.
Rudwick, Martin J.S. 2005: *Bursting the Limits of Time. The Reconstruction of Geohistory in the Age of Revolution*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
Rusnock, Andrea A. 2002. *Vital Accounts: Quantifying Health and Population in Eighteenth-Century England and France*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Schøning, Gerhard 1758: *Velmeente Tanker om Agerdørkningens muelige Forbedring i Norge.* København, Møller.
Storsveen, Odd Arvid 1997: "'Fornuftig Kierlighed til Fædrenelandet'. En analyse av norsk patriotisme mellom 1784 og 1801." I: Storsveen, O.A. (red.): *Norsk patriotisme før 1814* = KULTs skriftserie nr 88. Oslo, Norges Forskningsråd.
Suhm , P.F.1781: "Fortale". I: G.Schøning, *Norges Riges Historie*, bd. 3, København, Gyldendal.
Zalasiewicz, Jan, Anne-Sophie Milon and Mateusz Zalasiewicz 2018: Introduction. In: Zalasiewicz, Jan et al (eds.): *The Epochs of Nature*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

Culture Unbound
Journal of Current Cultural Research

Touchstones for Sustainable Development: Indigenous Peoples and the Anthropology of Sustainability in *Our Common Future*

By John Ødemark

Abstract

The Anthropocene is regularly invoked as an occasion for the rethinking of the Anthropos, for instance through a reexamination of human origin stories. This article examines one such anthropological origin story; the construction of an exemplary and sustainable humanity based upon notions of "indigenous cultures" in *Our Common Future* in the context of D. Chakrabarty's call for a history of the human that merges the biological and cultural archives of humanity. The UN report, *Our Common Future*, first formulated "sustainable development" as a global policy. Through a close reading of the report, the article demonstrates that a combined ecological and anthropological exemplarity is associated with "indigenous and tribal peoples", who are also construed as living examples of sustainable living for the global society, and links to humanity's past. Furthermore, the article aims to show that particular conceptions of "culture" and "ecological" wholes enables a translation between different scales, between local and "bounded" indigenous cultures and earth as the bounded habitat of humanity. The fusion of the concepts of "development" and "sustainability" in *Our Common Future* lies behind present UN concerns with sustainable development goals in current international policy. Hence, an inquiry into the anthropological and cultural historical assumptions of the report is vital. Questions of natural and cultural time have come to dominate discussions of the Anthropocene. The article also reconnects the global scale with a very literal struggle over space inside the Brazilian nation state, through reading the comment on the report from Ailton Krenak. Applying what we could call a language of survival, Krenak relates the global eco-political scale of OCF with a very concrete struggle over territory inside the political space of the Brazilian nation state.

Keywords: Ailton Krenak, Chakrabarty, Our Common Future, Indigenous Culture, Sustainability, Anthropocene, Cultural Theory

Ødemark, John: "Touchstones for Sustainable Development: Indigenous Peoples and the Anthropology of Sustainability in Our Common Future", *Culture Unbound,* Volume 11, issue 3–4, 2019: 369–393. Published by Linköping University Electronic Press: http://www.cultureunbound.ep.liu.se

Introduction – Exemplary Cultures and the Anthropocene

The notion of the Anthropocene is now regularly invoked as an occasion for the rethinking of the human, for instance – as one introductory author has it – through a reexamination of "origin stories" and "narratives explaining the human emergence on earth" (Ellis 2018: 1). In this article, I examine the construction of an exemplary human origin story relating to "indigenous cultures" in *Our Common Future,* the report of the *World Commission on Environment and Development,* published in 1987 (World Commission on Environment and Development 1987, hereinafter OCF). The commission was convened by the UN, and led by Gro Harlem Brundtland, the then prime minister of Norway (OCF; Escobar 1996: 327).

OCF is primarily devoted to developing the concept of "sustainable development". The main task of the report is thus to devise a global policy that takes both the human and the environmental into consideration by articulating notions of development and sustainability. While the geo-cultural notion of the Anthropocene is not an explicit issue in OCF, the report nevertheless presents a plot where humanity is, in Vassos Argyrou's illuminating phrasing, both "too big" and "too small" for the planet. If humans are cosmologically insignificant, they/we are simultaneously also capable of destroying the planet, the cosmological whole of which they/we are an (insignificant) part (Argyrou 2005: 47). Moreover, the report's attempted fusion of the concepts of "development" and "sustainability" has been immensely influential, and lies behind the present UN concern with sustainable development goals. Hence, in addition to the academic interest of a study of the anthropological and cultural historical underpinning OCF, an inquiry into the anthropological and cultural historical assumptions behind the report is vital for reason of policy as well.

Arturo Escobar has claimed that the notion put forward in OCF that nature can be managed is a "novel assertion", and that this new assertion turns nature into an "environment". He goes on to say that the "*management* of nature entails its capitalization, its treatment as commodity" under the "managerial attitude" (Escobar 1996: 328, my emphasis). Moreover, Escobar also relates the "vision" of the earth in OCF to the kind of "scientific gaze […] established in clinical medicine at the end of the 18th-century" (ibid). As I shall show, there are also anthropological and cultural historical underpinnings of the narrative and visual representations in the report.

OCF asserts that "the larger society" has much to learn from the "traditional skills in sustainably managing very complex ecological systems", that is, from what the report refers to as "indigenous and tribal peoples". Moreover, the term "management" is also crucial in the beginning of the report, on the level of global humanity. In between these scales an anthropology of sustainability is forged in the name of "management"; the presence of ecological management among "indigenous cultures" should serve as an example to humanity at large:

INDIGENOUS CULTURES	HUMANITY
Their [indigenous and tribal peoples] disappearance is a loss for the larger society, which could learn a great deal from their traditional skills in sustainably *managing* very complex ecological systems (OCF: 114-115, my emphasis).	*Humanity*'s inability to fit its activities into that pattern is changing planetary systems, fundamentally. Many such changes are accompanied by life-threatening hazards. This new reality, from which there is no escape, must be recognized – and *managed* (OCF: 1, my emphasis).

From this juxtaposition, we also see that indigenous and tribal cultures are in possession of something that global humanity lacks. I will show that particular conceptions of "culture" and "ecological" wholes enables a translation between different scales of "management"; between local and "bounded" indigenous cultures and earth as the bounded habitat of humanity.

Superficially, the use of the indigenous in OCF may seem like just another case of the much-commented upon "noble" or "ecologically noble savage" (Ellingson 2001; Brynhildsen 2018). However, it is important to note that certain notions of "wholeness" also enable the translation between vastly different scales in the report; between "bounded" indigenous culture and Planet Earth as the bounded habitat of humanity. This also testifies to the importance of understanding (stereotyped) notions of culture and cultural time, and narratives for modeling new social adaptations to climate change.

"Tribal" and "indigenous" people are treated under the heading "Empowering Vulnerable Groups" (OCF: 114). OCF affirms that although these people are quantitatively and statistically insignificant, they are also qualitative yardsticks for sustainable and just development. Moreover, their present predicaments are actually the political result of destructive and unjust forms of development:

> In terms of sheer numbers, these isolated, vulnerable groups are small. But their marginalization is a symptom of a style of development that tends to neglect both human and environmental considerations. Hence a more *careful and sensitive consideration of their interests is a touchstone of a sustainable development policy*. (OCF: 116, my emphasis)

In addition to being examples of sustainable forms of life rooted in the beginning of human history, and models for ecological management in the present, the interests of indigenous peoples serve as a measure for the just implementation of policies of development and sustainability. As we shall see, one such indigenous "touchstone" is represented in the report. Ailton Krenak, the coordinator of UNI (the Union of Indigenous Nations), the first nationwide indigenous organization in Brazil, is cited in OCF making territorial claims on behalf of the Krenak people (Hemming 2003: 506; Ramos 1998: 82).

I will read the construction of a story of an exemplary and sustainable humanity based upon "indigenous cultures" in OCF in the context of Dipesh Chakrabarty's call for a history of the human that merges the biological and cultural archives of humanity. In the seminal essay "The Climate of History: Four Theses", Chakrabarty maintains that the challenges coming from climate change necessitates thinking and writing across the divide between natural and human history, and the vastly differing time scales organizing these forms of history; human days and years versus cosmological and geological eons (2009: 201 ff.). Chakrabarty calls for interdisciplinary translations across an epistemological divide between natural and cultural history, a division he traces back to G. Vico. One product of such a translation would be a species history of the human that merges the biological and cultural archives of humanity, and their widely varying temporalities. Contrary to the humanistic concern with cultural differences, but vital in the present Anthropocene epoch, such a natural history of the human would need to tackle human sameness.

To be sure, the term "Anthropocene" already performs a crossing of nature and culture; it implies that humanity is a unified geological agent fundamentally reshaping the history of the earth (ibid). Now, "Anthropocene" is also a highly contested designation, precisely because it appears to blame all men for the effects of capitalism and/or modernity – or the lifestyle of a few of us – on the climate of the planet (Sideris 2016). Chakrabarty, however, also argues for a species history in and of the Anthropocene, asserting that "[w]ithout such knowledge of the deep history of humanity it would be difficult to arrive at a secular understanding of why climate change constitutes a crisis for humans" (2009: 213). This crisis also affects human life without any "intrinsic connection to capitalist, nationalist, or socialist identities", and it will go on affecting life even after the demise of capitalism (ibid: 217, 212). To understand the parameters for the survival of humans, one must therefore also consider the deep history of the human brain and biology (ibid: 211). This return to natural history would consequently reinsert the "animal nature" of man into historiography, and thus make natural and cultural history converse (ibid: 203). Chakrabarty, however, also doubts the possibility of a species history, in the sense of a history where humanity becomes conscious of itself as a species and as a geo-historical force (Chakrabarty 2000; Chakrabarty 2012).

Débora Danowski & Eduardo Viveiros de Castro maintain that "Chakrabarty's concept of the Anthropocene" requires "a little more ethnological comparitivism and translative curiosity" (2017: 82). Accordingly, the authors also assert that there is a need for "a greater attention to those subaltern peoples and discourses he [Chakrabarty] has analyzed so well elsewhere" in the context of the Anthropocene as well (ibid). Here, then, the issue of colonial and postcolonial struggles over the de- and reprovincialization of knowledge is added to the attempt to bridge cultural and natural history in the context of the Anthropocene (see also Baucom 2014; Chakrabarty 2012). In Chakrabarty's postcolonial work, "deprovincialization" refers to the historical process through which Europe universalized its forms of knowledge, and in the process erased the local constitution and construction of forms of knowledge that became standards for truth and science. In the same process, non-Western forms of knowledge were turned into mere, "local cultures", while universal nature was discovered by the natural sciences (Chakrabarty 2000; Bauman & Briggs 2003; Ødemark 2017).

In the following, I shall interrogate a similar set of relations between forms of knowledge and figures of the human in OCF. I shall do this by examining the figure of the human as an ecological "*manager*" in three different sections of OCF. Moreover, I will examine a textual and conceptual pattern that connects the three sections in question. In the incipit of the report the authors call upon a global "we", capable of "*managing*" the globe – in the guise of the blue marble seen from space – in sustainable ways. I articulate this introductory interpellation of "us humans" with a section of the report where an exemplary humanity associated with an "archaic" sustainability already at the origin of human, bio-cultural time is called upon as a model for managing complex ecologies. Living specimens who serves as local models for ecological emulation across the globe, indigenous peoples, represent the seemingly original, human possibility of sustainability. Finally, I reconnect the global, eco-political scale with a very literal struggle over *space*, territoriality and dominion inside the Brazilian nation state (around 1985), through reading the comment on the report from Ailton Krenak, a representative of the Krenak people.

Questions of natural and cultural time – and the relation between the two – have come to dominate discussions of the Anthropocene (see Chakrabarty above). Distributed through OCF there are text boxes with internal frames that separate them from the surrounding text of the UN report, and the global language of policy. Inside these text boxes, we find citations of individuals and spokespersons, speaking for different groups, and particular local interest inside the textual frame of the report as a book, and the UN as a global institution (Brynildsen 2018: 41). In these internal micro texts, we find traces of both the political and the cosmo-mythological dimensions, which Danowski and Viveiros found lacking in Chakrabarty. Inside the boundaries of his text box, Krenak steers between different human collectives. On the one hand, he speaks from the pan-human position of the report, the "we" of global humanity. On the other, he speaks for the Krenak people and a Krenak "we", about the loss of land, and relates this to a looming collective death. Thus, we could say that Krenak's text interrupts the language of global policy and the authorial, narrative voice of the commission dominating the report. Applying what we could call a language of survival, Krenak also reconnects the global eco-political scale of OCF with a very concrete struggle over land and dominion inside the political space of the Brazilian nation state.

In the first sections below, I examine the construction of the figure of the human as a global ecological "manager" in relation to notions of ecological management in "indigenous cultures". Next, I examine the cultural and anthropological assumptions underlying the passage between indigenous and global humanity. Finally, I turn to Ailton Krenak's interruption and use of the language of OCF.

Indigenous Models for Sustainable Development

The objective of OCF, then, is to argue for the possibility of forms of development that are also "sustainable", that is, to preserve certain key concepts and orientations of modernity, like "progress" and "growth", in the face of ecological disaster. OCF's attempt to make the concepts of "development" and "sustainability" compatible contrasted with the Club of Rome's *Limits to Growth* (1972), which had concluded that economic growth was incompatible with sustainability. Contrary to this, the Brundtland commission wanted to "reassure representatives of poorer countries" that development and growth were possible – and sustainable – while "assuring wealthier nations that they would not have to reduce their living standards to achieve sustainability" (Brynildsen 2018: 26). As Stian Brynildsen has further shown, the notion of "indigenous and tribal peoples" played an intricate role in mediating between "development" and "sustainability" in OCF. Even if the Brundtland commission uses the phrase "tribal and indigenous" only twice in total, and the remaining sentences (where the terms are used) simply refer deictically back to these references as "these groups or people", the cultural category comprising such peoples serves as a mediator between development and sustainability in the report (ibid).

Indigenous and tribal peoples serve as figures for human origins – and as a *storehouse* of ancient insights in ecology. The notion of an inherent, human sustainability associated with the "tribal" and the "indigenous" actually transforms humanity, in its origin and species nature, into a potentially sustainable life form (Brynildsen 2018). In the wording of the World Commission (already cited above), indigenous and tribal peoples

> are the repositories of vast accumulations of traditional knowledge and experience that *links humanity with its ancient origins*. Their disappearance is a loss for the larger society, which could learn a great deal from their traditional skills in sustainably *managing* very complex ecological systems. (OCF: 114-115, my emphasis)

Using an analytical distinction from Clifford Geertz, we could say that the ecological exemplarity associated with "indigenous and tribal peoples" here serves as "models for" new sustainable practices ("society could learn a great deal from their traditional skills"). In this sense, then, they serve as a model that "the larger society" could – and emphatically should – emulate. This normative dimension, however, is intrinsically linked to an understanding of what "indigenous and tribal peoples" really are – a "model of" aspect in Geertz' sense (Geertz 1973). Indigenous cultures are, the report says, a source of traditional knowledge of ecology and sustainable living, and therefore an anthropological example for global humanity in the present ecological crisis (in 1987). However, "they" primarily have this status because they link "us", in the present, with the ancient past of generic humanity. Casting a category of peoples as a "model for" ecological management – for global humanity, in the present – is, in the language of the report, inherently related to the manner in which the peoples in question are associated with what we could call a bio-cultural deep time. Moreover, they also furnish evidence for an original (and perhaps natural) human capacity for "ecological management". The normative dimension associated with the "model for" aspect is thus intrinsically related to a set of "models of", that is, understandings of how the world is; in this case, understandings of the essence and identity of a particular class of cultures. In OCF, "indigenous and tribal peoples" are supposed to have links with the "ancient origins" of "humanity", that is, the bio-cultural origins of humankind.

This bio-cultural and historical understanding of humanity through the epistemic and normative exemplarity of the indigenous lies behind the report's view of the "disappearance" of indigenous and tribal peoples as a "loss" for "the larger society". The models of culture, humanity and human history that are imported into the report have been produced in human sciences, like anthropology, folklore and religious history. From the outset, salient strands of these disciplines struggled to overcome the nature-culture distinction, to become nomothetic and "positive" sciences about man by applying biological metaphors, zoological models of classification, or finding the universals of language and symbol production (Bauman & Briggs 2003; Hafstein 2000). The desire to break down the nature-culture distinction is thus obviously far older than concerns with the temporality and historiography of the Anthropocene. Perhaps we should see this desire to transcend the binary as a foundational part of Western metaphysics, rather than a way out of it (Derrida 1976). Let us now turn to how a global humanity is constructed as a potential ecological manager in OCF, and how the interpellation of the human as global "manager" both inserts humanity in a position of dependency of nature and above nature.

The Anthropology of the Blue Marble

The ecological exemplarity ascribed to "indigenous peoples" in OCF gives resonance to the language deployed to describe a global anthropology in the incipit of the report. A kind of human management is attributed to indigenous peoples living in specific territories, and a new kind of sustainable management is needed on the global level of the Anthropos, due to the dire ecological challenges facing the collective the UN report refers to as "us humans". The report turns to an iconic place for thinking of humanity and human vulnerability in relation to cosmology, using the first image of Planet Earth taken from space, the so-called "blue marble" or "blue planet". The image – and a wide range of text commenting upon it – formed a part of a broader concern with the "Whole Earth" in the ecological thinking of the period (Heise 2008: 22-23).

OCF underscores humanity's inability to fit its activities into planetary ecosystems, and the global consequences of such ecological incapacity. Hence, the report casts man as a geological agent – as both destructor and savior – and thus already plays out the Manichean human drama coded in the name of the Anthropocene. We see this clearly in the incipit of the report where a collective, human "we" see "*our* planet" – a shared possession – as a *whole,* from space, that is, a position *external* to Earth:

> In the middle of the 20th century, we saw our planet from space for the first time. Historians may eventually find that this vision had a greater impact on thought than did the Copernican revolution of the 16th century, which upset the human self-image by revealing that the Earth is not the centre of the universe. From space, we see a small and fragile ball dominated not by human activity and edifice but by a pattern of clouds, oceans, greenery, and soils. Humanity's inability to fit its activities into that pattern is changing planetary systems, fundamentally. Many such changes are accompanied by life-threatening hazards. This new reality, from which there is no escape, must be recognized – and managed. (OCF: 1)

The text begins with an account of an apparently unique historical event ("we saw our planet from space for the first time"), but next relates this to a larger class of events in the history of science, the Copernican discovery of the heliocentric cosmos. It seems to be taken for granted that "humanity" – as a *whole* and a singular historical actor – has changed its self-perception because of such scientific revolutions, or at least that the addressed community, of which the speakers themselves form a part, has undergone the implied revolution in mentality. The Copernican revolution "upset the human self-image" and the report further implies that the new "vision" of the earth presented here is about to create a new anthropology, even if the new self-perception "hurts" human pride and anthropocentrism. In contrast to talk about the Anthropocene, the report apparently has no difficulty in separating culture from nature. In the Anthropocene, "the pattern of clouds" would actually be a product of human, historical and cultural agency.

Next, the authors of the report add an interpretation of the "blue marble" image to the initial historical account of shattered scientific paradigms and revised anthropologies. Actually, what they present is more than "what we see". The bare eye simply cannot "see a small and fragile ball *dominated* not by human activity and edifice but by a pattern of clouds, oceans, greenery, and soils". This seemingly visual object, nature's domination, is an *inference* made from the visual data, not a "simple" rendition of an image or a visual perception. Such an addition of a theoretical, and non-visual surplus, is even more noticeable in the next sentence, which combines moral and causal relations: "[h]umanity's inability to fit its activities into that *pattern* is changing planetary systems, fundamentally". As observed above, this creates a paradoxical anthropology where humanity is simultaneously "too big" and "too small" for the planet, and where the part turns out to be larger than the whole (Argyrou 2005: 47; cf. above). Moreover, seeing "our planet" as a *whole* actually also implies seeing it as a *part* of the larger cosmos that surrounds it.

Now, in the report of the World Commission, the most challenging insight for "the human self-image" – anthropology – is apparently the *invisibility* of humanity and human culture in the new "vision" from space. It is this invisibility of human culture and the concomitant recognition of human vulnerability that create the need for a human "species" agency associated with the proposed new and sustainable "management" of life on earth. New forms of sustainable "management" – a "management" also akin to the ancient, ecological practices of indigenous and traditional peoples – is what "we" need to oppose to humanity's "inability to fit its activities into" the planetary "pattern of clouds, oceans, greenery, and soils".

Despite man's planetary invisibility, however, the report actually reinserts humanity into the center of cosmology. If culture is a web of citations and translations (Gal 2015), the image of an earth without culture clearly forms a part of vast cultural networks of images, texts and technologies. Indeed, the invisibility of human culture is itself a product of human technology and visualizations – a result of the very human construction of a "point of view" in space by means of visual technology, and the citation of this in a verbal text, which must be invisible to make the point of human invisibility.

There is thus a paradoxical relation between the cosmological role given to humanity in the reading of the image and the role of human culture in its production. Likewise, the narrative role of the human in the story is also ambivalent. In the story about the image, the missing humanity holds the destiny of earth in its *hand*s; almost as if human hands could reach out and care for earth as a *partial* object, and thus making nature and earth into an environment (cf. Escobar above). Humanity is the invisible hand behind the ominous changes in the atmosphere, and thus has to *manage* both itself and nature to avoid destruction. Thus, the *Anthropos* figured in OCF is an ambivalent, Manichean, actor, cast as both the destroyer of earthly life and its possible savior.

Narratology distinguishes between surface actors (like characters) and actants, that is, different underlying "functions" and "forces" that help or hinder the subject of the narrative action to realize its goal (Rimmon-Kenan 2002: 34-35, cf. 9-28). Applying this analytic distinction, we could say that "humanity" in OCF (and this also applies to the Anthropos of the Anthropocene) is one as a global and planetary *actor,* but split in two *actants*, that is, different underlying "functions" and "forces" that help or hinder the subject of the narrative action, global humanity, to realize its goal. In this case, the goal for the human protagonist is sustainable life on a global level. However, the human protagonist is split into two; there is an opponent striving to deny the protagonist the desired object. Man is still – as in earlier anthropocentric cosmologies – the main character in this cosmological master myth, while nature is an object in play between human protagonists and cultures – inside "us", in "our" human nature, and between "us" in intercultural and political struggles.

The idea of global management is associated with a view of the earth as a whole and total object of reflection and manipulation. As a unitary object of conservation, the earth is almost like an isolated reservation – for humanity, in cosmic space. This notion of a bounded whole encompassing human and natural patterns is replicated in the model of the "tribal" and "indigenous" as isolated, cultural wholes.

A short Genealogy 1: "Cultural Isolation"

Along with "sustainability", "development" is at the conceptual core of OCF. If "indigenous or tribal peoples" are a model for sustainable management of complex ecologies, they also lack development:

> The processes of development generally lead to the gradual integration of local communities into a larger social and economic framework. But some communities – so-called indigenous or tribal peoples – remain isolated because of such factors as physical barriers to communication or marked differences in social and cultural practices. […] *The isolation of many such people has meant the preservation of a traditional way of life in close harmony with the natural environment*. Their very survival has depended on their ecological awareness and adaptation (OCF: 114, my emphasis).

The report thus links "development" to expanding socio-economic integration; "generally", it asserts, "development" implies the integration of local communities into expanding networks. Yet, there are exceptions to the general rule, namely "indigenous or tribal peoples". Communities in this category are, we are told, external to the historical processes behind the socio-economic integration that here defines "development".

The authors of OCF appear to have certain reservations regarding the use of the names "indigenous" and "tribal". They only apply these labels after hedging them with the phrase "so-called" ("some communities – so-called indigenous or tribal peoples – remain isolated…"). This hesitation actually sets us on the track of the models of culture that makes it possible to move "management" between the Anthropos and (apparently) local cultures. For when it comes to identifying the conditions that cause the lack of "development" and "integration" of indigenous cultures – the causes behind the names – there are no doubts. Isolation is definitely the key word here. The factors causing isolation can be found in nature or in culture ("physical barriers to communication or marked differences in social and cultural practices"). In any case, the consequences are identical; the report places indigenous peoples in a geographical and/or cultural topography clearly *external* to development and modernity.

The hesitation concerning names, then, sets us on the track of the models of "indigenous culture" informing OCF. In his classic critique of how anthropology "makes it object", Johannes Fabian turned his attention to the epistemic hegemony of the spatial and the visual in disciplinary anthropology. "[T]he hold of a visual spatial 'logic' on our discipline is as strong as ever", he asserted – and he further related these visual practices to ancient cultural practices, like the *ars memoria* (Fabian 1983: 113). This visual and spatial logic amounted to a deep structural principle for representation that went well beyond particular theories:

> the bodies or organisms of functionalism, the culture gardens of the particularists, the tables of the quantifier, and the diagrams of the tax-

> onomists all project conceptions of knowledge which are organized around objects, or images of objects, in spatial relation to each other (ibid).

Moreover, Fabian related what he called the "denial of coevalness" to these spatial and visual principles' manner of organizing data. Fabian further considered the "denial of coevalness" to be the constitutive *aporia* of anthropology. On the one hand, the ethnographical object is created through fieldwork, a practice based upon the biographical and empirical co-presence of the investigator and the informant. On the other hand, Fabian asserts, in the resulting anthropological text, what has been observed during the time shared with contemporaries becomes *located* in another cultural time, a past that the observer's culture has left behind.

This manner of organizing time and space is also at work in OCF. In OCF, "isolation" is a condition in which these communities "*remain*" ("[t]hey remain isolated because of such factors as physical barriers to communication or marked differences in social and cultural practices"). In this way, the report adds a kind of *durative* notion of traditional *time* to the *spatial* idea of "isolation". A further consequence is that the time of tradition is opposed to the time of history, and the historical processes of integration that go along with development.

In line with Fabian, critical trends in cultural theory discredited assumptions about isolated and self-contained cultures in the 1980s and 1990s. New trends in anthropology and cultural studies pinpointed how travel and translation, and the "third space" between cultures, actually constituted cultures (Ødemark & Engebretsen 2018). Thus, it was emphasized that the *bounded* entities presupposed by the "classical" formulation of the object of cultural inquiry were themselves already a product of different kinds of translation and connectivity (ibid). The following passage from Eric Wolf sums up the critique of cultural boundedness with illuminating metaphors:

> By turning names into things we create false models of reality. By endowing nations, societies, or cultures with the quality of *internally homogenous and externally bounded objects*, we create a model of the world as *a global pool hall in which the entities spin off each other like so many hard and round billiard balls* (Wolf 1982: 6, my emphasis).

Wolf here charges the socials sciences for reifying names. To Wolf's concern with names, we should add that the spatial and visual principles of epistemological organization that goes beyond denomination – such as "tribal" or "indigenous" – might be as important as the names themselves in such processes of reification. A case in point is the concept "indigenous religion".

A short Genealogy 2: Indigenous Ecology as Inverted Superstition

As Bjørn Ola Tafjord has suggested about the category "indigenous religion", "new names" (like "indigenous religion" or "indigenous culture"), may be indebted to old disciplinary games and power asymmetries – even though they are supposed to correct earlier epistemic and political errors. Regarding the category "indigenous religion", which substitutes for a more derogatory term, like "primitive religion", Tafjord has noted that the traits defining the category are inversions of those defining "true" Christianity. Historically, then, "indigenous religion" has its origin in Christian theology – and hence bears traces of the constitutive relation to this religious standard. "Christianity was seen as the superior and only true 'religion'", and while "Judaism and Islam were seen as more or less mistaken deviations, […] all the rest was seen as 'idolatry' conducted by inferior 'pagans' or 'heathens'" (Tafjord 2012: 225). It seems to follow that it would be futile to search for common traits on the level of phenomena – identifying a shared religious "essence" of what is, in effect, a category of otherness constructed through symbolic inversion – without taking the religious norm as the point of departure. However, in recent history, the term "indigenous religion" and adjacent terms (like "indigenous culture") have been turned into an actor category – and in the process been filled with positive content by indigenous activists as well as anthropologists and other scholars (Conklin & Graham 1996; Ødemark 2015).

The brief genealogy sketched here also explains why the present members of the category "indigenous religion" are almost identical to the members of older classes of religious otherness, like "animism", "nature religion", "primitive religion", or "tribal religion", and other sobriquets referring to religions *outside* Christianity. Medieval (and later) theology classified idolatry as a species of *superstition.* Aquinas, for instance, found the cause of idolatry in the veneration of the creation, nature, at the expense of the divine creator (Martin 2004: 10).

The notion of "superstition" as a category in need of examination survived in early disciplinary folklore and anthropology. E. B. Tylor actually introduced the notion of "survival" to replace "superstition", because the last "implies a reproach" (Tylor 1871: 65). Survival is not "reproached" because it implies *literal* dangers (as for instance witchcraft did in early modern Europe) but because it confuses fiction and fact, culture and nature.

After evolutionary anthropology (like Tylor's), it has been claimed, the exemplary anthropological problem became how to interpret "natives'" beliefs in spirits and an animated nature, that is, their disregard for the demarcation that separates nature, culture and the supernatural, without falling back on evolutionary ethnocentrism (Argyrou 2005: 64-65). To "save" the "primitive's" rationality, Argyrou maintains, anthropology had to interpret statements about nature as statements about culture. Therefore, the informant's assertions about "animistic" nature were converted into *symbolic* statements and *metaphors* referring in the last instance to human society. A consequence of this was that the demarcation between nature and culture was restored in the anthropological text, and the "native" freed from charges of category mistakes (like constructing an anthropomorphic nature). If, however, we hold that indigenous peoples have real insight in ecology, this kind of cultural translation becomes redundant, Argyrou observes. Now, "natives mean what they say and much of what they say is true" (ibid: 65). Finally, it is implied, "natives" can be taken to speak literally about nature and/as ecology.

A Chronotope for Indigenous Culture

The reversal of "superstition" and the concomitant inclination to take "natives" literally appears to have made an impact on the UN text and the World Commission. OCF identifies a category of "isolated" human cultures, which already practice the sustainability that the report introduces as a vital supplement to development. We note that this construal of how indigenous cultures adapt to local environments also presupposes the *spatial* notion of cultural isolation. This is so because isolation – barriers and borders – is the precondition for the ecological aspect of social "survival", as an adaptation to a particular, natural habitat. It is from a particular position in cultural space – external to modernity – and in the margins of modern nations, that "indigenous" and "tribal" peoples furnish global humanity with an example of sustainable forms of life.

We can further analyze the link between "isolated" indigenous cultures and the stubborn time of "tradition" located in places undisturbed by modern society with a term, the chronotope, taken from Mikhail Bakhtin. The assumptions about "indigenous cultures" in the report, and the implicit narratives it contains, is dependent upon a spatio-temporal framework, which we can refer to as a chronotope for "indigenous", "tribal" and "traditional" peoples. The chronotope in question furnishes the *background* against which a narrative can be staged, and where objects can be "timed" or given historical "value" (Bakhtin 198; Puckett 2016: 157). In our case, OCF, the narrative is implicit; it is about collectives with a *continuous cultural identity* going back to "ancient times", and living outside the geo-cultural spaces characterized by the historical process of development. The notion that living "primitives" can supplement a lack in the written, historical archive, and thus serve as placeholders for the origins of human history, presupposes the distribution of different cultural periods and historical values at different times and places (Certeau 1980: 46; Ødemark 2017). This is the reason why, as Fabian asserted, the anthropologist's travel in space is simultaneously a travel in time, a voyage to the place where culture is nearest to its natural, "primitive" form.

The "isolation" said to characterize indigenous peoples in OCF only becomes meaningful from the perspective of the historical process of development, a process that "indigenous" and "tribal" communities "resist" or "survive". To create an eco-cultural exemplarity with bearing on the main theme of the report – "sustainable development", adding what "they" have to what "they" lack – the inclusion of the natural environment in the chronotope of indigenous culture is indispensable.

I have shown that OCF places "indigenous or tribal peoples" in a chronotope external to modernity. On the one hand, this creates a negative definition without essences of any kind; "they" are not forming a part of the historical processes of development, and thus, like indigenous religion, inhabit spaces "without qualities" – solely defined by the inversions of the qualities that define the normative center (Christianity, Modernity, *deviation* from Scripture, *lack* of writing, reason, and so on). On the other hand, a vital ecological wisdom is associated with cultures fully aware of their dependency on nature. The denial of coevalness (in Fabian's sense), is the (textual) prerequisite for the ecological wisdom ascribed to the category "indigenous and tribal peoples". In the wording of the report, "[t]heir very *survival* has depended on their ecological awareness and adaptation" (cf. above, my emphasis). The insight behind social "survival" thus furnishes us with a *positive*, ecological definition, which in turn lies behind the exemplary ecological role: "they" are a model for "us", since "they" still "manage" their environments in sustainable ways – a precondition for their survival. In addition, "indigenous or tribal peoples" also exemplify human sustainability at the archaic origin of human, cultural evolution. As "repositories of vast accumulations of traditional knowledge and experience that links *humanity* with its ancient origins", these peoples figure as a transcultural link to the time of the emergence of *the human* (cf. above, my emphasis). The awareness of a dependency on nature forms the basis of an ecocultural exemplarity – for humanity at large. Here we shift to something like a species level, a transcultural human potential for sustainable living – pointing towards the future, not back to past "superstition" and "idolatry" of nature.

Survival and the Literal and Symbolic Role of the Indigenous

The change described above is consistent with Argyrou's observation that environmentalism has produced a semiotic shift in the interpretation of cultures. Now the "animistic" statements of the "native informant" can be taken as referring *literally* to nature and not *metaphorically* to human society. Argyrou, however, also claims that the "green primitive" is still seen as a link to past forms of thought that "we" have forgotten: "[n]ative populations are once again used as *key building blocks* in the latest Western constructs – the environmentalist vision of the world" (ibid: 72, my emphasis). Indeed, "indigenous or tribal peoples" serve a similar function in

OCF; they offer a linkage to the primordial time of humanity, and as such can be seen as "building blocks" in Western constructs.

The chronotope of "indigenous or tribal peoples" is more radical than the value assessments associated with names such as "noble savage" or the "primitive". Actually, proponents of the "noble savage" as well as the "brutal savage" share this premise – and its concomitant principle of object construction. See, for instance, how a self-acclaimed debunker of the "noble savage", Napoleon Chagnon, inscribes the object of his study, a local ethnographical specimen turned into a figure for the human due to cultural isolation:

> My position, as stated many times in my publications, is that at the time I visited them, the Yanomamö were merely the best approximation anthropologists could have to examine the life of a people living completely free and ignorant of the cultures that surround them. […] The point is that the Yanomamö are completely unaware, or at least they were in 1964 in the villages I studied, of countries called Brazil and Venezuela […]. The Yanomamö were quite innocent and naïve about the external world they lived in. As far as they were concerned, *they were the only people on the planet*. (Living Anthropologically, my emphasis)

Chagnon thus inscribes the Yanomami within a particular chronotope that make them simultaneously local and global in a manner that resembles OCF: "[T]hey were the only people on the planet" – and hence, they become a stand in for humanity.

As we have seen, Argyrou observed that the symbolic or metaphorical translation of the "native informant" has ended in environmentalism. Nevertheless, the category "indigenous" still serves what we may think of as a symbolic role in the context of global "management". OCF asserts that the "very survival [of indigenous and tribal peoples] has depended on their ecological awareness and adaptation" (OCF: 114). Moreover, "surviving" outside the continuously expanding chronotope of progress and development means living in and of nature. "Survival", in this context, therefore has strong ecological implications; the capacity to survive as culturally different proves that the communities in question have lived traditional and sustainable lives since "ancient" times. Hence, there is a collective identity with a stable and continuous history disappearing in cultural deep time. We also see this in the relation between the grammatical singular and the plural in OCF's bridging of the relation between indigenous peoples and humanity. "Indigenous peoples" are,

1. "*repositories* [in the *plural*] of vast accumulation*s* of traditional knowledge and experience that

2. links *humanity* [in the *singular*] with its

3. *ancient origins* [in the *plural*]".

Indigenous cultures, then, are *literally* adapted to a particular, local habitat – but also serve as *symbols* of sustainability in the global, anthropological context of the struggle for the blue marble. This is a manner of relating, spatially, to other forms of knowledge, which is akin to the processes of "deprovincialization" in Chakrabarty's postcolonial work (2000; cf. above). On the one hand, indigenous cultures become "provincialized" against the yardstick of global humanity, speaking in the first person plural in the incipit to OCF. On the other, "indigenous", "traditional" and "tribal" groups also serve as symbols or examples of sustainable management beyond the realm of their "isolated" localities. Hence, indigenous management, we could say, becomes *deprovincialized* as an attitude to nature or the environment – and *reprovincialized* as a specific adaption to a particular habitat.

The report claims "[t]he processes of development generally lead to the gradual integration of local communities into a larger social and economic framework" (OCF: 114). This is wholly in line with theories of development and modernization, which has regularly regarded the "disappearance" of tradition as an inevitable outcome of a teleological historical process, which, in a machine-like manner, drives history towards its goal. The report here seems to deploy commonplaces of modernization theory, which held that communities not partaking in this development would inevitably perish (Appelby et al. 1995). Commenting on the tacit assumptions of folklore studies and other forms of cultural inquiry, Allan Dundes has called this idea of an inevitable decline the "devolutionary premise". Figures, he asserts, like "[t]he noble savage" and "the equally noble peasant" were destined to lose their authentic culture "as they marched ineluctably towards civilization" (1969: 12). Thus, this notion of devolution assumes that certain cultural items and types of culture, the traditional, are doomed to "decay through time" (ibid: 6).

In line with progressivist philosophies of history, OCF states that the "disappearance" of indigenous peoples "is a loss for the larger society, which could learn a great deal from their traditional skills in sustainably managing very complex ecological systems". However, talking about the "disappearance" and the "survival" of indigenous peoples is also, often enough, a euphemistic and symbolic way of speaking about actual war, violence, and death. Indeed, such struggles have been, and are, struggles not with a generalized and abstract modernization process, a historical and sociological "type", but *literally* with death and forced displacement, resulting from intentional political acts, not general socio-historical laws. The notion of the "disappearance" of traditional and indigenous communities could thus be seen as performing a kind of metaphorical or symbolic violence in itself. This violence, moreover, also masks the material violence that indigenous people have actually suffered. Ailton Krenak's text box in OCF further demonstrates this.

Sustainability and Survival as Cultural Translation – the Place of the Krenak

The external view of Planet Earth from the incipit of OCF is cited inside other kinds of boundaries, namely the textual frames around Ailton Krenak's text box. We could see this particular text box as both linking to postcolonial issues in debates about climate, sustainability and the Anthropocene, and to Amerindians' notion of space and humanity in a cross-cultural contact zone *within* the report. Inside this textual enclosure, Ailton Krenak speaks with "traditional authority" – from one of the "isolated" and "traditional" places that have resisted the time of modernity and the historical process of development – for the Krenak people and their territory:

> I am here as the son of a small nation, the Krenak Indian Nation. We live in the valley of the Rio Doce, which is the frontier of Espirito Santo with the State of Minas Gerais (OCF: 115).

The authority of traditional speech can be analysed with reference to what Roland Barthes called the cultural or gnomic code (Barthes 1993). Barthes groups statements "made in a collective and anonymous voice originating in traditional human experience" in this code (Barthes 1993: 19). This code is "one of the numerous codes of knowledge or wisdom to which the text continually refers", he declares. Further, he decides to call it "in a very general way cultural codes […] since they afford the discourse a basis in *scientific or moral authority*" (ibid, my emphasis). In terms of content, the gnomic code expresses "traditional human experience". Therefore, it refers to statements that belong to the past, that is, that represent the past in relation to the text's present; it will, in most if not all cases, actually involve the citation of past texts.

In OCF, the Krenak speak through the cultural code, in the textual locality of the bounded text box. Here, however, the scientific and moral authority of the report and the traditional authority of Krenak culture appear to corroborate each other. Inside the boundaries of the text box, and speaking from a particular geo-cultural territory, Krenak actually appears to cite the cosmological perspective in the incipit of OCF:

> We can no longer see the planet that we live upon as if it were a chess board where people just move things around. We cannot consider the planet as something isolated from the cosmic (OCF: 115).

As in the opening of OCF, the visual description and the admonition of humanity is uttered in the first person plural. The speaking "we" appears to be referring to global humanity – and the endangered future of the human species as well as other life-forms on Planet Earth. Unsurprisingly, we also find the same splitting of the evoked pan-human subject position when the "we" of humanity, as in the incipit, begins to address – and reproach – itself in the form of two morally charged commands: "We can no longer see", "we cannot consider". Both these interdictions have to do with a certain way of "seeing" or "considering" the world. Hence, science and tradition here appear to be countersigning each other. Thus, the view of the earth from space in the incipit of OCF is confirmed by "tradition", and from a local, cultural position on earth.

It has been observed that an alliance between indigenous peoples and environmentalists was forged in the Amazon basin in the 1980s (Conclin & Graham 1996; Alberts 2015: 129ff.). In the wording of Karl Thomas Alberts, "[t]his alignment *reframed indigenous cultural survival as an environmental issue* and linked biodiversity conservation with cultural conservation" (Alberts ibid, my emphasis). This alignment probably also influenced the language of OCF as well as Ailton Krenak's. Alberts frames this process partly as

> (i) a translation from a language of culture to a language of ecology ("[t]his alignment *reframed* indigenous *cultural* survival as an environmental issue"), and partly as
>
> (ii) an articulation of different disciplinary registers in the name of conservation ("linked biodiversity conservation with *cultural* conservation")

Ailton Krenak appears to be making the same kind of translation and articulation Alberts describes. His language, however, also appears to express an existential predicament that goes beyond both the language of culture and that of ecology. This is how Ailton Krenak addresses the World Commission:

> I am here as the son of a small nation, the Krenak Indian Nation. We live in the valley of the Rio Doce, which is the frontier of Espirito Santo with the State of Minas Gerais. We are a micro-country – a micro-nation. When the government took our land in the valley of Rio Doce,

> they wanted to give us another place somewhere else. But the State, the government will never understand that we do not have another place to go. The only possible place for the Krenak people to live and to re-establish our existence, to speak to our Gods, to speak to our nature, to weave our lives is where our God created us. It is useless for the government to put us in a very beautiful place, in a very good place with a lot of hunting and a lot of fish. The Krenak people, we continue dying and we die insisting that there is only one place for us to live. My heart does not become happy to see humanity's incapacity. I have no pleasure at all to come here and make these statements. We can no longer see the planet that we live upon as if it were a chess board where people just move things around. We cannot consider the planet as something isolated from the cosmic. We are not idiots to believe that there is [no] possibility of life for us outside of where the origin of our life is [SIC]. Respect our place of living, do not degrade our living condition, respect this life. We have no arms to cause pressure, the only thing we have is the right to cry for our dignity and the need to live in our land.
>
> Ailton Krenak
> Coordinator of Indian Nations Union
> WCED Public Hearing, Sao Paulo. 28-29 Oct 1985 (OCF: 115).

Ailton Krenak here navigates between different communities and positions of enunciation, from the "we" of the Anthropos to the "we" of the Krenak people; the text moves from the "I" and "my" into the "we" of the Krenak people, who self-identify as a collective linked to a particular territory. The Krenak "we" defines and identifies itself by listing some very concrete points of geopolitical reference inside a Brazilian, national space; "the valley of the Rio Doce", "the frontier of Espirito Santo, the State of Minas Gerais", while the text is signed in Sao Paulo. The Krenak are one of the pieces moved around on the "chess board planet", not by an abstract humanity, but by the government of Brazil, in a very concrete, political situation. This clearly puts the Krenak "micro-nation" into a particular political conflict with – and within – the space of the Brazilian nation state.

The Brazilian politics of displacement actually lead to the collective death of the "micro-nation" and "micro-country" Krenak identifies with and represents – being moved around as a pawn by the state has existential implications. The "micro-nation" belongs to a particular territory where it is possible to speak with "the gods" – gods that appears to be thoroughly localized. Survival is thus intrinsically associated with the ability to live in one particular place: "The only possible place for the Krenak people to live and to re-establish our existence, to speak to our

Gods, to speak to our nature, to weave our lives is where our God created us". The place of origin where the God of the Krenak created them, then, cannot be substituted by other places without that particular relationship (between a collective and its particular gods) regardless of their aesthetic (beauty) and economic qualities (plenty). The result of the displacement from this non-transferable property, a sacred land of origins, is a continuous, *collective* dying, impossible to pin down as either a literal or a figurative expression.

Closing Remarks

Questions of natural and cultural time, the articulation of the European genres of natural and cultural history, seem to dominate discussions of the Anthropocene. Through reading the comment on the report from A. Krenak, I have reconnected the global, eco-political scale with a very concrete struggle over *space* inside the political space of the Brazilian nation state – a spatial scale often forgotten in discourses on the Anthropocene, but which is actually more important than ever. I have examined the figure of the human as this emerges as a global ecological "manager" in relation to "indigenous cultures" in OCF. "Indigenous and tribal peoples" are supposed to have links with the "ancient origins" of "humanity", that is, a time of the bio-cultural origin of the human, well before history and the constitution of the written historical archive. Moreover, I have also demonstrated that particular conceptions of "culture" and "ecological" wholes enable a translation between vastly different scales in the report, between local, and "bounded" indigenous cultures, and Earth as the blue marble suspended in cosmic space as the bounded habitat of man.

The word "management" connects different ecological and cultural scales (local ecosystems, the planet). The "isolation" that OCF attributes to "traditional" and "indigenous" communities further enables a translation between these vastly different scales, between local – bounded, and billiard ball-like – indigenous cultures and the blue marble suspended in cosmic space. Thus, we have

1. "culture" in its "indigenous" and "traditional" form; seen as a bounded totality separated from the chronotopos of development by geographical and/or cultural barriers of communication. This separation makes the cultures in question into repositories of ancient, pan-human knowledge about how to live in harmony with nature inside the limitations of a particular territory or habitat.

2. Secondly, we have the planetary "whole", as this is perceived from an extra-terrestrial position. In this new cosmological context, the planet

> Earth is only a *part* of a larger whole (the space in which the Earth is suspended).

The pattern that connects these two vastly different objects appears to be that both are "complex wholes", encompassing circumscribed patterns (of culture and nature). The models of culture and humanity the report builds upon have mostly been produced in human sciences. Thus, this testifies to the importance of understanding (stereotyped) notions of culture and cultural time and narratives for modeling new social adaptations to climate change.

John Ødemark is professor of Cultural History and Cultural Encounters at the University of Oslo. He has published on early modern cultural contact, indigenous cultures in the Anthropocene and on theories and methods of cultural translation. Currently he leads the project "The Body in Translation: Historicizing and Reinventing Medical Humanities and Knowledge Translation" at the Centre of Advance Studies in Oslo. E-mail: john.odemark@ikos.uio.no

Acknowledgements
The article forms a part of the project *The Future is Now*. The article was finished during a stay at the Centre for Advanced Study in Oslo (CAS). Thanks are due to CAS and my project group *The Body in Translation*. Thanks are also due to my master student Stian Brynildsen and his excellent master's thesis on OCF for inspiration, and in particular, to Kyrre Kverndokk, Marit Ruge Bjærke and Hall Bjørnstad for comments on an early draft of this article.

Notes

[1]On the Krenak people cf. also Insituto socioambiental, https://pib.socioambiental.org/en/Povo:Krenak.

[2]More precisely, the division between nature and culture based upon the so-called verum factum principle. In Chakrabarty's phrasing, the principle comprised the epistemological idea that "we, humans, could have proper knowledge of only civil and political institutions because we made them, while nature remains God's work, and ultimately inscrutable to man" (Chakrabarty 2009). Hence, nature – the product of a divine construction – was excluded from a historiography solely concerned with human constructions.

[3]If capital and capitalism fully explained climate change, there would simply be no need for a new historiography, a fusion of the registers that Vico separated, because cultural theory developed in the Marxist tradition would still have sufficient explanatory power.

[4]In a later essay, the moral implication of the epistemological split attributed to Vico is further underscored when Chakrabarty relates the nature-culture divide to "[t]he assumed separation of the moral life of humans from their animal life in post-Enlightenment narratives" (2016. 348).
[6]Cf. "Species may indeed be the name of a placeholder for an emergent, new universal history of humans that flashes up in the moment of the danger that is climate change. But we can never understand this universal. It is not a Hegelian universal arising dialectically out of the movement of history, or a universal of capital brought forth by the present crisis. Yet climate change poses for us a question of a human collectivity, an us, pointing to a figure of the universal that escapes our capacity to experience the world. It is more like a universal that arises from a shared sense of a catastrophe. It calls for a global approach to politics without the myth of a global identity, for, unlike a Hegelian universal, it cannot subsume particularities. We may provisionally call it a "negative universal history." (Chakrabarty 2000: 222).
[7]Most histories of anthropology, folklore, and religious history routinely partition an earlier intellectual formation according to contemporary criteria and disciplinary boundaries, and folkloristic became somewhat discredited in the later part of the twentieth century, and is accordingly often left out of the equation. However, the field played a particularly significant role in the history of the human sciences. Notions like "culture", "collective memory" "informants", and what Baumann and Briggs have called "a poetics of otherness" (2003) were for instance initially calibrated as tools for fieldwork and practical investigation here.
[8]In pre-modern discourses about knowledge, however, superstitio did not reference practices relating to forces without empirical existence, but practices with 'lethal connotations' (Clark 1997:474). In contrast to modern or secular notions, the premodern category consequently subsumed phenomena taken to constitute literal threats to physical bodies. This was particularly clear when superstitio referred to magic and witchcraft; it was the "inefficacy in magic that made it demonic" (Clark 2002:120). This was so because diabolical intervention was needed to make inefficient magic into efficient causes; words do not kill without the aid of demons. Magic worked, then, not due to any causal-properties or powers in the spell itself, but because demons assisted the practitioners, who were accused of holding superstitious beliefs not because they believed in the efficacy of magic, but because they held a wrong causal theory. The danger of spells was that they, as forms of linguistic communication, 'invited' demonic forces to enter the human world.
[9]In Tylor's own wording, "what we call poetry [is] to them [primitives and peasants] real life" (quoted in Argyrou 2002: 78).
[10]The idea that the Yanomami lived isolated and historically unrelated lives has been heavily contested (cf. Living Anthropologically).
[11]I take this from S/Z, where Barthes analytically extracted five different textual codes

from Balzac's short story Sarrasine.

[12]The English version of OCF actually erases the "no" in the sentence "We are not idiots to believe that there is [NO] possibility of life for us outside of where the origin of our life is".

References

Alberts, Karl Thomas (2015): *Shamanism, Discourse, Modernity*, London & New York: Routledge.

Appleby, Joyce, Lynn Hunt, Margareth Jacob (1995): "Scientific History and the Idea of Modernity", Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt & Margareth Jacob: *Telling the Truth About History*, New York: W. W. Norton & Company, p. 52–90.

Argyrou, Vassos (2002): *Anthropology and the Will to Meaning. A Postcolonial Critique*, London: Pluto Press.

Argyrou, Vassos (2005): *The Logic of Environmentalism. Anthropology, Ecology and Post-coloniality*, New York: Berghahn Books.

Bakhtin M. (1981) "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel", *The Dialogical Imagination: Four Essays*, Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.

Barthes, Roland (1990): *S/Z*, Oxford: Blackwell.

Baucom, Ian (2014): "History 4°: Postcolonial Method and Anthropocene Time", *Cambridge Journal of Postcolonial Literary Inquiry*, vol.1, pp. 123- 142.

Bauman, Richard & Briggs, Charles (2003): *Voices of Modernity. Language Ideologies and the Politics of Inequality*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Brynildsen, Stian (2018): *Hegemony and Articulations of the Ecologically Noble Savage: An analysis of Greenpeace and Our Common Future's hegemonic articulations of environmentalism*. Oslo: Master in European Culture, University of Oslo:

Certeau, Michel de (1980): "Writing vs. Time: History and Anthropology in the Works of Lafitau". *Yale French Studies*, No. 59, Rethinking History: Time, Myth, and Writing, pp. 37-64

Chakrabarty, Dipesh (2000): *Provincializing Europe. Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. Princeton University Press: Princeton and Oxford.

Chakrabarty, Dipesh (2009): "The Climate of History: Four Theses", *Critical Inquiry* Vol. 35, No. 2 (Winter), pp. 197-222.

Chakrabarty, Dipesh (2012): "Postcolonial Studies and the Challenge of Climate Change", *New Literary History*, vol. 43, Nr. 1, pp. 1-18.

Chakrabarty, Dipesh (2016). Humanities in the Anthropocene: The Crisis of an Enduring Kantian Fable. *New Literary History*, Volume 47, Numbers 2 & 3, Spring & Summer. Johns Hopkins University Press

Clark, Stuart (1997): *Thinking with Demons*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Clark, Stuart (2002): "Witchraft and Magic in Early Modern Culture". Ankarloo, Bengt, Stuart Clark & William Monter (eds.). *Witchraft and Magic in Europe, vol. 4. The Period of the Witch Trials*. London: The Anthlone Press: 97-169.

Conklin, Beth & Graham, Laura (1996): "The Shifting Middle Ground: Amazonian Indians and Eco-Politics", *American Anthropologist* 97(4), pp. 695-710.

Danowski, Débora & Viveiros de Castro, Eduardo (2017): *The Ends of the World*. Cambridge: Polity.

Derrida, Jacques (1976): *Of Grammatology*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Dundes, Allan (1969): "The Devolutionary Premise in Folklore Study", *Journal of the Folklore Institute, vol. 6*, No. 1, pp.5-19.

Ellingson, Ter (2001): *The Myth of the Noble Savage*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

Ellis, Erle C. (2018): *Anthropocene – a Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Escobar, Arturo (1996): "Construction Nature – Elements for a Post-structuralist Political Ecology". *Futures*, vol. 28, no. 4, pp. 325-343.
Fabian, Johannes (1983): *Time and the Other. How Anthropology makes its Object*, New York: Columbia University Press.
Gal, Susan (2015): "Politics of Translation", *Annual Review of Anthropology*. Vol. 44, pp. 225-240.
Geertz, Clifford (1973): "Religion as a Cultural System". *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books, pp. 87-125.
Hafstein, Validimar Tr. (2000): "Biological Metaphors in Folklore Theory". *The Krohn Prize 1999*. Åbo: Nordic Network of Folklore.
Hemming, John (2003): *Die if you Must. Brazilian Indians in the Twentieth Century*. London: McMillan.
Heise, Ursula K. (2008): *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet: the Environmental Imagination of the Global*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Insituto socioambiental (n.d.). https://pib.socioambiental.org/en/Povo:Krenak, (accessed 1/3/2019).
Living anthropologically (n.d.) Party like its 1999 with Napoleon Chagnon. https://www.livinganthropologically.com/brian-ferguson-napoleon-chagnon/ (accessed 1/11/2019).
Martin, Dale B. (2004): *Inventing Superstition: From the Hippocratics to the Christians*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
Puckett, Kent (2016): *Narrative Theory: A Critical Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Ramos, Alcida Rita (1998): *Indigenism: Ethnic Politics in Brazil*, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press.
Rimmon-Keenan, Shlomith (1989): *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics*, London: Routledge.
Sideris, Lisa (2016): "Anthropocene Convergences: A Report from the Field" In: "Whose Anthropocene? Revisiting Dipesh Chakrabarty's 'Four Theses,'" edited by Robert Emmett and Thomas Lekan, *RCC Perspectives: Transformations in Environment and Society*, no. 2, pp. 89–96.
Tafjord, B. O. (2013): "Indigenous religion(s) as an analytical category". *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion 25*, 3, pp. 221-243.
Tylor, E. B. (1871): *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art, and Custom* (vol.1). John Murray, London.
Wolf, Eric (1982): *Europe and the People without History*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
World Commission on Environment and Development (1987): *Our Common Future*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Ødemark, John (2015): "Avatars in the Amazon – tales of cultural conversion and ecological salvation", *Culture Unbound vol*. 7, pp. 455- 478.
Ødemark, John (2017): «Interkulturell og global idehistorie», Reidar Aasgaard; Ellen Marie Krefting & Espen Schaanning (eds.), *Grep om fortiden: Perspektiver og metoder i idéhistorie*. Oslo: Cappelen Damm Akademisk, pp. 185 - 206
Ødemark, J. & Engebretsen, E. (2018). "Expansions", Lieven D'hulst and Yves Gambier (Eds.), *A History of Modern Translation: Knowledge Sources, Concepts, Effects*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, pp. 85-90.

Culture Unbound
Journal of Current Cultural Research

Making Invisible Changes Visible: Animal Examples and the Communication of Biodiversity Loss

By Marit Ruge Bjærke

Abstract

Communicating biodiversity loss and other environmental threats is never only about relating natural science data. How different environmental discourses are presented, how they intertwine, and what concepts of nature are implied, are important parts of environmental communication. The release of the *2015 Norwegian Red List for Species* by the Norwegian Biodiversity Information Centre was commented on by governmental and non-governmental organizations, and was covered quite extensively in Norwegian national and local papers. In this article, I investigate the use of animals as examples in media texts on the Norwegian Red List, and the different conceptions of biodiversity loss that they activate. The examples studied in the article vary from the listing of species' names to longer narratives connected with a single species. What they have in common, however, is that the authors use them to make the general issue of the texts more real and understandable to the reader or listener. The conceptions of biodiversity, produced through animal examples in the various media, ranged from happiness and childhood magic, to a climate-changed future, and to recreational hunting. The close reading of the examples shows that both the choice of species and, more specifically, which of the species' many relationships to portray as part of the exemplary narrative, is crucial to the conceptions of biodiversity loss and of nature that are conveyed to the public. Through their way of both exceeding and reducing the general statement they are meant to illustrate, the examples bring some ideas about biodiversity loss to the foreground, but at the same time obscure others, thus providing insight into how biodiversity loss is constructed and communicated as an environmental problem.

Keywords: Biodiversity loss, climate change, endangered species, environmental communication, exemplarity, Red List, *Cuculus canorus*, *Lagopus spp*.

Bjærke, Marit Ruge: "Making Invisible Changes Visible: Animal Examples and the Communication of Biodiversity Loss", *Culture Unbound*, Volume 11, issue 3–4, 2019: 394–414. Published by Linköping University Electronic Press: http://www.cultureunbound.ep.liu.se

Introduction: A Minister, a Cuckoo, and the Mediation of a Red List

On November 18, 2015, the Norwegian Minister of Climate and Environment, Tine Sundtoft, held a speech entitled "We need knowledge to make the right decisions" (Sundtoft 2015). The speech was held at the launching of the *2015 Norwegian Red List for Species*, a list of more than 4 000 Norwegian species in danger of extinction (Norwegian Biodiversity Information Centre 2018). The Minister started her speech with a question. "What is happiness?" she asked, and continued:

> It can be to feel the sun shining and hearing "from the hillside a cuckoo saying cuckoo". Knowing that spring is here. Feeling the tingling in the body from when we were children. Then we knew that if we could just steal towards – and hide under – the tree where the cuckoo sat and crowed, we could wish for something. Now, preliminary Red List numbers from the Norwegian Biodiversity Information Centre show that the cuckoo seems to be in strong decline. Possibly as a result of the climate changes. (Sundtoft 2015)

In her speech, the Minister communicated biodiversity loss and the *2015 Norwegian Red List for Species* by choosing one of the species on the list, the cuckoo, and relating it to her own childhood experience. She used the cuckoo as an example, and told her story as an exemplary narrative, to show that biodiversity connects the past to the future, and culture with nature, and to draw attention to what we stand to lose.

Two of the main obstacles when attempting to communicate environmental problems, are the fact that most environmental problems emerge gradually over a long period of time, and that they necessitate action before the full effects can be seen (Adam 1998: 8–10, Doyle 2011: 4). In other words, most environmental problems are, in a sense, invisible. Simply put, biodiversity loss is made visible through a twofold process. First, it has to be 'produced' as science, most importantly through the construction of Red Lists (Braverman 2017). Red Lists are lists of species at risk of going extinct. The first Red Lists were created during the 1960s by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the organization that now provides the global *IUCN Red List of Threatened Species* (International Union for Conservation of Nature 2018). In Norway, the *2015 Norwegian Red List for Species* is the third and last version of the Norwegian Red List, so far.[1]

Second, the results from the Red List assessment process must be communicated to the public. The use of numbers is one way of presenting the problem, giving what Ursula Heise in her book, *Imagining extinctions* (2016: 55), has called "a panoramic view of mass extinction". However, using examples of endangered species, the way the Minister of Climate and Environment does, is another way to try to get the public to relate to the problem of biodiversity loss. Literary scholar John Lyons (1989: 28) has stated that in early modern texts, examples were "a way of gesturing outside the pure discourse of the speaker/writer toward support in a commonly accepted textual or referential world". That examples gesture outside the textual discourse is not limited to early modern texts, however. Textual examples also represent a way of making contemporary environmental problems 'real' to the reader or listener.

An example can be defined as a particular instance, chosen to support a general statement, among a range of possible cases. The general statement, however, only accounts for a limited aspect of the particular instance, and this means that the example contains an excess of meaning which can be brought into the text by association (Lyons 1989: 33-34). At the same time, the particular nature of the example that was chosen also influences the general statement. Thus, examples always both exceed and reduce the issue they are meant to illustrate. In this article, I explore the use of animals as examples in the mediation of the *2015 Norwegian Red List for Species* released by the Norwegian Biodiversity Information Centre (Artsdatabanken). The examples studied in the article vary from the listing of species' names to longer narratives connected with a single species. What they have in common, however, is that the authors use them to make the general issue of the texts more real and understandable to the reader or listener. While some animals from the list are used repeatedly as examples, others are used sparingly, and most of the species on the Red List are never used as examples at all. My aim in this article is to examine the different conceptions of biodiversity loss in the Norwegian public sphere. My contention is that close examinations of animals as examples and the conceptions they activate provide important insight into how biodiversity loss is constructed and communicated as an environmental problem.

The child, the past and the struggle for knowledge

Newspapers, NGOs and governmental bodies all have different roles in the media landscape. While newspapers are governed by media logics, the NGOs and governmental bodies are governed by their PR-strategies. The release of the *2015 Norwegian Red List for Species* was commented on by several non-governmental organizations, and was covered quite extensively in Norwegian national and local papers. Except for the Norwegian Biodiversity Information Centre themselves, the Ministry of Climate and Environment was the only governmental body that published a press release on the day the Red List was released – and then only a written version of the speech given by their Minister. There is, however, a remarkable degree of similarity between many of the texts, as a large number of the newspapers cite the NGOs and draw their examples from them. By using material from both governmental and non-governmental organizations published on the day the *2015 Norwegian Red List for Species* was released, and comparing it to material published in Norwegian newspapers in the following weeks, it is possible to trace the recurrence of some of the examples throughout the material, and investigate how they change along the way.

The speech made by the Norwegian Minister of Climate and Environment at the launching of the *2015 Norwegian Red List for Species* starts with the question of what happiness is. The answer is the story of a cuckoo and a childhood memory. The hearing of the cuckoo is set in an idyllic scene; the sun is shining and it is springtime, and the Minister remembers the tingling in the body from when she was a child, before going on to describe how one could claim a wish from the cuckoo. The childhood memory ends quite abruptly with the information that the Red List now shows the cuckoo to be in strong decline. Only the context of the speech and this abrupt ending show that the story about the cuckoo has something to do with biodiversity loss. Although the Minister starts by asking what happiness is, the answer becomes relevant to the occasion only because it is connected with biodiversity. The story about the cuckoo and the childhood memory, then, is an example intended to show the reality of biodiversity loss: Since one kind of happiness is feeling the sun shining and hearing the cuckoo, the information from the Red List that the cuckoo is about to disappear, means that happiness is about to end.

By combining the question of happiness and the results from the Red List, the Minister evokes several assumptions about the good life as well as about what biodiversity loss is. Firstly, happiness is dependent on interactions between humans and nature. Biodiversity loss is much more than the loss of a species; it is the loss of a way of life, for humans as well as for cuckoos. The example presents biodiversity loss in a similar way to what Thom van Dooren in his book, *Flight Ways,* calls 'entanglements' (van Dooren 2014). Species are not separate entities, and extinctions are not specific moments in time. Rather, species should be understood as "vast intergenerational lineages, interwoven in rich patterns of co-becoming with others", and this in turn shows that the disappearance of a species will be felt in "a range of complex and drawn-out ways" (van Dooren 2014: 12). If cuckoos become extinct, one possible form of happiness and one part of the magic of childhood will also disappear.

Secondly, the good life seems to be a thing of the past. While the 'now' is represented by the decline of the cuckoo and climate change, the use of the past tense in this childhood memory shows the past as the time of real happiness, when this kind of interaction between humans and nature was possible. The Minister refers to childhood both explicitly, by describing the memory of cuckoo-related folklore from childhood and by using a citation from a very common Norwegian children's song about hearing the cuckoo in the forest.[2] "Then we knew", the Minister says. With the use of the pronoun 'we', the Minister suggests that we have all been children, searching for that cuckoo, but also that there is some secret knowledge of childhood that is lost to us.

References to childhood do not necessarily point towards the past. Both in climate change discourses and in the imaginings of a catastrophic future, the child often signifies the future and the question of what we are doing to the planet of our children (Sheldon 2016: vii, Kverndokk In press). However, in this case, the child does not evoke the future, but rather underlines the breach between a harmonious past and a disrupted present. The example evokes an association to the Christian story of the Garden of Eden and the fall of man, where humanity in a childlike state roams the beautiful garden of nature, until they make a mistake that separates them from a state of grace forever. Without the cuckoo, the possibility of having a wish granted is lost, and there is no way back to the idyll that once was.

Although the use of examples in contemporary texts and in speeches is mainly intended as a way of illustrating something or supporting an argument inductively, the story of the cuckoo can be likened to what in medieval and renaissance texts was called an exemplary tale: "a short narrative to illustrate a moral point" (Lyons 1989: 9). By making assumptions about the good life, it embodies both a general illustration of a red-listed species and a moral statement about what the good life consists of. Such a combination of being an illustration and functioning as a kind of ideal at the same time is a typical feature of examples (Eriksen et al. 2012: 9). The two different ways of using them have co-existed since antiquity and still influence how they are understood. On one hand, examples were used as illustrations to support an argument; on the other hand, they were used as ideals or models (Gelley 1995: 1). This basic ambivalence between the illustrative aspect and the ideal is retained in any example – for instance in the uniqueness that made the author of the text choose it (Eriksen et al. 2012: 9). The cuckoo is one among many species on the Norwegian Red List, and as such is just a randomly chosen representative of the other species on the list. On the other hand, the cuckoo in the Minister's speech is obviously unique. The *2015 Norwegian Red List for Species* contained more than 4 400 species, but the specific conception of happiness - as a relationship between humans and nature, grounded in innocence and the knowledge that magic exists – that are embedded in the exemplary tale of the Minister's example, is not provided by any of the other species on the list.

Thus, when biodiversity loss and Red Lists are presented through species examples, the choice of example also has moral implications. While the example of the cuckoo provides the listener with the expected connection to the 'reality' of biodiversity loss that is understood to be the main rhetoric function of examples, it contains other features, linking it with innocence, the past, and the Garden of Eden. Although intended as an illustration of the Red List, the example of the cuckoo, through its inherent excess and its ambivalent status between illustration and ideal, brings forth the general trope of a time where humans lived in harmony with nature, implying that such harmony is good, but also that it is a thing of the past.

Through its excess, the example of the cuckoo also brings forth a view of what knowledge is. "Then we knew", says the Minister. The ones who know are the children, and what they know is that the cuckoo could help them get a wish granted. The idea of knowledge, is, however, also a large part of the context the speech places the story of the cuckoo and happiness within. After finishing the example with the information that the cuckoo seems to be in strong decline, possibly as a result of climate change, the Minister continues:

> This is important knowledge. We need knowledge to make the right decisions. Since the Norwegian Biodiversity Information Centre was established in 2005, you have obtained, systematized, evaluated and communicated knowledge about the diversity of nature. You have delivered important knowledge throughout the period you have existed. Knowledge that forms the basis for decisions on how to manage nature. Thank you for the job you have done. (Sundtoft 2015)

The change from sensory experiences such as 'sunshine' and 'tingling' is sudden. The "then we knew" from the first paragraph of the speech is replaced with the more distant "important knowledge". The Minister addresses the staff at the Norwegian Biodiversity Information Centre and the work they have done directly, and recites the number of species that have been evaluated, the number of species that are considered threatened, and the number of experts that have done the assessments. The knowledge she refers to here is numerical, rather than traditional. It is systematized and evaluated. Still, there is a moral tone to the speech: "We need knowledge to make the right decisions", she says. The Minister does not say what these "right decisions" are, only that the Red List will provide an "important professional basis" in the work on the government's next White Paper on nature.

To focus on the struggle for scientific knowledge is a quite common way of presenting biodiversity loss, and has been so since the production of Red Lists started (see for instance Fisher et al. 1969: 20). Such a focus is based on the expectation that lack of knowledge can lead to the wrong measures, as well as difficulties in convincing policy makers to do something about the problem of biodiversity loss. Producing Red Lists have been considered an important way of countering such a lack, and in their 50th year anniversary publication, the international IUCN

Red List, for instance refer to the Red List as a "gold mine of knowledge" (Vincent & Noel 1966: Introduction, Smart et al. 2014: xxv). Ursula Heise, (2016: 76–78) has found traces of narratives of such epic struggles for scientific knowledge in species assessments from the IUCN Red List, as well as in fictional texts on biodiversity loss.

In this case, the switch from a unique example showing that nature and culture – as well as humans and other species – are entangled, to numeric knowledge seems at first to make an awkward combination. While the example presents a nostalgia for the past, and indicates that an innocent childhood is gone forever, the struggle for scientific knowledge points towards the future possibilities of science, and also seems to obscure the feeling of a connection with nature from the example. However, in parallel with the focus on science, there is a common environmental trope stating that there is an alternative knowledge, or wisdom, besides the scientific knowledge, important for making "the right decisions". This knowledge, or wisdom, is usually separated from (post-)modern societies either in time or space; it is held by, for instance, Stone Age people or by indigenous peoples (see for instance Fisher et al. 1969: 18–19, Whyte 2013, Whyte 2017). With the phrase, "Then we knew", the child in the example assumes a similar role. While the authorization of the knowledge held by indigenous peoples is often construed as a certain form of cultural authenticity and commemorates a lost cultural past (Ødemark 2015: 474), the child's knowledge is rather authorized by its psychological authenticity, its innocence. The child holds knowledge of the magic of nature, more similar to ancient wisdom than to scientific numbers. Thus, the example of the cuckoo and happiness is, in a way, also about knowledge. We need to know both what happiness is, and the scientific facts, to make the right decisions. Both the example and the scientific Red List provide knowledge that is necessary to grasp and relate to biodiversity loss.

Climate reductionism or not?

There is only one animal used as example in the Minister of Climate and Environment's speech, and only one cause for biodiversity loss is mentioned in connection with the example. This cause is climate change. Since the Minister lets one example represent the whole Red List, the reality she links to through her exemplary narrative is a reality where not only biodiversity, but also the possibility of happiness and magic, are threatened mainly by climate change. The Minister's choice of example for her speech thus produced an implicit connection between the *2015 Norwegian Red List for Species* and climate change. However, other contributors to the mediation of the list made this connection more explicitly. WWF Norway was among the non-governmental environmental organizations that posted news articles on the *2015 Norwegian Red List for species* on the same day that the list was launched, and they openly activated climate change as the overarching story of the new Red List (WWF Norway 2015). The posting from WWF Norway was entitled "New Red List for Threatened Species – 172 Species in Norway are Threatened by Climate Change". The text started with the claim that "The number of species threatened by climate change in Norway is increasing rapidly. The mountain hare, ptarmigan, walrus, puffin, arctic fox and polar bear are all in trouble due to warmer weather, shows the new Norwegian Red List for species" (WWF Norway 2015). The text uses various examples to show the ways that species can be threatened by climate change: The puffin lacks food because of climate change, the mountain hare and ptarmigans need snow as camouflage because they are white in the winter, the walrus needs ice, and the glacier buttercup is threatened by rising temperatures in the mountains. Thus, the examples form a series, underscoring various ways in which climate change may lead to biodiversity loss. WWF Norway then combines the climate change threat with a call for "the world's leaders to take the consequences of the knowledge we have, ensure a global and ambitious climate agreement in Paris and save the nature in the Arctic" (WWF Norway 2015).

Although not part of the official launching of the *2015 Norwegian Red List for Species*, the strategy and examples of WWF Norway became influential in how the list was presented in Norwegian newspapers. The primary news agency in Norway, The Norwegian News Agency (Norsk Telegrambyrå, NTB), sent out several texts about the new Red List to Norwegian newspapers, and one of these texts was called "Climate Changes Threaten More Norwegian Species", and included a statement from the secretary general of WWF Norway. This was quite similar to the one in the posting from WWF Norway themselves:

> – The new Red List tells about a changing nature. Near and dear species like the ptarmigan, mountain hare and cuckoo are exposed as the temperature rises, Nina Jensen, Secretary General of the environmental organization WWF Norway says. – Now the world's leaders must take the consequence of the knowledge we have and ensure a global and ambitious climate agreement in Paris, she adds. (Føli 2015)

The overarching story conveyed by these texts is that climate change is the reason that species go extinct, and that doing something about climate change is the way to prevent future extinctions. More than half of the 41 printed newspapers that published articles on the new Red List after it was released, mentioned climate change as a pressure on biodiversity, and the Secretary General of WWF Norway was quoted directly on relating the new Red List to climate change in seven of the newspaper articles. In six of these, she was also quoted on linking the Red List with the need for a Paris agreement. Thus, the idea that biodiversity loss is caused by climate change filtered through into Norwegian mass media.

In several recent studies, media coverage of climate change has been shown to be systematically higher than media coverage of biodiversity loss under otherwise similar circumstances (Young et al. 2014, Legagneux et al. 2018). These differences have been attributed to various aspects of the two discourses. Zaccai & Adams (2012: 567), for instance, contend that climate change is better defined as a policy issue, and as a subject of daily concern for lay persons, that the measurement units of climate change science (CO_2 equivalents) are easier to understand; and to the fact that climate change is connected to an important strategic matter such as energy. Legagneux et al. (2018: 3), on the other hand, try to explain the discrepancy by pointing to the similarities between climate change and belief systems, the norm of balanced reporting being activated, and the fact that biodiversity loss is perceived as taking effect on a local scale, while climate change is perceived as global. They also bring up possible lag effects stemming from the fact that the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) is more than 20 years older and have more resources than the IPBES (Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services). During recent years, when a number of studies have shown that climate change gets more media attention than biodiversity loss, several authors have argued that biodiversity loss should be embedded in a climate change discourse whenever possible, to increase public awareness and political interest in biodiversity loss as an environmental threat (Veríssimo et al. 2014, Legagneux et al. 2018). One might argue that WWF Norway follows this strategy, and that they embed the *2015 Norwegian Red List for Species* in a climate change discourse to increase the publicity of biodiversity loss. As their press release and statements influenced several of the newspapers either directly or through The Norwegian News Agency, one might also claim that the strategy worked. However, such a strategy has both advantages and drawbacks when it comes to the understanding of biodiversity loss that is conveyed to the public. Presenting biodiversity loss as closely connected with climate change helps envisage biodiversity loss as a global environmental problem, but at the same time gives the impression that climate-related measures aimed towards limiting future changes in global temperature, such as the Paris-agreement, will be enough to stop it. Although climate change is one of the drivers of biodiversity loss, and climate change and biodiversity loss are both environmental problems with a global reach, the two problems are still to a large degree in need of different measures. The Norwegian Biodiversity Information Centre states that changes in land use is a pressure on more than 90 percent of the threatened species on the *2015 Norwegian Red List for Species*, while climate change is a pressure on four percent of the threatened species (Norwegian Biodiversity Information Centre 2015). There is also a fine line between trying to boost biodiversity loss by connecting it to climate change, and using a media event on biodiversity loss as a means to talk about climate change. The *2015 Norwegian Red List for Species* was launched less than two weeks before the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 21) in Paris, France, started.[3] It is possible to understand the focus on climate change in the texts from WWF Norway and NTB as a way of using the launching of the Red List as part of the run-up to COP 21, rather than as a media event in itself.

Although media strategies are important, mediation of biodiversity loss as part of climate change may also be the result of more unintentional understandings of biodiversity loss and future climate change. Mike Hulme (2011) has introduced the concept 'climate reductionism', describing a form of analysis or prediction where the interactions between climate, environment and society that creates the future, are reduced to one determining factor, namely climate. Hulme believes that this reductionist tendency is due to an epistemological slippage from climate modelling, and that predictive sciences with statistical models and prediction power have got hegemony because they are difficult to combine with predictions from the less quantitative sciences (Hulme 2011: 249). Like climate change science, the discourse on biodiversity loss has its own numerical and technological practices produced to render the future actionable (Anderson 2010, Braverman 2017: 134), which, to a certain degree, should make it resistant to the epistemological slippage described by Hulme. Still, although Red Lists and other lists of endangered species are based on extensive scientific criteria and guidelines, these are not as 'hard science' as climate change science, and the outcomes are lists and databases, rather than models, predictions, and scenarios.

The texts from WWF Norway and The Norwegian News Agency both bear some clear signs of climate reductionism. The only pressure presented with expectations for the future and in terms of change, is climate change. This is especially visible in this passage from The Norwegian News Agency:

> The proportion of the threatened species that are negatively impacted by human induced changes in land use, is stable on as much as 90 %. Forestry, agriculture, drainage and regrowth have large consequences for a large number of plants and animals. However, the importance of climate change is expected to increase, since the temperature will probably continue to rise. In addition, climate changes might have been underestimated, since the species are evaluated over a period of ten years - which can be too short to capture gradual changes in temperature and rainfall. (Føli 2015)

While the impact from changes in land use is stable, climate change "is expected to increase". The possibility of climate change being underestimated is also mentioned. For the other pressures, neither their future, nor their possibility of under- or overestimation are discussed. This is consistent with what Hulme claims about epistemological slippage from the fact that we have more statistical and scientifically modelled knowledge of future climate change than of future changes in land use or in pollution (Mazor et al. 2018: 1071).

However, the decision of whether to use redlisted animals as examples, and if so, of which species to use, is also an important way of reducing the future to climate change, either consciously or unconsciously. The Minister of Climate and Environment used only one example in her speech, the cuckoo. Later in her speech, she mentioned that the category "changes in land use" is "by far the largest negative impact factor for species in Norway", but this statement was neither accompanied by an exemplary narrative, nor with any mention of specific species threatened by changes in land use. As examples provide both a way of pointing outside the discourse and function as representatives of the other species on the Red List, the cuckoo threatened by climate change enforce the conception of climate change as the cause of biodiversity loss. At the same time it serves to downplay the importance of other pressures, such as changes in land use, that are not presented through examples. Like the Minister of Climate and Environment, WWF Norway states that changes in land use is the biggest threat to Norwegian species. But while the various effects of climate change are presented through examples of species suffering from these, there are no examples of species threatened by changes in land use – and thereby no exemplary narratives or indication of how changes in land use may threaten human relationships with nature. In a similar fashion, The Norwegian News Agency included no species examples in their general text on the Red List, while in the text on climate change several examples were included. Even when species such as elm and ash, which are not threatened by climate change but by new diseases, were used as examples, climate change was presented as the cause of such new diseases: "expected to grow worse, since many new species can settle in Norway when it becomes warmer" (Føli 2015). Through the examples, therefore, it is not only the future that is reduced to climate change. Environmental problem such as biodiversity loss and the transfer of new diseases are turned into effects of climate change rather than separate, but connected, problems. To let all the examples in a text point to climate change is a powerful way of defining the outside world, and as such reduce it.

A closed tale − and an open one: ptarmigans all over

"To make an example of an object is to account for only one limited aspect of that object," John Lyons writes (1989: 34). In her speech, the Minister's exemplary tale of the cuckoo presents one relationship between the cuckoo and humans, limiting the cuckoo to its role as a granter of wishes. However, this is only effective insofar as the reader or audience does not bring in his or her own knowledge and associations. The cuckoo is connected to a large number of traditional beliefs, folk medicine, omens and magic in various cultures, that the reader or audience might be aware of, and draw into the story by association (Tillhagen 1978: 157). Although there is magic in the story of the cuckoo as a granter of wishes, the magic connected with the cuckoo in folklore is more often negative or dangerous, representing the bird as a sign of death or sorrow, or with the ability to bewitch people (Tillhagen 1978: 157–177, Kostveit 2000: 47–48). In some places, hearing the first cuckoo in spring before breakfast meant that accident and illness would strike for the rest of the year, while in other places hearing the cuckoo crow before the trees had budded meant that many unwed women would become pregnant (Kostveit 2000: 47, 34).

The way the Minister presents the cuckoo as an example also leaves out possible relationships between the cuckoo and other species. For instance, there is a close, parasitic relationship between the cuckoo and the meadow pipit (*Anthus pratensis*). In Norway, the majority of cuckoos lay their eggs in the nests of meadow pipits, making the meadow pipits nurture the cuckoo chicks instead of their own (Artsdatabanken 2015a). One of the reasons why the cuckoo has entered the *Norwegian Red List for Species* is because that relationship is changing. The meadow pipit, which is a short distance migrator, has started to migrate earlier in the spring due to higher temperatures, thus, laying its eggs earlier. The cuckoo, as a long-distance migrator, spends the winter in North Africa, and its timing is not sensitive to the rise in spring temperatures in Northern Europe. It still migrates at the same time each year, and more and more often, the meadow pipit's eggs have already hatched when the cuckoo arrives. Good for the meadow pipit, whose offspring survive, bad for the cuckoo. The meadow pipit is not on the *2015 Norwegian Red List for Species*, but has been placed on both the Swedish Red List and on the global IUCN Red List, where it is categorized as near threatened (ArtDatabanken 2015, Artsdatabanken 2015b, Birdlife International 2018). As such, the cuckoo and the meadow pipit are both in decline. However, of the two, only the cuckoo can be used as an example of the *2015 Norwegian Red List for Species* and Norwegian biodiversity loss. Placing a species on a Red List is in itself an action that influences existing relationships between humans and other species, and produces new ones. However, the cuckoo example involves changing human interpretations of the relationships between birds as well. Implicitly, the Minister of Climate and

Environment needs the meadow pipit to host cuckoo eggs in its nest to uphold the magic of her childhood. Thus, to a reader or audience knowing something about the Red List status of meadow pipits in other countries, the Minister's example might instead serve as a reminder of the fact that national Red Lists, although produced as scientifically and objectively as possible, have limitations in scale, and also consequences for the species that are not included.

Despite the number of possible relationships between humans and animals, animals and animals, and humans and climate change that the cuckoo invites, very few, other than the Minister of Climate and Environment, used it as an example when writing about the *2015 Norwegian Red List for Species*. The Secretary General of WWF Norway mentioned it in a series with ptarmigan and mountain hare as examples of species threatened by climate change, and this series was repeated in one local newspaper, but otherwise there was no mention of the cuckoo. Instead, the most commonly used examples from the *2015 Norwegian Red List for Species* were ptarmigans (*Lagopus muta* and *Lagopus lagopus*), which are mentioned in 20 of the 42 newspaper articles, lynx (*Lynx lynx*) which is mentioned in twelve of the articles, and mountain hare (*Lepus timidus*) which is mentioned in ten. The Norwegian Red List was also, in several cases, presented only through numbers. Seven of the newspapers used no examples of species at all. This was also the case in the press release from the Norwegian Biodiversity Information Centre, which presented the *2015 Norwegian Red List for Species* through more than 60 different numbers and percentages, but mentioned no specific animal or plant, nor any specific measures.[4]

The exemplary narratives, of which the ptarmigans are part, vary from newspaper to newspaper. In some articles, ptarmigans are a part of the longer series of red-listed species. This is the case in the texts from WWF Norway and The Norwegian News Agency, where the series points to climate change and the importance of a global agreement. It is also the case in a release from another Norwegian NGO, Friends of the Earth Norway (Naturvernforbundet). Their text, entitled "Climate and Changes in Land Use in Deadly Interaction" contains a large number of examples of animals from the Norwegian Red List:

> Well known bird species such as the willow ptarmigan and rock ptarmigan, the bluethroat, yellowhammer, common house martin, and eider duck are now on the 2015 Red List. Species such as the northern lapwing, common guillemot and puffin are retaining their status as endangered, while, for example, the hen harrier has had its status reduced to endangered. (Ødegaard 2015)

Here, the ptarmigans are part of a group of species that are new to the list, indicating that the problem of biodiversity loss is increasing. Friends of the Earth Norway were cited in eleven newspaper articles. Three of these articles were based closely on the text from their web site. These articles were easily recognizable on their long list of bird examples, mentioning ptarmigans, bluethroat, yellowhammer, common house martin, eider duck and so on (Trønder-Avisa 2015, Theodorsen 2015, Haug 2015). Eight articles used the lynx as example, and presented the Red List through a short interview with a representative from Friends of the Earth Norway stating that the hunting of red-listed species must stop (see for instance Romsbotn 2015).

In the *2015 Norwegian Red List for Species*, three reasons for the decline of the two Norwegian ptarmigan species, willow ptarmigan and rock ptarmigan, are listed: climatic changes, predators and hunting (Artsdatabanken 2015c, 2015d). Articles where ptarmigans are presented as the single example from the *2015 Norwegian Red List for Species*, mostly combine the presentation of the list with discussions on recreational hunting of ptarmigans and management consequences of red-listing the two ptarmigan species (see for instance Dokka 2015, Hallingdølen 2015, Sandholm 2015, Severinsen 2015, Sortlandsavisa 2015). This is not surprising considering that recreational hunting of ptarmigans is widespread in Norway. During the 2016/2017 hunting season, 46 000 persons hunted ptarmigans in Norway, while 28 700 persons reported felling one or more ptarmigans (Steinset & Rundtom 2017).

In one article, entitled "Redlisted and huntable (Rødlista og jaktbar)", in the local paper Troms Folkeblad, a representative from Statskog, the state enterprise responsible for managing state forests and mountain areas, is interviewed (Dokka 2015). He emphasises that climate change and predators are the real problems for the ptarmigans, not recreational hunting. "[W]e expect that climate is one of the main causes", the representative says. "It is very easy to say that these [the decline in ptarmigan populations] are side effects you get because of hunting. But it is dangerous to blame hunting for this decline". On the surface, this article uses the ptarmigan as an example to promote a story of biodiversity loss and climate change similar to the one in the texts from WWF Norway and The Norwegian News Agency. However, although presented through the same species example, the relationship between humans and nature in the examples are very different. In the texts from WWF Norway and The Norwegian News Agency, the ptarmigans are signs of climate change, vulnerable, and therefore our responsibility to protect. In Troms Folkeblad, the ptarmigans are prey and the humans are hunters. Here, ptarmigans represent a service provided by nature, a service that is now in danger of being discontinued. Thus, the global scopes of biodiversity loss and climate change seem distant, almost irrelevant in this article, compared to the possible effects on upcoming ptarmigan hunts. The placing of the ptarmigans on the *2015 Norwegian Red List for Species* indicate a danger of extinction for the ptarmigans, but it is first and foremost perceived as a threat to Norwegian hunting traditions.

Troms Folkeblad is a local newspaper, and the local scope is expressed in a discussion of the difference between local abundance of ptarmigans and the national scope of the Norwegian Red List. The temporal perspectives are also short term. The article does not concern itself with a distant future, where ptarmigans may be extinct, but rather focuses on upcoming seasons.

Presenting something as local, and as part of local practices, increases people's understanding of biodiversity loss as being close to them and their daily lives. References to traditional hunting practices, folklore and childhood experiences are ways of activating feelings and interest. Thus, it is significant that the three species most commonly used as examples in the newspaper articles on the *2015 Norwegian Red List for Species* were species that are subjected to hunting in Norway; ptarmigans and mountain hares through recreational hunting, and the lynx because it kills livestock and domestic reindeer, and are therefore species that many Norwegians relate to in one way or another. At the same time, these practices and experiences are always local in their scope, and as such undermine the understanding of biodiversity loss as part of a global problem. Ptarmigan populations are not even considered on the national level in most of the local newspapers, but as local populations calling for local management strategies. As ptarmigans are only categorized as 'near threatened' on the Red List, and are still a common sight in many parts of Norway, it might be difficult to unite them with the conception of a species on the verge of extinction.

Since the ptarmigans are particular instances of both global climate change and local hunting traditions, and are able to function as examples of both, the articles in these local papers have to juggle and combine the various ideas and spatial scales of biodiversity loss, climate change, hunting traditions, and nature management. As an example, the ptarmigan becomes a focal point for several different conceptions of nature, producing slightly differing stories in different newspapers. As Legagneux et al. (2018) have argued, disagreement and the norm of balanced reporting has contributed to the media coverage of climate change. Therefore, presenting biodiversity loss through examples of species that matter enough to people that they are willing to disagree about them, seems to be a good idea if one wants to be read – whether one is an environmental NGO or a local newspaper.

The ptarmigans are used as examples of global climate change, of birds, of hunting traditions, and of the necessity of local management. They are discussed in web postings by environmental NGOs and presented in national and local newspapers, and although the examples change and turn the biodiversity discourse along the way, they, at least, evoke interest in the *2015 Norwegian Red List* *for Species*. The cuckoo, on the other hand, is not widespread in the material. One important explanation is probably that the cuckoo is of little or no economic value, and that the threats to the species are relatively unspecific. There are no controversial political measures that should or should not be taken, except for climate change measures, which in Norway are largely decided on through cross-party settlements (Båtstrand 2014). Although the cuckoo is connected to human life through various magical practices, these practices do not have direct political implications, neither do they have a large place in the daily lives of most Norwegian newspaper-readers.

Although Zaccai & Adams (2012) and Legagneux et al. (2018) studied differences in media coverage between climate change and biodiversity, many of the differences they point out between the two discourses can also be seen among the examples in this study – where some species from the Red List get a lot more media coverage than others. The species that are reproduced as examples in various mass media are species that are of daily concern, that are connected to political matters, and that are subject to controversial measures with economic consequences or to public skepticism. However, the fact that examples contain excess information that will always, to a certain degree, be in conflict with the general rule they are supposed to support, presents a danger to the author who wants to make a certain point without being drawn into any controversy. The Minister of Climate and Environment might have chosen the cuckoo as an example because it is uncontroversial, and as such is less likely to be used in new and unexpected ways. The consequence, however, was that her example was not used by anyone else.

Making biodiversity loss visible

This close reading of some of the examples of animals that were used in connection with the *2015 Norwegian Red List for Species* shows that both the choice of species and, more specifically, which of the species' many relationships to portray as part of the exemplary narrative, is crucial to the conceptions of biodiversity loss and of nature that are conveyed to the public. The Minister of Climate and Environment's example of the cuckoo portrays biodiversity loss through breaches and bonds between past and present, childhood and adulthood, and between humans and nature. While Doyle (2011: 3) has criticized the use of nature in the mediation of climate change, for making climate change an environmental issue as opposed to an issue concerning humans and culture, and thus distant and difficult to engage with, this example shows that animal examples can just as well highlight the cultural consequences of an environmental problem as the natural consequences.

Through their way of both exceeding and reducing the general statement they are meant to illustrate, the examples do not only make biodiversity loss visible.

While bringing some ideas about biodiversity loss to the foreground, they at the same time obscure others. The Minister's example conveys the notion of a lost paradise, but mostly ignores the future. It also makes biodiversity loss seem national or local. The story of springtime and cuckoo folklore is limited both temporally and geographically. The exemplary tales used by WWF Norway and The Norwegian News Agency, on the other hand, are global and political in scope, turning biodiversity loss into global climate change, with the Paris Agreement as the solution to the problem. They point toward biodiversity loss as a future effect of climate change. However, their examples hide present pressures on biodiversity, such as changes in land use, and fail to activate specific relationships between humans and endangered species, or show the direct effects of biodiversity loss on human practices. The large number of newspapers choosing exemplary narratives that connected biodiversity loss with hunting stressed the short term and local effects of the Red List on hunting management, related biodiversity loss closely to human practices, and presented nature in a resource perspective. The local and short term perspective of the exemplary tales, however, obscured the global aspects and longer temporalities that are usually present in the idea of a massive biodiversity loss, as well as a less anthropocentric view of nature.

The Minister of Climate and Environment and her cuckoo did not seem to play any significant role in the way biodiversity loss was presented in Norwegian mass media. The environmental NGOs, however, played a very important role in providing both example species and exemplary narratives for the journalists to use. The newspapers' reproduction of animal examples from the environmental organizations highlights a certain degree of 'churnalism' in the Norwegian public. However, although the most commonly used examples of red-listed species in the newspaper articles were ptarmigans - an example that was used by the WWF Norway as an example of a species threatened by climate change - the ptarmigans did not stay the same throughout the material. Ptarmigans were used as examples of both newcomers, hunted species, and bad management, and as such they rather offered the excess necessary for the authors of newspapers articles to create what they considered the most relevant exemplary narratives, producing their own local stories and turning the biodiversity discourse in different directions - often incorporating several conceptions of biodiversity into a single newspaper article: From dear and vulnerable species that have to be protected, to biodiversity as a resource for human harvesting, and from global climate change to local management.

The case of the *2015 Norwegian Red List for Species* shows that examples bring other types of knowledge into the discourse on biodiversity loss, than the numerical knowledge present in the Red List itself. In the Minister of Climate and Environment's speech, the need for knowledge was stated explicitly, and although the focus on knowledge in the speech was probably meant as a reference to the work that had been done in compiling the Red List, and the large number of species that had been evaluated, it still highlighted the fact that her example of the cuckoo produced another kind of knowledge necessary for biodiversity loss to be made visible - a knowledge that is not possible to provide through numbers. It is probably correct that climate change is better defined as a policy issue than biodiversity loss, and as such is easier to communicate. Still, there seem to be numerous possibilities of communicating biodiversity loss through examples in ways that makes the problem real and relatable to people. For instance, by using species examples to combine the global and the local, wisdom and knowledge, nostalgia for the past, and hope for the future. The essential point is just choosing the right example.

Marit Ruge Bjærke is a postdoctoral research fellow in Cultural Studies at the Department of Archaeology, History, Cultural Studies and Religion, University of Bergen. Her research interests lie within the environmental humanities, with a focus on biodiversity loss and climate change. Bjærke is currently part of the research project 'The Future is Now: Temporality and exemplarity in climate change discourses'. E-mail: marit.r.bjerke@uib.no

Acknowledgements
I acknowledge support from the Research Council of Norway to The Future is Now - Temporality and exemplarity in climate change discourses, project number 268094. I would like to thank Senior Advisor Snorre Henriksen at the Norwegian Biodiversity Information Centre for valuable information on the launching of the 2015 Norwegian Red List for Species. I would also like to thank Anne Eriksen, Kyrre Kverndokk, Henrik H. Svensen, John Ødemark, Lone Ree Milkær, Camilla Asplund Ingemark, Diane Goldstein, and Hall Bjørnstad for stimulating discussions about climate change exemplarity.

Notes

[1]The first IUCN Red Lists were published in 1964. The first Norwegian Red List based on IUCN criteria was published in 2006. However, Norwegian Red Lists based on other sets of criteria than those of IUCN have existed since 1984. See Norwegian Environment Agency, *Truede arter [Threatened species]*: http://www.miljostatus.no/Tema/Naturmangfold/Arter/Truede-arter/ (accessed 16/2/2018).
[2]The citation "from the hillside a cuckoo saying cuckoo" is from the Norwegian children's song "I Went for a Walk on the Trail", where the first verse goes like this: "I went for a walk on the trail, seeking the calm of the forest. Then I heard from the hillside,

a cuckoo saying cuckoo. Cuckoo, cuckoo, cuckocurucuckoo. Cuckoo, cuckoo, cuckocurucuckoo".

[3]COP 21 lasted from 30 November to 12 December 2015 and resulted in the Paris Agreement.

[4]Based on a copy of the press release provided by senior advisor Snorre Henriksen from The Norwegian Biodiversity Information Centre (personal communication September 2017). The organization's web site was restructured in 2016, and the original press release is no longer accessible from artsdatabanken.no.

References

Adam, Barbara (1998): *Timescapes of Modernity: the Environment and Invisible Hazards,* London, UK: Routledge.

Anderson, Ben (2010): "Preemption, Precaution, Preparedness: Anticipatory Action and Future Geographies," *Progress in human geography,* 34:6, 777–798.

ArtDatabanken (2015): "*Anthus pratensis* Ängspiplärka," *ArtFakta ArtDatabanken SLU:* https://artfakta.artdatabanken.se/taxon/102983 (accessed: 11/3/2019)

Artsdatabanken (2015a): "*Cuculus canorus* Linnaeus, 1758," *Norsk Rødliste for arter:* https://artsdatabanken.no/Rodliste2015/rodliste2015/Norge/4040 (accessed: 15/2/2019)

Artsdatabanken (2015b): "*Anthus pratensis* (Linnaeus, 1758)," *Norsk Rødliste for arter:* https://artsdatabanken.no/Rodliste2015/rodliste2015/Norge/4322 (accessed 11/3/2019)

Artsdatabanken (2015c): "*Lagopus muta* (Montin, 1781)," *Norsk Rødliste for arter:* https://artsdatabanken.no/Rodliste2015/rodliste2015/Norge/4070 (accessed 25/2/2019)

Artsdatabanken (2015d): "*Lagopus lagopus* (Linnaeus, 1758)," *Norsk Rødliste for arter:* https://artsdatabanken.no/Rodliste2015/rodliste2015/Norge/4066 (accessed 25/2/2019)

BirdLife International 2018: "*Anthus pratensis*," *The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species 2018:* http://dx.doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.UK.2018-2.RLTS.T22718556A131986875.en (accessed 11/3/2019).

Braverman, Irus (2017): "Anticipating Endangerment: The Biopolitics of Threatened Species Lists," *Biosocieties,* 12:1, 132–157.

Båtstrand, Sondre (2014): "Giving Content to New Politics: From Broad Hypothesis to Empirical Analysis Using Norwegian Manifesto Data on Climate Change," *Party Politics*, 20:6, 930–939.

Dokka, Morten (2015): "Rødlista og jaktbar [Redlisted and Huntable]," *Troms Folkeblad,* 23 November 2015.

Doyle, Julie (2011): *Mediating Climate Change,* Farnham: Ashgate.

Eriksen, Anne, Ellen Krefting & Anne Beate Rønning (eds) (2012): *Eksempelets makt: Kjønn, representasjon og autoritet fra antikken til i dag* [The Power of Example: Gender, Representation, and Authority from Antiquity to Today], Oslo: Scandinavian Academic Press.

Fisher, James, Noel Simon & Jack Vincent (1969). *The Red Book: Wildlife in danger.* London: Collins.

Føli, Are (2015): "Klimaendringene truer flere norske arter [Climate Changes Threaten more Norwegian Species]," *Norsk telegrambyrå (NTB)*, 18 November 2015.

Gelley, Alexander (ed.) (1995): *Unruly Examples: On the Rhetoric of Exemplarity,* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Hallingdølen (2015): "Nær truede ryper [Near Threatened Ptarmigans]," *Halling-*

dølen, 28 November 2015.

Haug, Isabell (2015): "Rødlista 2015: Rypa er utrydningstruet [2015 Red List: the Ptarmigan is Threatened by Extinction]," *Framtid i Nord*, 19 November 2015.

Heise, Ursula (2008): *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet: the Environmental Imagination of the Global*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Heise, Ursula (2016): *Imagining Extinctions: the Cultural Meanings of Endangered Species,* Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.

Hulme, Mike (2011): "Reducing the Future to Climate. A Story of Climate Determinism and Reductionism," *Osiris,* 26:1, 245–266.

International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) (2019): *The IUCN Red List of threatened species:* http://www.iucnredlist.org/ (accessed 12/11/2019).

International Union for the Protection of Nature (1954): *Les Fossiles de Demain: Treize Mammifères Menacé d'Extinction,* Brussels: IUPN.

Kostveit, Åsta Østmoe (2000): *Fuglen i folkekulturen* [The Bird in Vernacular Culture], Oslo: Landbruksforlaget.

Kverndokk, Kyrre (In press): "Talking about Your Generation: 'Our Children' as a Trope in Climate Change Discourse," *Ethnologia Europaea*.

Legagneux, Pierre, Nicolas Casajus, Kevin Cazelles, Clément Chevallier, Marion Chevrinais, Lorelei Guéry, Claire Jacquet, Mikael Jaffré, Marie-José Naud, Fanny Noisette, Pascale Ropars, Steve Vissault, Philippe Archambault, Joel Bêty, Dominique Berteaux & Dominique Gravel (2018): "Our House Is Burning: Discrepancy in Climate Change vs. Biodiversity Coverage in the Media as Compared to Scientific Literature," *Frontiers in Ecology and Evolution* 5, 1–6.

Lyons, John D. (1989): *Exemplum: the Rhetoric of Example in Early Modern France and Italy,* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Mazor, Tessa, Christopher Doropoulos, Florian Schwarzmueller, Daniel W. Gladish, Nagalingam Kumaran, Katharina Merkel, Moreno Di Marco & Vesna Gagic (2018): "Global Mismatch of Policy and Research on Drivers of Biodiversity Loss," *Nature ecology & evolution*, 2:7, 1071–1074.

Norwegian Biodiversity Information Centre (2018): *Norwegian Red List for Species*: https://www.biodiversity.no/Pages/135380/Norwegian_Red_List_for_Species (accessed 16/2/2019).

Romsbotn, Brit (2015): "Står i fare for å bli utrydda [In Danger of Becoming Extinct]," *Jærbladet*, 20 November 2015.

Sandholm, Jarl Gunnar (2015): "Rypa på rødlista [The Ptarmigan on the Red List]," *Helgelendingen*, 19 November 2015.

Severinsen, Jan Eskil (2015): "Varsellys for rypa [Warning Light for the Ptarmigan]," *Avisa Nordland*, 19 November 2015.

Sheldon, Rebekah (2016): *The Child to Come: Life after the Human Catastrophe,* Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press.

Smart, Jane, Craig Hilton-Taylor & Russell A. Mittermeier (2014): *The IUCN Red List: 50 Years of Conservation,* Washington D.C.: Cemex and Earth in Focus.

Sortlandsavisa (2015): "Nå er rypa truet [Now the Ptarmigan is Threatened]," *Sortlandsavisa*, 19 November 2015.

Steinset, Trond A. & Terje Olav Rundtom (2017): "Færre ryper i sikte [Fewer Ptarmigans in Sight]," *Statistics Norway*, 7 September 2017: https://www.ssb.no/jord-skog-jakt-og-fiskeri/artikler-og-publikasjoner/faerre-ryper-i-sikte (accessed 25/2/2019)

Sundtoft, Tine (2015): "Vi trenger kunnskap for å ta riktige beslutninger [We Need Knowledge to Make the Right Decisions]," *Ministry of Climate and Environment*, 18 November 2015: https://www.regjeringen.no/no/aktuelt/artsdatabanken/id2461954/ (accessed 06/03/2019).

Theodorsen, Siri W. (2015): "Nye arter trues nå av utryddelse [New Species Now

Threatened by Extinction],” *Fosna-Folket*, 19 November 2015.
Tillhagen, Carl-Herman (1978): *Fåglarna i folktron* [The Birds in Folklore], Stockholm: LTs förlag.
Trønder-Avisa (2015): “Rype og gaupe på rødlista [Ptarmigan and Lynx on the Red List],” *Trønder-Avisa*, 19 November 2015.
van Dooren, Thom (2014): *Flight Ways: Life and Loss at the Edge of Extinction,* New York: Columbia University Press.
Veríssimo, Diogo, Douglas C. MacMillan, Robert J. Smith, Jennifer Crees & Zoe G. Davies (2014): “Has Climate Change Taken Prominence over Biodiversity Conservation?” *BioScience*, 64:7, 625–629.
Vincent, Jack & Simon Noel (1966): *Red data book. Volume 2. Aves*, Morges, Switzerland: IUCN.
Whyte, Kyle Powys (2013): “On the Role of Traditional Ecological Knowledge as a Collaborative Concept: a Philosophical Study,” *Ecological Processes,* 2:7.
Whyte, Kyle (2017): “Indigenous Climate Change Studies: Indigenizing Futures, Decolonizing the Anthropocene,” *English Language Notes*, 55:1-2, 153–162.
WWF Norway (2015): “Ny rødliste for truede arter – 172 arter i Norge trues av klimaendringer [New Red List for Threatened Species – 172 Species in Norway are Threatened by Climate Change],” *WWF Norway*, 18 November 2015.
Young, Juliette C., Kerry A. Waylen, Simo Sarkki, Steve Albon, Ian Bainbridge, Estelle Balian, James Davidson, David Edwards, Roddy Fairley, Ceri Margerison, Davy McCracken, Roger Owen, Christopher P. Quine, Charles Stewart-Roper, Des Thompson, Rob Tinch, Sybille Van den Hove & Allan Watt (2014): “Improving the Science-Policy Dialogue to Meet the Challenges of Biodiversity Conservation: Having Conversations Rather than Talking at One-Another,” *Biodiversity and Conservation,* 23:2, 387–404.
Zaccai, Edwin & William Adams (2012): “How Far are Biodiversity Loss and Climate Change Similar as Policy Issues?” *Environment, Development and Sustainability*, 14:4, 557–571.
Ødegaard, Martin (2015): “Klima og arealinngrep i dødelig samspill [Climate and Changes in Land Use in Deadly Interaction],” *Friends of the Earth Norway*, 18 November 2015: https://naturvernforbundet.no/naturvern/vern_av_arter/klima-og-arealinngrep-i-dodelig-samspill-article34363-152.html (accessed 29/8/2017).
Ødemark, John (2015): “Avatar in the Amazon – Narratives of Cultural Conversion and Environmental Salvation between Cultural Theory and Popular Culture,” *Culture Unbound: Journal of Current Cultural Research*, 7:3, 455–478.

Culture Unbound
Journal of Current Cultural Research

Response: Let This Be an Example: Three Remarks on a Thematic Cluster about Climate Change Exemplarity

By Hall Bjørnstad

This thematic section of *Culture Unbound* brings together five articles which in very different ways invite us to reflect on the importance of examples in the discourse on climate change. At first glance, such an invitation might be surprising, if not puzzling. Anthropogenic climate change is something radically unprecedented, so it would seem counter-intuitive to approach it through the discussion of prior examples. Furthermore, the analytical vocabulary which is already mobilized in the title of the section (exemplarity) and the introduction (exemplification) may seem alien to most readers. Do these terms actually serve as precise conceptual tools in the analysis? Indeed, is there really something like an operative theory of examples? To my mind, the five articles gathered here are very successful in dispelling such an initial reticence. Each piece is rich and thought-provoking on its own terms. Moreover, taken together, these articles help us appreciate the extent to which the use of examples is an unexpected and promising index for mapping how climate change discourse navigates between effect and affect, between illustration and ideal, between facts and values, between science and politics. In so doing, this thematic section also provides tools for better grasping the power of examples as such, which should be of methodological interest for other fields of study.

In what follows, I will briefly comment on three aspects that I not only found particularly intriguing, but which are illuminated differently according to the shifting perspectives of the case studies in the articles. First, the surprising emphasis on the *archive* in certain articles; second, the position of exemplarity and exemplification between theory and practice; and third, the meaning of the deep desire for potent examples of climate change in the wider society, which will, in closing, bring me back to the title of my response.

Keywords: climate change, exemplarity.

Bjørnstad, Hall : "Response: Let This Be an Example: Three Remarks on a Thematic Cluster about Climate Change Exemplarity", *Culture Unbound*, Volume 11, issue 3–4, 2019: 415–420. Published by Linköping University Electronic Press: http://www.cultureunbound.ep.liu.se

1. An archive from the deep past

None of the articles in the volume contests that present-day anthropogenic climate change is radically unprecedented. All the same, three of them explore cases where examples mobilized in climate change discourse are gathered from archives with roots in a remote past. This is first of all a central element in John Ødemark's close analysis of the momentous 1987 UN report *Our Common Future*, which still informs the current UN approach to sustainable development. If sustainable development is more than an oxymoron, it is through the "living example of sustainable living" provided by what the report terms "indigenous and tribal peoples." As such, their presence supplements a lack in the actual historical archive, a presence of the deep past in the present. We meet another pre-historic archive but with a very different temporality in Henrik H. Svensen, Marit Ruge Bjærke and Kyrre Kverndokk's exploration of how a period of rapid global warming 56 million years ago, the so-called Paleocene-Eocene Thermal Maximum (PETM), is used as an example related to our current predicament across different scientific genres. Scientifically speaking, the "sedimentary archive" of the PETM yields conclusions too uncertain to inform actual climate change modelling, yet, as the authors demonstrate, when considered as an example, it is still found to be both qualitatively and morally significant. Here, too, the archive from the deep past seems to speak with an unexpected authority. The third article that explores a case where examples from the remote past carry considerable argumentative authority in discussions of climate change differs insofar as the case itself is situated in the past. More specifically, Anne Eriksen explores a baffling eighteenth-century proposal of ways in which humans could improve the climate in Norway. The author of the 1758 proposal, Gerhard Schøning was himself a historian, and the argument relies almost entirely on examples from ancient Greek and Roman history. In the context of our discussion here, Schøning's proposal is noteworthy as the most striking example of the power of example: the deforestation of a whole country based on the authority of an historical archive dating two thousand years back.

How could such an argument, about such radical action based on such remote sources, possibly be convincing? The question is all the more important since taken as a whole, this thematic section on climate change exemplarity seems to suggest that a weaker version of the same argument is at play elsewhere, starting with the two other cases just mentioned where inference for the present is made on the basis of examples taken from the archive of a deep past. As the authors of the article on the exemplarity of the PETM suggest, there are formal similarities between their case and "the early modern *historia magistra vitae* topos." History was considered the teacher of life, or in Eriksen's formulation: "History consisted of examples to learn from and models to follow." This was an age before the modern conception of progress, in which the future was expected to resemble the past. A premodern culture of exemplarity which is no longer ours and in which the archive from the past imposed itself with an authority, a normative magisterial force difficult for us to understand today. In my reading, this difficulty and this effort to understand are at the core of the enterprise of the five articles taken as a whole. Therefore, while at the outset Eriksen's case study of eighteenth-century climate change exemplarity might seem like an outlier, it is in reality the linchpin of the whole project, itself a mirror from the past, showing us today how the past used to be a mirror for the present.

2. Towards a theory of examples?

The inclusion of examples in discourse is a way of buttressing what we are saying. Obviously, this is the case even in the articles gathered in this volume (and in my response). However, a different means to the same end, particularly attractive in academic discourse, is the practice of referring to established theory. Whereas the example is unruly practice, theory nails downs aspects of truth in affirmative observations. Or, at least, so we like to think. *But is there, can there be a theory of examples?* The articles under consideration here seem to indicate that this is the case. At crucial moments throughout, they mention "example theory" or "theories of exemplarity." Furthermore, there are a couple of references to – and even a few key quotations from – such a "theory" that circulate between the articles, as a common *doxa*, a stable ground on which to build. However, as somebody who has worked extensively on issues related to early modern exemplarity myself, I would respectfully surmise that this is not exactly a theory that provides a common foundation. Rather, these quotations are illuminating intuitions, flashes of insight in need of further development; starting points for reflection, rather than established theory. One could even wonder to what extent the two scholars who are the most often quoted (Alexander Gelley and John D. Lyons) had theoretical ambitions in their exploration of the workings of exemplarity. That would of course depend on what one means by *theory*, but it would hardly be a theory of any synthesizing, systematizing kind, with the pretention of having fully explained and exhausted the phenomenon. It is significant in this respect that both Gelley and Lyons are scholars informed by post-structuralist thought and so-called "critical theory." In their actual analysis of discourse they are more "critical" than "theoretical," in the sense that they are drawn towards moments where examples become "unruly" (the title of the important collective volume edited by Gelley) and instances that confirm Montaigne's famous assertion that "all examples are lame" (expertly analyzed by John Lyons). If there is a theory of examples and of exemplarity, it lies elsewhere.

However, if what I am saying here is a critique of the methodological approach of the volume, the weakness I am pointing out is the quite minor sin of exceeding humility. In fact, the most sophisticated and comprehensive discussion of the power of example that I know of is written not by Gelley or Lyons, but by Anne Eriksen et al, although the text, a book chapter entitled quite simply "Eksemplets makt" [the power of example], is unfortunately not yet available in English. In the absence of an English version of this crucial piece, the work performed collectively by the six texts in the present volume (including the introduction) is among the most important contributions – not exactly to a theory of the use of examples, but towards a better understanding of the way examples worked and didn't work in the past and still today. This is particularly the case with the discussion of the exemplarity of the PETM in the article by Svenden, Bjærke and Kverndokk, and Eriksen's discussion of Schøning's astonishing project, as referred to above, but also with many other instances in the volume.

3. Exemplifying climate change, now

The two articles that most directly and literally explore climate change exemplarity in contemporary debates are the single-authored pieces by Bjærke (on species extinction) and Kverndokk (on extreme weather). They are quite different in orientation from the three other articles in that they consider the process of exemplifying climate change in the present while looking towards the future. Rather than examples that serve to make the past present, they study examples whose power comes from evoking the presence of the future.

Here, it is worth taking a step back to recall the radical need for exemplification in climate change discourse. As the editors remind us in the introduction, climate change as such is not directly observable. Therefore, the mediation that would enable the passage from "silent" scientific numbers to more widely accessible narratives relies on a process of visualization, concretization, manifestation. The perceived urgency of the situation calls for a tangible and striking example, whereas scientific facts remain abstract and remote. An example that not only stands *for* climate change, but which stands *out*, and spectacularly so, with the potential to capture the imagination of a wide array of concerned citizens. This is very much the case in the two situations studied here. In fact, when extreme weather (Kverndokk) or species extinction (Bjærke) are mobilized as examples of climate change, they risk working too well. In other words, as expressed in the title of the two articles: these examples certainly make the invisible visible, even extremely visible, but in the process exemplification too risks running amok. In the specific materials analyzed, the authors identify a tendency in mass media coverage to diagnose climate change as the culprit too quickly, at the risk of erasing local differences and complexity. This exemplification is much more than *mere* examples, in the sense of illustrations, or more or less random samples. Epistemologically speaking, it does not lead to scientific proof, but rather to examples that themselves take part in shaping the cultural meaning of climate change. These examples are not science, but, in a certain sense, they are *truer* than science, as warnings about things to come. Present-day loss and destruction evoking a nightmarish apocalyptic scenario of much worse catastrophes that lie ahead.

* * *

There is a duality in the term *example* itself which allows for the conceptual richness explored here in terms of exemplification and exemplarity. The example can be, on the one hand, a plain illustration, a sample, one of many in a series, but, on the other hand, also something marked as exemplary and worthy of imitation. As such, it brings together fact and value, knowledge and politics in a way which is difficult to nail down. However, in these scholarly discussions of the workings of examples, there is a negative meaning which always resonates but is never made explicit, probably because it would complicate the unruly discussion even further. Here is the fourth definition of *example* in the *Oxford English Dictionary*: "An act or instance of punishment or retribution intended to deter others from committing the act for which the punishment or retribution is inflicted; (also) a person whose fate may serve as a warning to others against a particular act, course of action, etc. Also as a mass noun: warning, deterrent." The typical dry and understated language of a modern dictionary (passive voice, laconic tone, absence of agency) contrasts well with the somber meaning. For now, the force is held back, as is this negative meaning itself in the title "climate change exemplarity," hidden by the uplifting, edifying lilt of "exemplarity." But only for so long. The spectacular example of climate change returns. A punishment that mankind brought upon itself. Nature emitting one last warning or deterrent in the form of the pre-apocalyptic catastrophe which is ours: *Let this be an example.*

Hall Bjørnstad is Associate Professor of French at Indiana University Bloomington, where he also directs the interdisciplinary Renaissance Studies Program. He is the author of *Créature sans créateur: Pour une anthropologie baroque dans les "Pensées" de Pascal* (Presses de l'Universite Laval, 2010; Hermann Éditeurs, 2013); co-editor, with Helge Jordheim and Anne Régent-Susini, of *Universal History and the Making of the Global* (Routledge, 2018), co-editor, with Katherine Ibbett, of *Walter Benjamin's Hypothetical French Trauerspiel* (*Yale French Studies* vol. 124, 2014); and the editor of *Borrowed Feathers: Plagiarism and the Limits of Imitation in Early Modern Europe* (Oslo, 2008). He is currently finishing a book project that explores changing expressions of royal exemplarity in Early Modern France.

References

Eriksen, Anne, Ellen Krefting and Anne Beate Rønning (2012): "Eksemplets makt," Anne Eriksen, Ellen Krefting and Anne Beate Rønning (eds.): *Eksempelets makt: Kjønn, representasjon og autoritet fra antikken til i dag.* Oslo: Scandinavian Academic Press, 9–38.

Gelley, Alexander (1995): "Introduction," Alexander Gelley (ed.): *Unruly Examples: On the Rhetoric of Exemplarity.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1–24.

Lyons, John D. (1989): *Exemplum: The Rhetoric of Example in Early Modern France and Italy.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Oxford English Dictionary. <www.oed.com> (accessed 1/4/20).

Culture Unbound
Journal of Current Cultural Research

Thrift Television: Narratives of Enduring, Saving, and Living Well. A Thematic Introduction.

By Alexa Färber & Aneta Podkalicka

Abstract

Concepts of thrift and dwelling are central to how societies live together. Thrift refers to a complex and morally-loaded set of economic practices that people engage with out of necessity, choice, or both. Whilst home-making or dwelling refers to social integration and self-representation. The ways in which social realms of thrift and dwelling relate to each other are historically and culturally specific, and media representations are an important intersection for reflecting and putting forward specific 'imaginaries' of thrift and dwelling. In this special issue, depictions of thrift in popular television are treated inclusively and span makeover reality TV, comedy-drama and documentaries, and target different national and international audiences. Contributions by researchers from the US, France, Germany and Australia examine how 'appropriate' ways of dwelling, involving thrift are negotiated in situations marked by material scarcity, precarity and aspirational lifestyles. These include: negotiating the harsh realities of housing in expensive cities such as New York in *Insecure* or *Broad City* (Perkins; Kanai & Dobson), make-over through decluttering and controlling debt in *Tidying Up with Marie Kondo* (Ouellette), *Life or Debt* and *Raus aus den Schulden* (Meyer), and are linked to specific historical and social circumstances in different national contexts. Suburban areas of post-war France are represented in 1967–1981 TV documentaries (Overney), gentrified British rural areas in *Midsomer Murders* (Zahlmann) and post-recessional New York City after the 2007–8 Global Financial Crisis (GFC) in *Broad City*. Drawing on recent thrift scholarship and analyses of televised thrift in this special issue, we demonstrate how thrift and dwelling are articulated largely as a middle-class concern and a disciplining discourse. Positive incidents of thrift are also revealed for example, in the comedy form, environmental and DIY practices and female voice in French post-war women's documentaries. In other discussions there is scepticism over the possibilities for protagonists to self-fashion themselves within the system of television series. This raises the question of whether alternative forms of imagining subjectivities and social relations in neo-liberal economies of dwelling can occur in entertainment television, or whether thrift imagined as what we call 'televised endurance' merely serves to reproduce the status quo as an irreversible condition.

Keywords: Thrift, television, thriving, home, austerity, TV series, dwelling, endurance

Färber, Alexa & Aneta Podkalicka: "Thrift Television: Narratives of Enduring, Saving, and Living Well. A Thematic Introduction." *Culture Unbound*, Volume 11, issue 3–4, 2019: 421–442. Published by Linköping University Electronic Press: http://www.culture-unbound.ep.liu.se

Introduction

Thrift is no longer a concept associated with the distant past from post-war welfare countries in the global North. The 2008 Global Financial Crisis (GFC) and its lingering economic and social effects ensured that ideas of thrift, broadly defined as considerate, non-wasteful consumption behaviour, have re-entered the political discourse and everyday vernacular. Demands of everyday economising or aspirations of middle-class consumers who balance expenditure with moral values might not always evoke the concept of 'thrift'. Nonetheless these notions are addressed, especially in recurrent accounts related to austerity measures introduced in many countries in the wake of the economic downturn (Basu, Schifferes & Knowles 2018; Triliva, Varvantakis & Dafermos 2015), as well as in lifestyle politics. Although today's media discourse is dominated by the current commentaries on how to save resources in the context of ecological crisis, thrift looms large in media discussions about stagnating wages or growing wealth disparities in advanced Western economies such as the UK or Australia. For example, a Guardian article about 2019 OECD findings, reported that intergenerational inequalities existed, particularly millennials who experienced diminished life opportunities compared with baby boomers, and the general shrinking of the middle-class, appeared 'increasingly like a boat in rocky waters' (Gurría in Partington 2019).

Existing academic literature has examined the role of mainstream media in framing and normalising the discourses of 'austerity' (Basu, Schifferes & Knowles 2018; Schlosberg 2016), and documented specifically how fictional and reality television responded to the downturn by labelling this moment and media sub-set as 'austerity media' (Petro 2016). There are studies too that have discussed the coverage of the GFC and austerity in the broadcast news and press (e.g. Berry 2016 in the UK), and generally the gendered impacts of 'recessionary culture' on media content (Negra & Tasker 2014). Furthermore, diverse scholarship has investigated a broad variety of thrift applications in popular media ranging from online forums designed to help debters (Stanley, Deville & Montgomerie 2016) to TV make-over tips for aspiring on-a-budget renovators (Rosenberg 2008). Media as a site for reflecting and shaping the discourse of thrift, and generally consumption, reveal the tension between necessity and lifestyle choices, and the ways thrift is being re-worked in performative ways.

In this thematic introduction, we seek to make sense of media representations of thrift inclusively and over a long-term period by including examples of documentaries broadcast in the post-war period. These examples sit alongside long-running drama series from the 1990s and recent lifestyle TV programing which target different national and international audience markets. This approach decouples studies of thrift from the immediate context of the 2008 GFC, which much of the literature centres on, while continuing to insist on the cultural specificity and normativity of those representations. Everyday thrift practices and home-making are pursued through interdisciplinary exploration and textual analyses of different popular television series to examine how 'appropriate' ways of dwelling are negotiated in varied television formats. Although the majority of contributions focus on contemporary examples such as scripted reality programs showcasing tips for debt-counsellors (Meyer, *Life or Debt*), lifestyle shows on home management and decluttering practices (Ouellette, *Tidying Up with Marie Kondo*), or American women dramedies about the dynamics of thriving in large cities (Perkins, *Insecure*, *Girls*; Kanai & Dobson, *Broad City*), the discussion is grounded historically through French televised documentaries from the 1960s-70s (Overney), and long-standing British crime series such as *Midsomer Murders* (Zahlmann).

What cuts across the diversity of how thrift is represented and made meaningful is the inherent tension between choice and necessity and moral reverberances that define the concept. Thrifty practices of dwelling may be encouraged as a morally-loaded ambition to save, for instance, natural resources for future generations or as a necessary form of economising when on a tight budget. This speaks to the theoretisation of thrift as an inclusive concept denoting 'a compound practice of economic behaviour and cultural lifestyle' (Podkalicka & Potts 2014: 3). Thrift, as the contributions in this special issue show, is also understood as practised at different and intertwined spaces or scales. The domestic and public spaces refer to a practice that performatively articulates social relations vis-a-vis the neo-liberal consumer society.

Our contribution in this thematic introduction is three-fold. Firstly we situate thrift in relation to the existing scholarship on austerity, media and dwelling, and argue the value of focusing on the cultural logic of television as a useful analytic site for examining thrift as a social practice in the pursuit of the 'good life' (Lehtonen & Pantzar 2002: 228), anchored within the moral economies in 'thrift/thriving' (Yates & Hunter 2011). In our account, we identify four aspects of thrift as present in the literature: thrift as an individual technique of subject formation; thrift as a home-making/house-keeping practice; thrift as a spatial practice organising the urban; and thrift addressing the city as a whole, i.e. as a social entity at a specific time and space. This grouping helps organise the recent thrift literature, leading us to define a specific focus on the concept of 'endurance' as attached to thrift.

Secondly, drawing on the contributions in this special issue, we discuss cultural narratives of thrift across different TV programs, including those that proceed the 'moment' of 'austerity' or 'recessionary media' (Petro 2016; Hamad 2014; McElroy 2017) associated with the 2008 GFC. These programs contain narratives of thrift, referencing its inherent ambiguity as an economic practice that expresses morality (lifestyle/choice) and responds to everyday circumstances (need/necessity). By analysing pre-and post-GFC programs collectively, across different TV genres and in different viewing contexts, we adopt an inclusive (if necessarily selective, non-exhaustive) approach to thrift that goes beyond the national frames commonly applied to thrift and also mediated thrift.

Thirdly, we synthesize our observations of thrift in popular television, including the problematization of social relations that mediated thrift practices reveal and the cultural analyses of the social under conditions of neo-liberal austerity. In particular, we draw on the notion of endurance (Berlant 2011, Povinelli 2011) that illustrates representations and experiences of precarious lives in the austerity conjuncture (Bramall, Gilbert & Meadway 2016). The notion of 'endurance' is a productive way of framing thrift and dwelling in TV in relation to lived experiences and everyday politics. However, it is important to note that endurance is linked to thrift in complicated ways. For example, endurance echoes both aspects of thrift as a choice or necessity, yet can also be thought of as a condition resulting from thrift. Accounting for this complicated relationship allows us to speculate about the extent to which TV serials serve as modes of reflection and as a media form which disrupts the conditions of persistent precarity in a globalised, mediated world.

Thrift and dwelling in cultural studies

Thrift predates the post-2008 GFC austerity moment. Many scholars have approached thrift from a longer historical perspective by locating the understanding of thrift in different cultural contexts. For example, studies in sociology and cultural studies have traced thrift back to the Puritan morality in the Early American Republic (Yates & Hunter 2011) or to the very condition of the welfare state's promises in post-war UK (Bramall 2013, 2016). In the UK setting, academic interest in thrift, especially during the post-GFC years, has been notable because of introduced public austerity measures. Rebecca Bramall argues that expectations attached to meritocracy, individual risk-taking with regard to credits/mortgages, and weakening social security created the conditions for current aspirations and ideals of thriving:

> the fate of the welfare state in the austerity conjuncture needs to be situated in a much longer-term destabilization of the post-war social democratic consensus: it has been subject to processes of "unsettling" and "residualisation" over the last four decades, often as a result of neo-liberal reforms that have delivered new and different expectations for the future. (Bramall 2016: 2)

Allied with the contemporary moment, the connections between neoliberalism and austerity, or what De Benedictis and Gill (2016) term 'austerity neoliberalism', have become a new 'discursive formation' (Peck et al 2009). Peck argues that austerity can be understood as a localising project of 'actually existing neoliberalisms' (Peck et al 2009: 54). 'Austerity urbanism', with its insistence on re-arranging the relations between the state, citizens and companies, re-centralise for instance local power in mayors, and highlight the multiplicity of national or municipal austerity measures and civic responses to the global economic and financial crisis.

Against the background of these historically sensitive analyses, which stress structural social and economic conditions, the four aspects of thrift and dwelling that we have identified in thrift studies can be grouped as follows: thrift as an individually articulated technique of subjectivation; thrift as a set of domestic, home-making / house-keeping practices; thrift referring to spatial practices organising the urban; and thrift that addresses the city as a space- and time-specific social entity.

The literature emphasising individualised thrift points to historically and culturally embedded practices of subjectivation, related to 'making savings, economizing, and being parsimonious, frugal or sparing' (Gudeman 2008: 114). Rebecca Coleman, who interpreted data generated post-GFC (including a representative population survey), described the 'new' austerity in terms of 'mood' (2016). Coleman proposed the unsettling idea of 'hopeful pessimism' to describe potential futures related to debt and a non-linear, gendered experience. New austerity as mood is 'an orchestration of affects, feelings and emotions' (Coleman 2016: 90), or as Ben Anderson states referring to 'structures of feeling', it is an 'environment within which people dwell' (Anderson 2014: 105). The notion of austerity as 'mood' highlights an overall atmosphere that offers an affective realm of reference for individualised practices of thrift. How such an affective incorporation of thrift is expressed as a mode of subjectivation has mostly been studied with regard to self-disciplining and self-management techniques.

Inspired by social and technological studies perspectives, Liz McFall (2015) views thrift as a cultural form of morally charged economic activity that is inconceivable without recognising the role that disseminated instruments, guidebooks and deliberate institutional measures play in enabling the practice of thrift and saving. The academic literature is replete with examples of thrift-related instruments, ranging from advice literature of the early modern period in Western Europe addressed specifically to the male head of the household and concerned with moral guidance and 'management' (Rulffes 2013). The literature also includes analogues of bookkeeping techniques as technologies of the modernising self (Maß 2017a, 2017b, Büschel 2011) through to contemporary advisory actors such as debt consultants (Meyer 2012, 2017) and calculative actants such as shopping carts (Cochoy 2008).

In framing thrift as a set of self-disciplining and self-management techniques, cultural studies of thrift have focused on the home as a key site where economic life - and thrifting - is practised and made sense of. The home-based thrift is shaped by a crux of emotions, moral values and market imperatives. For example, sociological studies about household consumption (including energy consumption), have pointed to the strong (class/generation-marked) presence of thrift as a habit, prompting Gordon Waitt and colleagues in Australia to refer to the 'tyranny of thrift' (Waitt et al 2016: 37). Other empirical studies post- 2007–8 recession, have documented shifts in household consumption more generally, such as the rise in necessity-motivated thrift such as secondhand shopping (Murphy 2017). Others have highlighted the deliberate and emancipatory aspects of 'new' or ethical consumption by communities seeking 'alternatives of what it means to live in joy and to a high standard' and in accord with environmental values within consumer cultures (Moraes, Szmigin & Carrigan 2010: 293). In this respect, important contributions have been made by scholars who bring out the individual everyday experiences of austerity (or thrift) into sharp focus. Esther Hitchen argues:

> austerity is more than an economic policy; it is a phenomenon that is understood through individuals' lived and felt realities that are often experienced through fluctuating, non-coherent and sometimes conflicting affective relations that come to shape how people feel and act in the everyday. (Hitchen 2016: 102)

Connections between thrift and dwelling also emerge from the studies of urban spatial practices. Against the backdrop of neoliberal austerity, instances of how to confront inequality or how to avoid waste (of money and other resources) has been captured in social research that highlights 'voluntary work by redistributing, reusing or preserving items within the metabolism of the cities' (Derwanz & Vollmer 2015: 229; Grubbauer 2015). The term "low-budget urbanity" (Färber 2014) denotes the production of urban space through individual everyday saving practices. An example of this is explored in the commuting practice of ticket sharing on German regional inter-city trains, Schönes Wochenende Ticket, which demonstrated the notion of how 'calculative assemblages' encompassed the ambiguity of thrift-as-necessity and thrift-as-lifestyle (Färber & Otto 2016: 37). One specific commuting practice demonstrated the fragile assemblage of a shared single train ticket by an opportunistic and temporarily formed group of train passengers. The group engaged in calculative work and dwelled within a regional transport system. The ticket sharing was about saving money for some and earning money for others, with all involved taking different risks (Färber & Otto 2016: 31). These calculative assemblages illustrate normative ideas of the relationship between self and society (Maß et al 2011, Möhring et al 2011, Scholl 2015). Therefore, the spatial dimensions of thrift relate to urban spaces and to specific socialities. In the case of ticket sharing and the temporary transgressive spatial context, thrift can be interpreted as a necessity based on the scarcity of money which mobilises other resources. One example is the use of social skills and the ability to relate to and get on with strangers to form a temporary group and share a ticket to get to the same destination despite different interests.

Finally, the dimension of the city as a social entity brings forward the term scarcity. With scarcity, thrift and dwelling is addressed when resources are perceived as limited if not absent. In recent years much of the studies of scarcity have integrated the analysis of the self focussing on the characteristics of self-management and discipline (De Vries 2008, Möhring et al 2011, Tauschek & Grewe 2015, Streinzer 2016). One way of investigating these subjectifying techniques of scarcity, beyond their spatial dimension, is the examination of the city as a social entity. The city of Berlin serves as an example to demonstrate how, since the late 1990s to the 2010s, the 'urban imagineering' of the city as a social entity was premised on the tension between the experience of economic crisis and the city's attractiveness. According to Färber, frictions between the two epitomised the dual imaginary of 'economic wasteland' and 'flourishing cultural production' (Färber 2014: 129). Scarcity and affluence were assembled in different ways and embedded in everyday low-budget practices. These practices included do-it-yourself (DIY) cultures, co-housing and entrepreneurial projects. In this specific historical era the city Berlin was imagined and addressed as a social entity through thrift where the ambiguity of thrift was transformed into a place where necessity equalled lifestyle (Stahl 2014).

Drawing on these conceptualisations of thrift, we position thrift as an ambivalent practice of saving, driven by necessity or aspirational lifestyle values. Thrift is an everyday subjectivity-building practice involved in Coleman's (2016) orchestration of affects and emotions, and strongly linked to conflictual moral dimensions. 'Austerity' refers more broadly to a governing or regulatory regime. While everyday practice and today's austerity regimes implicate thrift in what is an interrelated and mutually constitutive type of 'assemblage' (Coleman 2016), in this work we have chosen to emphasise thrift's meaning as related to social positioning and aspirations for a good life. To study thrift in relation to dwelling, as an affective and subjectifying realm, leads us to better understand the contradictory and unequal spatial workings and effects of 'thrifty' home-making. Thrift is not only confined to a domestic space but extends to urban settings and impacts meaning making through images and imaginaries of cities as a social entity. This 'multi -dimensional' perspective takes the ambiguity of thrift and dwelling seriously, considers what holds thrift and dwelling together, and how they are experienced and represented. Furthermore, the notion of endurance is formulated as a question about the agency of thrift in dwelling. We can now turn our attention to how thrift endures, and how enduring thrift becomes televised endurance.

Dwelling and home-making: imagining thrift in television

Television remains an important platform for reflecting and shaping the cultural ideas and discourses about social and political life. This includes values and aspirations that guide consumption and the processes of home-making. As Diane Negra and Yvonne Tasker put it, 'our economic lives are both shaped by and embedded within popular and representational culture' (2014: 1). Representations of thrift and home-making, in various forms and guises, can be traced through the history of television. Representations have ranged from post-war home-economics programs to contemporary drama series set against the backdrop of the Great Depressions of the 1930s (as in *Mildred Pierce*, HBO, 2011), news items on how to save on electricity bills, and property and reality TV programming. Today's television screens around the world, including in web-based permutations, burst with lifestyle shows consumer journeys and practices associated with home-making and ideas of how to lead good lives. Magazine-type shows including instructional DIY/thrift segments (e.g. *The Living Room*, *Better Homes and Gardens*, Australia) to entire series built on the premise of improvement and ingenuity. The broad category of lifestyle and property TV uses narrative, entertainment and drama to pull audiences in and guide viewers through the complex terrain of the real estate market, urban space and the minutiae of everyday choices.

Lifestyle and reality programming is prevalent. In response, significant strands of scholarship within the cultural and media studies field have examined popular television and consumption in relation to home and property entertainment. Studies found that many shows are premised on the educational, normative and value-judgment logic of expert advice fixated onto and integral to depicted transformations and the project of self-making. This logic has been articulated in a recurrent slogan of 'what modern houses should look like', and explored within the critiques of the neo-liberal mandate of individualised entrepreneurship and constant improvement (Meyer 2017: 263-275, Ouellette & Hay 2008).

Reality television is often organised around consumption - or hyperconsumption – 'to create the impression that one can "buy" whatever one wants; a new life, a new future, an entirely new "self"' (Dixon 2007: 52). Therefore, thrift may appear at odds with this popular genre's ethos – especially given excessive amounts of waste displayed or implied in many popular make-over or property TV shows. In US series, *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition*, Wheeler Dixon argues that 'nothing else will suffice to satiate the viewer's appetite for spectacle than to completely destroy the existing home, and then "magically" replace it with a Trump-esque McMansion created in a mere seven days' (Dixon 2007: 53). This wastefulness (in opposition to thrift) is documented by first-hand experience of working on an Australian version of the British make-over *Changing Rooms* program that first screened in Australia in 1995 and aired in a new incarnation on commercial station Channel 10 in 2019. The host of the Australian version, Suzi Wilks, commented:

> we did go back and do a couple of shows about what people had done to their rooms. A lot of the people had reverted back to their old taste. One couple, as we were leaving, were literally pulling out everything and throwing it over the balcony into the front yard. (Wilks cited in Bucklow 2018)

And yet, despite the 'profligate' lifestyle make-over genre, thrift has been identified as a discursive strategy, including in *Changing Rooms*, where participants do work on a limited budget (Rosenberg 2008). Buck Rosenberg argues:

> Most home-related programmes work not within a sphere of uncontrolled consumption but within a discourse of thrift. Hence they promote consumption as a key ingredient for self-construction and upward social mobility, as witnessed by Redden's [work] regarding appropriate consumption. Yet, paradoxically, they also offer suggestions for controlling consumption, for employing thrift. (Rosenberg 2008: 508)

Lifestyle, property television series *Grand Designs* also delves into thrift. The programme, which has aired in the UK since 1999, has portrayed its different dimensions and purposes over time. But notions of thrift seem contradictory on occasion - given the self-referential invocation of 'grandeur' in the series' title and the common instances of excessive consumption and spectacular waste of material, financial and emotional resources that occur when building a dream house (Podkalicka, Milne, Kennedy 2018). In the Australian franchise of the series, broadcast on subscription television Foxtel and also on public service channel Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) (earlier seasons), thrift, to some owner-builders, pertains to economising through making and building as empowering practices that run deep in the family. For example, after Chris Clarke, a carpenter (like his dad), lost his new house in Australia's deadly 2009 bushfires, Chris is shown determined to rebuild on a moderate, approximately 400k (AUD) budget (Season 1 Episode 1 'Bushfire House', Callignee, Victoria). Clarke uses materials that survived the fire and repurposed abandoned or unused ones. The commitment to cost saving, linked to environmental philosophy and the financial situation, drove the project from start to finish, luring the viewer into the aesthetic world of creativity based on respect of history, recycling, DIY and morality of ethical/sustainable build/consumption. In other episodes, thrift was also portrayed as a mundane tactic adopted during the build, out of necessity, when the budget is blown (as it almost always is!) rather than a life philosophy, forcing some protagonists to buy secondhand, draw on friends and relatives for labour or scale down ambitious designs or finishes (Podkalicka, Milne & Kennedy 2018).

Grand Designs has also addressed the challenges and anxieties which some aspiring grand-designers had to confront because of the 2008 GFC (both in the UK and Australia), where deteriorating job prospects and housing affordability was a widespread concern (Ibid). Some episodes depicted how thrift emerged from calculative assemblages that drew together diverse and contradictory spatial dimensions with regard to location – for example, inner city (expensive) and house design (small / creative) alongside individual skills and cultural capital (architectural background). This is illustrated in an episode about Sydney-based professional couple, Domenic Alvaro and Sue Bassnett, who built a tiny but very well-designed house in the expensive inner-city suburb of Surry Hills. The couple explicitly distanced themselves from the mainstream expectation of owning a large house in Australia's sprawling suburbs, and invoked the need to maximise existing resources according to the motto 'less can be more' (Season 1 Episode 2 'Very Small House', Sydney).

In the wake of the 2008 GFC academic research has discussed 'the recessionary turn in cultures of reality TV', documenting responses of the genre to the worsened economic conditions and public anxieties they have produced (Hamad 2014: 225). Property television for example, while originally focused on aspirations for property and home-ownership, has shifted to reflect the new precarity in the real estate market and capitalist economy more broadly (Bruce & Druick 2017). Jean Bruce and Zoe Druick argue that 'post-crisis series increasingly highlighted ways to find economic value', bringing to the fore 'strategies for fixing up properties, such as DIY repairs and crafting', 'finding treasure amidst the trash' – and generally revealing:

> the tension between using homes as a stage for the domestic dramas of intimacy – long a feature of so-called "women's genres" – and thinking about houses and property as a means for shoring up financial security (…). The home – intimate space and financial asset – becomes uncanny, at once homely and unheimlich, familiar and strange, private and public. (Bruce & Druick 2017: 484-5)

British property TV exemplifies this transformation. Ruth McElroy suggests that recessionary times provided TV experts with additional authority and licence to advise on and influence individual citizen-consumers' choices. McElroy argues that even though 'house buying and selling have become even more fraught and inaccessible', property TV abstained from the critique of structural challenges and inequalities underpinning the crisis (McElroy 2017: 527). McElroy further recognises a return of television programming focused on 'the display of home', gendered domesticity and crafting – harking back to Britain's post-war 'make do and mend' philosophy, which acquires a contemporary anti-consumerist meaning (McElroy 2017: 539) related to thrift.

Friendship in and against the real estate market: imagining the conditions for enduring thrift

Nonetheless this renewed attention to thrift prominent in the studies of reality TV genre, shows that representations of thrift are found across *different* TV formats, targeting different national and international audiences, at different points in time. A great variety of television series have depicted the lives of protagonists through the central location of combined kitchen-living room (*Roseanne*, *Friends*) in small apartments (*Seinfeld*, see below), imagining thrift and dwelling as framed through ideas of friendship as a social practice. This in turn creates the possibility of confronting the inequalities of consumerist capitalist societies. The proliferation of thrift on television can be explained by its connection to norms and values around consumption, grounded in the everyday, and playing out in different economic scenarios. Representations of thrift and dwelling therefore allow for multiple slippages and escaping an easy pigeonholing.

It is typical for the 'apartment plot' (Wojcik 2010, see also Perkins this issue), which is in itself a low-cost studio setting, for the private space of the home to be shared by all characters. The setting provides a backdrop for narrative construction, recurring gags and the transgression of cultural norms, which we argue is connected to thrift. Friendship as a common motif, is developed in the context of these apartment plots and is set against the challenges of the real estate market, which allows protagonists to face its inequalities, though typically this is subtly rather than explicitly portrayed.

American sitcom *Seinfeld* (1989–1998) serves as an illustration of how this well-studied (Pierson 2005, Lavery, Lewis & Dunne 2006, Delaney 2006, Mirzoeffs 2007, Rebhandl 2012, Horn 2015) 'masterpiece' and 'greatest US sitcom ever written' (Raeside 2017) explores friendship as a questionable condition for making thrift endure. The sitcom is set in New York City, after the financial crisis of the early 1970s that fuelled intensive globalisation well into the 1980s based on speculative real estate economy. Lead character Jerry Seinfeld's leased Manhattan apartment offers a playground for a low-budget life at the end of the 1980s. Thrift is represented as a subversive strategy of making do by the middle-class characters with creative ambitions, most notably through Seinfeld's goal to write a TV script. The characters of the show include Seinfeld's former girlfriend Elaine, childhood friend George, and the turned-into-a-friend neighbour Kramer who constantly transgresses social conventions of sharing, making the spectator wonder (and laugh) about their spontaneous, unintentional and somehow naive lighthearted-ness in using each others' things and inhabiting private space and conversations. Interactions between these four characters repeatedly consist of constant rushing into Seinfeld's small apartment without notice or sleeping over whenever they need to. Seinfeld's three friends, who can hardly afford to rent an apartment in Manhattan themselves, grab whatever they can find in Seinfeld's fridge, obliviou-s to everyone else's needs or wants. Their lives jostle between patches of work and unemployment, living together with a partner and separating from him/her, living with parents in Queens/Flushing or choosing to have a sleep-over on the sofa at their friend's place. The run-of-the-mill apartment, furniture and clothing suggest a lower middle-class background. Bert Rebhandl argues that 'the ostentative of wealth, which is often associated with the yuppies, is missing from the series' (2012: 54). Instead, the necessity to share illustrates the character's acquired competence in thrifting and saving. These 'everyday concerns' of the four middle-class single characters in Manhattan muddling through 1980s-90s New York City, amplify the significance of the reality of the property market at the time, when affordable housing was a significant problem and homelessness 'seemed to spiral out of control' (Schwartz 1999: 283).

Seinfeld has been labelled as 'antisocial' (Rebahndl 2015: 45) as the quality of the characters' social bond appears at times idiosyncratic. In fact, the friendship between the four characters unfolds in ways that demonstrate connections between friendship, thrift and individuals capacity (or not) to thrive. Friendships are frequently tested and reflexively probed in this sitcom against the fragmentation and persistent everyday scarcity of New York's inner-city urban life. However, one of the few storylines that does not take place in New York, revolves around Seinfeld taking back the spare keys to his apartment from Kramer after the latter used the apartment repeatedly for rendez-vous with his girlfriend (Season 3 Episode 23 'The Keys'). As a consequence, Kramer is so deeply disturbed by losing his friendship with Seinfeld - because for Kramer, access to Seinfeld's dwelling equals friendship - that Kramer reconsiders his options and decides to try his luck in Hollywood.

Addressed in habitualised mundane ways, thrift is an underpinning source of everyday experience, social bonding and subjectivity in *Seinfeld*. Thrift, as it figures in *Seinfeld*, can be interpreted as a not-yet-normalised or legitimate lifestyle, whereby the protagonists subvert the traditional rationality associated with professional careers by slipping in and out of unemployment. These events challenge the stability of their social bond and their friendship when living frugally. At the same time friendship also makes thrift endure. While displaying the characteristics of middle-class thrift-by-choice pursued in order to fulfil creative ambitions in the testing urban environment, thrift as portrayed in *Seinfeld* resonates with contemporary women-centric apartment-plot-series such as *Insecure, Girls*, *Fleabag* (Perkins) or *Broad City* (Kanai & Dobson) analysed in this issue. The authors discuss the fragilities of young women's middle-classness (comfortable upbringing, higher education from a prestigious university) under 'conditions of material and social hardship' (Kanai & Dobson). Women in these series struggle through the 'adulting' phase, implying the prospect of reaching another stage of maturity (Perkins). In *Broad City*, as in *Seinfeld*, maturity appears always 'out of reach' and is marked by 'inevitable "failures"' (Kanai & Dobson). Equally, friendship offers a narrative ground for getting by and imagining *enduring thrift*.

Thrift as (televised) endurance

The intersection between thrift and home-making, framed through friendship, sheds light on a possible critical approach to and within these programs. Here we draw on the analysis of scholars who have explored thrift as a mode of endurance necessary to cope with precarity in late-capitalist societies (Berlant 2007, 2011; Povinelli 2011). For example, 1990s movies by Belgian filmmakers Luc and Jean-Pierre Dardenne, including La Promesse (1996) and Rosetta (1999) deal with deeply deprived lives that, as Lauren Berlant (2007) argues, reproduce aspirations that are fundamentally shaped by middle-class cultural values. These values also materialise in the specific settings of TV programs that are set in the 'private' sphere of homes, and the 'public' sphere of urban spaces. These spaces serve as the actual background for what can be described as 'televised endurance', meaning that the representations of characters' thrifty practices are coupled with hopeful (if unachievable) goals in the face of hardship and precarity. While Berlant acknowledges that the existentially precarious and enduring characters in La Promesse and Rosetta have a certain degree of agency, Elisabeth Povinelli stresses that endurance reproduces the inescapability from precarity. Cultural values of the middle-class are a 'part of the technology of power and the ethics of substance' (Povinelli 2011: 110) which reproduce a fixed idea of (or a fixation on) a good life. Therefore, it is difficult to evaluate whether the capacity to endure thrift (including through friendship) is ultimately empowering – because it contains elements of agency – or whether it is exclusively obstructive and undermining. It is equally difficult to evaluate the specific related subjectivities produced. Endurance then echoes the ambivalent qualities of thrift – between choice and necessity, between individual and collective – and can be thought of both as a condition of and resulting from thrift.

This special issue groups mediated narratives of thrift under the category of dwelling as pertaining to the aforementioned individualised and spatial dimensions. Narratives of thrift expose values and practices focused on individual consumption under social anxieties of the time, however limiting or problematic they may be. When portrayed through Seinfeld's mundane life revolving around playing host to his thrifty and at times precarious friends in the 1990s or the lives of people seeking help from Japanese home organisation guru, Marie Kondo, in *Tidying Up with Marie Kondo*, thrift as a set of individualised home-making practices (or techniques) 'does little to challenge the logic or consequences of (...) late capitalism' (Ouellette this issue). On the other hand, thrift can offer a sense of self-empowerment by helping characters adjust to a low budget, that provides a feeling of security and fulfilment, or social belonging. Furthermore, in this issue, the social nucleus of friendship is central, such as in *Girls*, *Broad City* or the family such as in the French documentaries from the 1960s-1980s instructing tenants of the new suburbs how to manage a small budget in an 'appropriate way'.

Thrift can have an undesirable effect too. The pursuit of thrift brings about emotions of loss, inadequacy and deprivation. As Kanai and Dobson argue, despite the *Broad City* protagonists' (middle-class) cultural capital and 'high energy striving' deployed to get by, the outcome is not financial wellbeing and security. Equally, analysing women's TV series such as *Girls* or *Insecure*, Claire Perkins argues (this issue) that thrift signifies 'an enduring state of immobility' or being 'stuck'.

We have shown above that as an idea and type of capital, thrift is modelled through a range of instruments and has roots in the historical gendered divisions of labour, with 'home' as its traditional location (see Yates and Hunter's account of gendered thrift in the US context, 2011). However, while we have located thrift within the domestic setting of home (as opposed to institutional contexts such as the financial sector, see Lehtonen & Pantzar 2002), we have also recognised its important connections to urban and public spaces, which come to the fore in the contributions to this issue. For example, Kanai and Dobson observe that thrift, as an affective female friendship-based strategy of making-do in *Broad City*, 'spills across public spaces', beyond the gendered domesticity of home, and into the streets of New York City and its outdoor parks and benches. Similarly, for Perkins, dwelling refers to having a place in the 'city as a whole'.

Thrift is linked to morality, normativity and thriving and is echoed in many storylines of the different TV programs featured in this issue as they are deconstructed to reveal how the 'good' life and society are imagined and represented in and through thrift. Netflix series *Tidying Up with Marie Kondo* demonstrates how TV can become an arena where narratives of thrift and thriving are tested, while having performative and material effects on the reality format's characters as well as inspired spectators. But how exactly are they negotiated? Laurie Ouellette suggests that this is achieved through gendered discourses of female household labour linked to the problematic notion of individual family 'happiness' contingent on tidying (mostly performed by women). The endorsement of the 'joyful' and 'quasi-minimalist' consumer lifestyle that the practices of decluttering supposedly produce (while operating within the standard self-empowerment neo-liberal logic) sits uncomfortably with the actual material impact of the show on the urban fabric of thrift stores, and the reported unmanageable rise of 'decluttered' objects spurred by the Netflix series in the US and UK in early 2019 (Holder 2019). As Ouellette reminds us, consumption is not only historically gendered, but it is also class-based, as throwing away things is afforded by the affluent middle classes as a sign of power. *Tidying Up with Marie Kondo* 'perpetuates these class hierarchies' promoting 'a quasi-minimalist lifestyle based on volition, not necessity', with no interest in 'secondhand reuse'. Ouellette argues that tidying-up 'allows privileged consumers to adopt a throwaway ethic with no concern for the social impact'.

The aspirational ideal of an individually appropriate life holds true also for the comparative analysis of moral economies of debt counselling depicted in TV reality shows in Germany and the US. Silke Meyer (this issue) argues that thrift is 'a perfect example of the nexus of economic decisions and moral orders: Thrift means economising appropriately, with an eye to social norms, situations, and interactions'. Meyer demonstrates how these realms of everyday life are entangled differently in the German programme *Raus aus den Schulden* (*Getting Out of Debts*), which 'offers a way out of debt not by following financial rules but by implanting self-technologies and thus optimising the indebted self' and the US program where 'anybody can get out of debt, as long as they clean up their act and try hard enough'. Despite these differences, in both cases the neo-liberal context turns thrift into a question of 'discipline' and 'trying hard enough', irrespective of precarity and persistent inadequacy (or oppression) of structural systems to create social change noted in many contributions. While the individual precariousness described goes beyond class affiliation, social difference primarily results from the social situation of counselling. Beyond the concern of this publication, the question arises as to which audience is addressed by this globalized format of consulting television.

The articulations of 'women and housing' have been central to analyses of thrift, more recently in relation to the so-called 'austerity media texts' (Petro 2016: 89). Many of the contributions in this issue have focused on gendered forms of thrift discourses and women, bringing in novel insights about thrift's scope and character. Ouellette exposes the ongoing characterisation and reality of household management as 'a female problem', as supported by the whole industry of instructional media aimed at women home-makers. The pieces by Kanai and Dobson and Perkins consider thrift as a coping yet choice-based strategy that signals (middle-class) cultural capital of the young female protagonists struggling to get by living in expensive, competitive cities, while pursuing the 'project of self-discovery' and creative ambitions (Perkins this issue). As noted above, 'doing it thriftily' as an expression of and tactic of women's labour, is depicted in contemporary American drama series for and by women, replaces a private, domestic space of home/apartment for public spaces of a city and highlights affective investments in female friendship. Importantly, thrift for these protagonists emerges as a normal and permanent state of dwelling in neo-liberal economies. Women are required to be thrifty in order to survive gendered impacts of structural inequality. In contrast, the gendered socialities associated with thrift and dwelling in the rural setting of crime series *Midsomer Murder* have changed during its 20 seasons. Women were mostly confined to the house and garden in the beginning, and later at public fairs and shows and as spectators (not participants) of sport (such as cricket games). In more recent series, the 'gentrified pub' has become a place which addresses gender and ethnic diversity (Zahlmann this issue).

The historical analysis of state TV documentaries from France from the late 1960s to early 1980s is equally instructive of complex (and gendered) thrift and relationships between the private and the public. Laetitia Overney (this issue) shows how post-war boom documentaries, set amidst the new housing developments, made visible for the first time domestic reproduction as work. According to Overney, 'television uses close-ups when filming what the housewives do, just as it filmed, in those times, the detailed work done by workers and artisans'. Overney argues that 'housing problems lead to speaking out in public. Television reveals women who on a daily basis adopt political stances that echo the demands of feminist movements. Women do their share to evolve these new towns'. This analysis is important because it bears witness to the emancipatory and educational aspect of TV, which can be appropriated by the represented women to articulate their perspectives on the emerging sub-/urban communities, without exclusively succumbing to the governmentality frame in understanding TV subjectivities.

The underlying understanding of thrift as an articulation of historically specific national, social and cultural circumstances and institutions points to the crucial role of media as an arena to address and put forward specific 'imaginaries'. Crime series, *Midsomer Murders*, lends itself especially well, as Stefan Zahlmann argues in his contribution, to study such imaginaries with respect to social change. The imagined moral landscapes of thrift and dwelling are spread between the rural crime scene and the urban hinterland, and are culturally embedded into the historical depth of austerity in the UK beyond its post-2007–8 expression and 'middle class ideals of the countryside' (Zahlmann this issue). While the expectations of how gender and ethnic diversity should be articulated have changed in the series over time, the ways in which the culturally accepted thrifty dwelling is narrated suggest that thrift can be understood as a concept 'that includes or excludes people according to certain features. Gender, age, and ethnicity; being mentally or physically disabled is also something that enables individuals access to public spheres – or not, as the case may be' (Zahlmann this issue). However, the decisive marker between these features is social difference, repeatedly but not exclusively reproduced in the over-mediated antagonism between decadent aristocratic life and 'the lives, well-being and struggle of the common people of Midsomer' (Zahlmann this issue). While thrift can be seen as integrative and as a common ground between cottage and mansion, Zahlmann insists that the program is 'a battleground of a society struggling for a modern Britishness'. Thrift and class are not reconciled.

Representations of thrift convey, on the one hand, a response to externalities and, on the other, different strains and facets of agency in the everyday. By analysing television series, these imaginaries illuminate the scales, meanings, techniques and practices of thrift. Overall, thrift is crucially shaped by categories of class and gender. In an authoritative account of thrift in the US context, Joshua Yates posits that 'the full story of thrift can only be told against the changing social and natural imaginaries of Western modernity' (2011: 556). Referring to Adam Smith:

> It is only against the backdrop of material scarcity that thrift makes sense, and only then, when persons understand themselves as having a kind of autonomy from, and agency toward, the world around them. (Yates 2011: 559)

Collectively, the papers in this special issue consider how thrift narratives are implicated in the mediated processes of home making (or un-making) and dwelling, across time and across different cultural contexts. The themes broached in this introduction about historicity, storytelling and the performative effect of representations as they legitimise particular forms of being, remain open to future research. Studies based on a systematic comparison of different TV formats would help unpack these relationships further. For example, in regards to differences between local/national versus international narrations of thrift in shows such as Netflix's *Tidying Up with Marie Kondo*, which, as Ouellette suggests (this issue), represent 'a generic makeover template that is presumed to be globally accessible'. If the tendency in popular television series is towards familiarity, 'seriality and duration' (Perkins this issue), the generic and international (Ouellette this issue), the questions of performativity loom particularly large. Therefore, to what extent are TV representations more likely to perpetuate particular (middle-class and western) narratives of 'good life' and individual responsibilities rather than provide alternatives? Can social voices of critique and dissent exist in entertainment television culture, shaped by consumer capitalist imperatives and neo-liberal logic? As Laetitia Overney (this issue) puts it, 'television can be normative just as it can reflect and even encourage the evolution of mores'.

Building on the existing thrift and media studies scholarship, we suggest that it is productive to consider thrift in popular television 'multi-dimensionally' (Podkalicka & Potts 2014). It is possible to consider mediated everyday thrift practices and their cultural meanings beyond the dichotomy of either necessity or lifestyle, and that thrift is not necessarily located exclusively within the intimacy of home, city or nation. These ambivalences are apparent in the analyses of popular representations of thrift on TV included in this issue. The identified themes are not exhaustive. There is a bias towards popular English-language shows, and analyses from researchers working in advanced western economies. We therefore hope the collection offers a useful contribution to thrift studies, particularly through its elaboration of the relationships between thrift representations, aspirations for the good life and endurance. Whether narrated as comedic, practical competence to be learned when living on a budget; a normative version of home-making; identity-producing in precarious neo-liberal societies; or under the impression of crime as a common ground for diversifying society; thrift refers to the fundamental questions of dwelling and thriving, and remains a recurrent motif of many TV stories and aesthetic templates.

Based on the issue's contributions, we have identified 'endurance' as a productive frame for studies of thrift. Thrift is expressed in the life of those who manage to live on a budget. In some situations, people and characters consult experts and are 'encouraged' to employ social techniques of self-/disciplination that essentially represent an adjustment to middle class ideals of thrift and thriving. Others are required to adapt to challenging real estate market circumstances and endure friendships that transgress normative notions of private/shared space or property. In some ways, responses to scarcity through thrifty practices demonstrate tactical resistance and agency, and as such, endurance cuts across different mediated narratives of thrift.

The contributions in this issue suggest that there is little room for truly disruptive ways of imagining subjectivities and social relations in entertainment television in neo-liberal economies of dwelling. While there are positive, empowering representations of thrift – notably expressed in the form of friendships – thrift as 'televised endurance' appears to mostly serve to reproduce the status quo as the irreversible condition.

Acknowledgments
This special issue results, in part, from a panel held at the 2017 SIEF 13th congress 'Ways of Dwelling: Crisis - Craft - Creativity' at the University of Göttingen, Germany. We would like to thank Christine Hämmerling and Daniel Klug who presented and discussed the topic at the session but were unfortunately unable to contribute to this special issue. Our sincere thanks go to all the authors and reviewers who made this special issue possible, as well as *Culture Unbound* editors Johanna Dahlin and Kristin Wagrell for their assistance, and Nicolette Snowden for her help with editing the article.

Aneta Podkalicka is a lecturer in Communications and Media Studies, and Deputy Director Research: Impact and Engagement in the School of Media, Film and Journalism, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia. Aneta's research focuses on media, consumption and everyday life, most recently in the context of environmental sustainability. She is co-author of *Using Media for Social Innovation*, Bristol: Intellect 2018, and *Grand Designs: Consumer Markets and Home-Making*, UK: Palgrave Macmillan 2018.

Alexa Färber is Professor of European Ethnology at the University of Vienna, Austria. She was the primary investigator for the 'Low-Budget Urbanity' research initiative at HafenCity University Hamburg (2012–2015). Her research interests include visual methodologies and Actor-Network Theory (ANT), everyday representational work, dwelling and mobility. Her recent publications are concerned with the notion of the city as promissory assemblage, including 'How does ANT help us to rethink the city and its promises?' In: Anders Blok, Ignacio Farías, Celia Roberts (eds): *The Routledge Companion to Actor-network Theory*. London: Routledge 2019, 264–272.

References

Anderson, Ben (2014): *Encountering Affect: Capacities, Apparatuses, Conditions*, Ashgate: Farnham.
Basu, Laura, Schifferes, Steve & Knowles, Sophie (2018): 'The media as messenger', Laura Basu, Steve Schifferes & Sophie Knowles (eds): *The Media and Austerity: Comparative Perspectives,* Abingdon: Routledge, 1–11.
Berlant, Lauren (2007): 'Nearly utopian, nearly normal: Post-fordist affect in La Promesse and Rosetta,' *Public Culture*, 19:2, 273–301.
Berlant, Lauren (2011): *Cruel Optimism*, Durham: Duke University Press.
De Benedictis, Sara & Gill, Rosalind (2016): 'Austerity Neoliberalism: a new discursive formation,' *OpenDemocray*, (July), 1–4.
Berry, Mike (2016): 'No alternative to austerity: how BBC broadcast news reported the deficit debate,' *Media, Culture & Society,* 38:6, 844–863.
Bramall, Rebecca (2013): *The cultural politics of austerity. Past and present in auste-*

re times. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
Bramall, Rebecca (2016): 'Introduction: The future of austerity,' *New Formations,* 87, 1–10.
Bramall, Rebecca, Gilbert, Jeremy & Meadway, James (2016): 'What is austerity?,' *New Formations,* 87, 119–140.
Bruce, Jean & Druick, Zoe (2017): 'Haunted houses: Gender and property television after the financial crisis,' *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 20:5, 483–489.
Bucklow, Andrew (2018): 'Network Ten is making a new series of Changing Rooms,' *news.com.au*, 18 September 2018: https://www.news.com.au/entertainment/tv/reality-tv/network-ten-is-making-a-new-series-of-changing-rooms/news-story/a5bba1b5f75033715071676f5d516737, (accessed 27/04/19).
Büschel, Hubertus (2011): 'Sparzwang und Vorsorge als Techniken der Menschenführung im tropischen Afrika' (Compulsion to save and provide for the future as techniques of human management in tropical Africa), *Zeitschrift für Kulturwissenschaft,* 1, 55–72.
Cochoy, Franck (2008): 'Calculation, qualculation, calqulation: Shopping card arithmetic, equipped cognition and the clustered consumer,' *Marketing Theory*, 8:1, 15–44.
Coleman, Rebecca (2016): Austerity mood, *New Formations,* 87, 83–101.
De Vries, Jan (2008): *The Industrious Revolution: Consumer Demand and the Household Economy, 1650 to the Present*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Delaney, Tim (2006): *Seinology. The Sociological Study of Seinfeld*, Amherst: Prometheus Books.
Derwanz, Heike & Vollmer, Hanz (2015): 'Grassroots initiatives as pioneers of low-budget practices: An activists roundtable. CiT-collective, gängeviertel, new cross commoners, revolutionary autonomous communities,' *Ephemera: Theory & Politics in Organization,* 15:1, 229-247.
Dixon, Wheeler Winston (2007): 'Hyperconsumption in reality television: The transformation of the self through televisual consumerism,' *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, 21:1, 52–63.
Färber, Alexa (2014): 'Low-budget Berlin: towards an understanding of low-budget urbanity as assemblage,' *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society*, 7, 119-136.
Färber, Alexa & Birke, Otto (2016): 'Saving (in) a common world: Studying urban assemblages through a low-budget urbanities perspective,' Andres Blok & Ignacio Farias (eds): *Urban cosmopolitics,* Routledge, London, 25-43.
Grubbauer, Monika (2015): 'Not everything is new in DIY: Home remodelling by amateurs as urban practice,' *Ephemera: theory & politics in organization*, 15:1, 141-162.
Gudeman, Stephen (2008): *Economy's tension: the dialectics of community and market*. New York: Berghahn Books.
Hamad, Hannah (2014): 'Fairy Jobmother to the rescue: Postfeminism and the recessionary cultures of reality TV,' Diane Negra & Yvonne Tasker (eds): *Gendering the Recession: Media and Culture in an Age of Austerity*, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 223-245.
Hitchen, Esther (2016): 'Living and feeling the austere,' *New Formations,* 87:6, 102–118.
Holder, Sarah (2019): 'The "Marie Kondo Effect" Comes at Time for Thrift Stores', *Citylab,* 18 January 2019: https://www.citylab.com/life/2019/01/tidying-up-with-marie-kondo-netflix-where-to-donate/580396/, (accessed 19/07/19).
Horn, Kathrin (2015): '30 Rock: Complexity, Metareferentiality and the Contemporary Quality Sitcom,' Christoph Ernst & Heike Paul (eds): *Amerikanische Fernsehserien der Gegenwart. Perspektiven der American Studies und der Media Studies*, Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 153-183.

Lehtonen, Turo-Kimmo & Mika Pantzar (2002): 'The ethos of thrift: the promotion of bank saving in Finland during the 1950s,' *Journal of Material Culture,* 7:2, 211–231.
Lavery, David & Sara Lewis Dunne (2006): *Seinfeld, Master of Its Domain: Revisiting TV's Greatest Sitcom*. New York: Continuum.
Lewis, Jerome (2008): 'Managing abundance, not chasing scarcity: the real challenge for the 21st century,' *Radical Anthropology,* 2, 11-18.
Maß, Sandra (2017a): *Kinderstube des Kapitalismus? Monetäre Erziehung im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert* (The nursery of capitalism? Monetary education in the 18th and 19th centuries), München: De Gruyter/Oldenbourg.
Maß, Sandra (2017b): 'Children, savings, banks and politics. The savings movement in the last third of the nineteenth century,' *FUNCAS Social and Economic Studies,* 4, 7-18.
Maß, Sandra, Bönker, Kirsten & Hana Havelkova (2011): 'Geld-Subjekte. L'Homme' (Money-Subjects. L'Homme), *Europäische Zeitschrift für Feministische Geschichtswissenschaft (European Journal of Feminist History),* 22:2.
McElroy, Ruth (2017): 'Mediating home in an age of austerity: The values of British property television,' *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 20:5, 525–542.
McFall, Liz (2015): *Devising Consumption. Cultural Economies of Insurance, Credit and Spending*. London: Routledge.
Meyer, Silke (2012): 'Economic Agents and the Culture of Debt,' Jan Logemann (ed): *The Development of Consumer Credit in Global Perspective: Business, Regulation, and Culture*, Washington: Palgrave, 223-241.
Meyer, Silke (2017): *Das verschuldete Selbst. Narrativer Umgang mit Privatinsolvenz*. (The indebted self. Narrative handling of personal bankruptcy), Frankfurt am Main: Campus.
Möhring, Maren, Schüttpelz, Erhard & Martin Zillinger (2011): 'Knappheit', (Scarcity) *Zeitschrift für Kulturwissenschaften* 1.
Mirzoeff, Nicholas (2007): *Seinfeld*. London: British Film Institute.
Moraes, Caroline, Szmigin, Isabelle & Marylyn Carrigan (2010): 'Living production-engaged alternatives: An examination of new consumption communities,' *Consumption Markets & Culture*, 13:3, 273–298.
Murphy, Fiona (2017): 'Austerity Ireland, the new thrift culture and sustainable consumption,' *Journal of Business Anthropology*, 6:2, 158-174.
Negra, Diane & Yvonne Tasker (2014): 'Introduction: Gender and Recessionary Culture,' Diane Negra & Yvonne Tasker (eds): *Gendering the Recession: Media and Culture in an Age of Austerity*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1–30.
Ouellette, Laurie & James Hay (2008): 'Makeover television, governmentality and the good citizen,' *Continuum*, 22:4, 471–484.
Partington, Richard (2019): 'Millennials being squeezed out of middle class, says OECD', *The Guardian*, 11 April 2019: https://www.theguardian.com/business/2019/apr/10/millennials-squeezed-middle-class-oecd-uk-income, (accessed 20/07/19).
Peck, Jamie, Theodore, Nik & Brenner, Neil (2009): *Neoliberal urbanism: Models, moments, and mutations*, SAIS Review, XXIX(1), 49–66.
Petro, Patrice (2016): 'Austerity Media', Kennan Ferguson & Patrice Petro (eds): *After Capitalism: Horizons of Finance, Culture, and Citizenship,* New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 89–105.
Pierson, David (2005): 'American Situation Comedies and the Modern Comedy of Manners,' Mary M. Dalton & Laure R. Linder (eds): *The Sitcom Reader. America Viewed and Skewed,* New York: State University of New York Press, 35-46.
Podkalicka, Aneta & Jason Potts (2013): 'Towards a general theory of thrift,' *International Journal of Cultural Studies,* 17:3, 227-241.
Podkalicka, Aneta, Esther Milne & Jenny Kennedy (2018): *Grand Designs: Consu-*

mer Markets and Home-Making. UK: Palgrave Macmillian.
Povinelli, Elizabeth A. (2011): *Economies of Abandonment. Social Belonging and Endurance in late Liberalism*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.
Raeside, Julia (2017): 'Seinfeld: finally, you can stream the greatest US sitcom ever written', *The Guardian*, 6 January 2017: https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2017/jan/05/seinfeld-the-greatest-us-sitcom-ever-written, (accessed 20/07/19).
Rebhandl, Bert (2012): *Seinfeld*. Zürich/Berlin: Diaphanes.
Robertson Wojcik, Pamela (2010): *The Apartment Plot. Urban Living in American Film and Popular Culture, 1945 to 1975*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.
Rosenberg, Buck Clifford (2008): 'Property and home-makeover television: Risk, thrift and taste,' *Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, *22*:4, 505–513.
Rulffes, Evke (2013): 'Milch, Butter und Käse. Tipps und Tricks für die Hausmuttern von Chr. F. Gemmershausen', (Milk, butter and cheese. Tips and tricks for the housemothers of Chr. F. Gemmershausen) *illinx* 3, 105-113.
Schlosberg, Justin (2016): 'Is there really an alternative? The mainstream media and the limits of public debate over austerity', *OpenDemocracy*, 22 June 2016: https://www.opendemocracy.net/uk/austerity-media/justin-schlosberg/is-there-really-alternative-mainstream-media-and-limits-of-publ, (accessed 19/07/2019).
Scholl, Dominik (2015): *Arbeit anders denken. Ethnografische Perspektiven auf Narrative der Arbeit* (Thinking work differently. Ethnographic perspectives on narratives of work) Berlin: Panama Verlag.
Schwartz, Alex (1999): 'New York City and subsidized housing: Impacts and lessons of the city's $5 billion capital budget housing plan,' *Housing Policy Debate,* 10:4, 839-877.
Stahl, Geoff (2014): *Poor but sexy. Reflections on Berlin Scenes.* Bern: Peter Lang.
Stanley, Liam, Deville, Joe & Johnna Montgomerie (2016): 'Digital Debt Management: The Everyday Life of Austerity,' *New Formations,* 87:4, 64–82.
Streinzer, Andreas (2016): 'Stretching money to pay the bills. The temporal modalities and relational practices of getting by in the Greek economic crisis,' *Cambridge Journal of Anthropology,* 34:1, 45- 57.
Tauschek, Markus & Grewe, Maria (2015): *Knappheit, Mangel, Überfluss. Kulturwissenschaftliche Positionen zum Umgang mit begrenzten Ressourcen*. (Scarcity, shortage, abundance. Cultural studies positions on how to deal with limited resources) Campus Verlag.
Triliva, Sofia, Varvantakis, Christos & Manolis Dafermos (2015): 'YouTube, young people, and the socioeconomic crises in Greece,' *Information Communication and Society,* 18:4, 407–423.
Yates, Joshua & Hunter, James Davidson (2011): *Thrift and thriving in America*. New York: Oxford University Press.
Yates, Joshua (2011): 'Disputing Abundance: The Antiglobalisation Protest Movement and Our Changing Natural Imaginary,' Joshua Yates & James Davison Hunter (eds): *Thrift and Thriving in America: Capitalism and Moral Order from the Puritans to the Present*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 536-569.
Waitt, Gordon, Roggeveen, Kate, Gordon, Ross, Butler, Katherine & Paul Cooper (2016): 'Tyrannies of thrift: Governmentality and older, low-income people's energy efficiency narratives in the Illawarra, Australia,' *Energy Policy*, 90, 37–45.

Culture Unbound
Journal of Current Cultural Research

Women and Money Management: Problematising Working-class Subjectivities in French Television Programmes During and after the Post-war Boom

By Laetitia Overney

Abstract

This article looks at French television during and after the post-war period to explore the relationships that programmes systematically established between home-making in social housing, housekeeping money management and women. It sheds light on the gendered dimensions of thrift and dwelling. French 1960's Television reflected a range of urban transformations characteristic of the period: the development of high-rise estates, social housing, shopping centers. How should people inhabit these new environnements, new structures of dwelling and new services in order to keep up with regular household expenses such as paying rent, utility bills, buying food or covering child rearing costs?

Since the 19th century, women had generally managed household budgets as part of the everyday domestic cultures. These heavy financial responsibilities were relayed by televised documentaries prompting questions about the types of in/appropriate activities and attitudes, knowledges and expertises shown on mainstream TV at the time. Television was constantly problematizing working-class subjectivities through women's voice. On the one hand, television reports showed women always counting the money and thrifting in order to control the household comsumption and to avoid debts. In the documentaries I analyse, the women describe in detail their economic problems and moral economies they are conditioned to operate within. On the other hand, TV programmes were replete with the specialist home economics tips that were meant to spread normative representations of dwelling in order to educate housewives.

Women's activities are tied to the welfare state which is revealed in all its complexity, controlling with one hand the rationalisation of domestic budgets and practices, and, with the other, improving living conditions and protecting individuals against vulnerabilities.

Keywords: Social Housing, Working Class, Women, Television Archives, Moral Economy, Consumption, Home Account Book, Welfare State.

Overney, Laetitia: "Women and Money Management: Problematising Working-class Subjectivities in French Television Programmes During and after the Post-war Boom", *Culture Unbound*, Volume 11, issue 3–4, 2019: 443–465. Published by Linköping University Electronic Press: http://www.cultureunbound.ep.liu.se

Introduction

This article looks back at French television during the post-war period to explore the relationships that programmes systematically established between home-making in social housing, housekeeping money management and women. In the 1960s and 1970s, television reflected a range of urban transformations characteristic of the times: the development of high-rise estates, social housing, shopping centres, and comfort and domestic appliances in the home (Rudolph 2014). Women were portrayed as central figures in these new homes (Canteux 2014): they were the ones interviewed by journalists while their husbands were at work and they were filmed crossing concrete slabs to do their shopping, or dusting and polishing their comfortable and modern flats.

In Europe between the two wars, public authorities set middle-class women the task of progressing and this mission was passed on through the teaching of home economics at school, exhibitions, catholic associations, women's press and books on home-making (Clarke 2005, Segalen 1994, de Caigny 2005). These media circulated information on standards of health and comfort, new lifestyles and rules for rationalising household budgets.[1] In the 1950s, these messages more directly targeted working-class women who were moving into new social housing (HLM[2]) tower blocks and who had for a long time been in charge of housekeeping and family budget management (Hoggart 1957). This economic and domestic function is an important aspect of their daily practices. In what way does French post-war television portray and replay a traditional role that goes back to working-class milieus in the nineteenth century?

Television systematically underlined the working-class origins of the women filmed in the new social housing. Social housing tower blocks were a brand new domestic work space for these women, who had only just vacated unsanitary homes with no running water or amenities and who were discovering a new universe and new facilities.[3] How were women to inhabit these new environments and dwellings, with new services such as social centres, youth centres and launderettes, in a manner that would allow them to keep up with regular household expenses such as rent, utilities, food and raising children? With these new homes, there was a significant increase in the portion of the family budget reserved for rent. How were they to juggle between these different expenses so as to meet the needs of all the family and also "properly" look after the home? What was the best way to spend their benefit payments? These were the sort of questions that television was asking.

As soon as a programme discussed new social housing, the question of family budgeting was raised, and it was women who were under the spotlight. This article looks at how television intricately linked home-making, money management and women to a backdrop of social housing. My challenge is to highlight the gendered dimensions of dwelling and thrift. At the intersection of class and gender, the sociological analysis sheds light on working-class economics and women practices during the post-war period and in the urban context of high-rise estates. I examine the dissemination and popularisation, in and through TV, of the normative home-making values and moral economies of the working class. Television portrayed a normative family model (close link between women and the home and strict control of expenditure) alongside emancipatory considerations. The heavy financial responsibilities of women were highlighted, prompting questions about the types of in/appropriate activities and attitudes, knowledge and expertise shown on television at the time. On the one hand, the documentaries and reports I analyse always show women counting money and being thrifty in order to control household consumption and avoid getting into debt. Television programmes were awash with specialist home economics tips that were designed to spread normative representations of the dwelling in order to educate housewives. On the other hand, the women describe in detail their economic problems and their own moral values with regard to effective home-making. They are vocal critics of social-housing landlords who increase rent and service charges.

Women's shifting roles at the time have to be considered in the context of the late nineteenth century's France, when (like in other Western countries), housing and family gradually became areas of legitimate women's involvement in public affairs.[4]

This paper uses archival research, focusing on specific genre(s), documentaries and news reports that were popular at the time and which dealt with new social housing. Between conformism and emancipation, television was a new vector allowing women to express their views in public. It revealed their thoughts, problems and hopes. I ask what significance women's public participation had on TV in the 1960's and 1970's; how it concerned working-class women – and how was female activism represented – especially in relation to thrift and dwelling?
In the first section I will show how television relayed educational and normative messages to working-class women; in the second part of the article I explore the avenues of emancipation that these broadcasts nevertheless opened up. My analysis of audio-visual programmes seeks to explore their domestic and political role.

Women Setting the Example: from Home Account Book to the Small Screen

The Pedagogical Line for Women's Programmes

There is no doubt that there was a "domestic morality for housewives" at work in television to accustom women to their new chores (Lévy 1995: 180). Some programmes for women took on a pedagogical role to teach women how to live in a

Corpus and Contextual Elements

The documents I consulted come from the archives of the Institut National de l'Audiovisuel (INA). This public establishment was created in 1974 to archive audiovisual productions from the post-war period, and houses almost 60 years of public television recordings. A certain number of contextual details are required to grasp the rudimentary beginnings of television in France. It remained a public institution up until the creation of private channels in the 1980s. For some considerable time there was only one channel. As from 1949, Radiodiffusion-télévison française's (RTF) first channel (Première Chaîne) began broadcasting programmes, becoming the Office de radiodiffusion-télévision française (ORTF) in 1964, then TF1 as from 1975. The second channel (Deuxième Chaîne) was created in 1963, becoming Antenne 2 in 1975. In 1972, the third channel (Troisième Chaîne) saw the light of day, its name changing to FR3 in 1975. Compared with other countries, the number of homes equipped with television sets remained low until the 1970s. For example, there were 60,000 sets in France in 1953 (1 for every 704 inhabitants) as opposed to 22 million in the United States (1 for every 7 inhabitants); in 1961, France had 2,500,000 television sets (18% of homes) as against 56 million in the USA (1 for every 3 inhabitants). It was not until 1976 that 85% of French homes boasted a television (Cazeneuve 1980: 49-50). Programmes nevertheless reached a wider audience than just television owners – French people went round to their neighbours to watch television, and sets were available in public places and in TV Clubs.

The corpus analysed for the purposes of this article was made up of 20 documents held by INA and broadcast between 1967 and 1981. This was a key period for the construction of large estates[5] and for criticism of gender relations. These archives consist of documentaries and news reports (of between 5 minutes and 1 hour) based on investigations by television producers; they are the result of solid documentary work and are a precious source for sociological analysis.

The corpus allows us to grasp the differences between the approach to programmes aimed at women (Les femmes... aussi, Aujourd'hui Madame, Le magazine féminin, Vie pratique) and the approach to documentaries/reports for all audiences (l'Avenir est à vous, Journal Télévisé, Cinq colonnes à la Une, Affaire vous concernant, A la bonne heure, C'est la vie, Vivre au présent). When television first began, gender was a criterion for differentiating between audiences. Statistics showed that, on average, women spent more time watching television alone – in the mornings and afternoons. Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Frank N. Stanton describe different tastes, with women preferring programmes that were more oriented towards human interest and practical information (Lazarsfeld & Stanton 1949).

Method

I began by watching the archived programmes with the sound muted, so as to concentrate on what I saw on the screen. At the intersection of class and gender, I studied the women's faces, their every gesture, the gender relations, as well as signifiers of low economic status and poverty (environment, flat, furniture, clothes, food) and. I then reversed the procedure and transcribed the audio track, to concentrate on the words and arguments used by the women in the documentaries. In this way I covered many different angles and distances of viewing and analysis. My analysis grid was as follows: how were the women portrayed as they managed their homes? What chores were shown? I compiled an inventory of these chores and on each occasion studied the manner in which they were filmed. I studied camera movements, the relationship between the words spoken and the pictures, and the effects of the editing. I use freeze-frame pictures to illustrate this article.

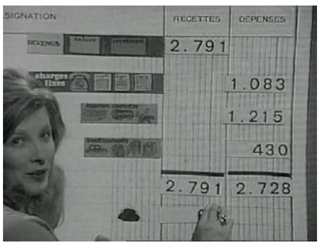
modern home, look after a family, save time and be thrifty. Each programme offered short documentaries and provided practical advice, with proper lessons on housekeeping and home budgeting, as a way to pass on the powerful educational mission of social housing.

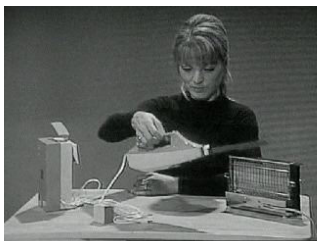
This was very much the approach adopted by the programme Vie pratique in April 1974, with a segment entitled "How to keep to budget" (Troisième Chaîne, "Vie pratique: Savoir tenir son budget", April 1 1974). For 26 minutes, the female audience could take a lesson in home economics. During the introduction, close-up shots showed a woman's hands holding a purse, paying at the supermarket check-out or signing a cheque [pictures 1-2-3]. This was followed by a documentary drama where a woman was doing her shopping. The calendar marches on: at the beginning of the month the shopping trolley is full, but at the end of the month she can only afford potatoes and sardines – basic products which signify poverty. She apologises as she serves dinner to her husband and children: "I wasn't able to stick to my budget".



Picture 1–3 Troisième Chaîne,"Vie pratique: Savoir tenir son budget", April 1 1974

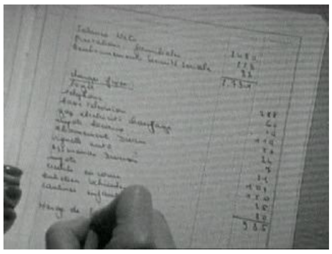
On the set, the female presenter begins her lesson on how to correct this behaviour: "you need to think before you spend (...)". She advises women who control the purse strings to avoid credits higher than 8% of income, and to calculate the utility and cost-effectiveness of household appliances [picture 4]. Her ideas are illustrated on the screen in the form of a lady who is looking sceptically at an electric toaster and tin opener – appliances that are unnecessary [picture 5]. The presenter warns viewers not to "blindly trust what adverts say".





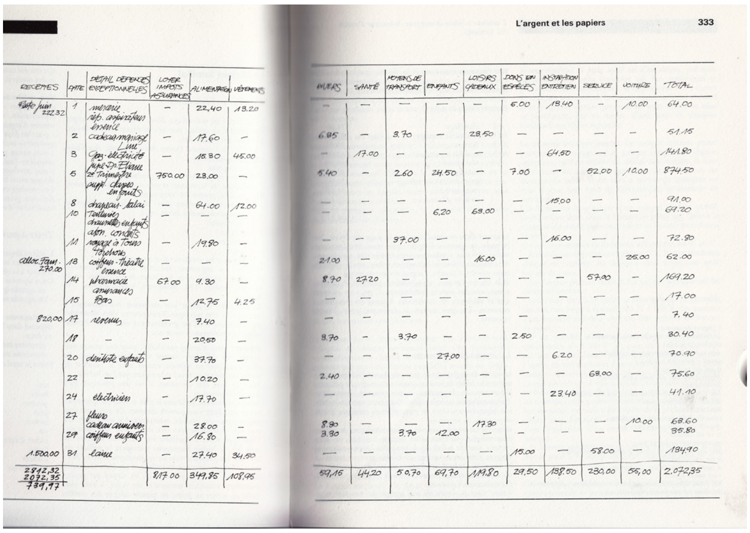
Picture 4–5 Troisième Chaîne, "Vie pratique: Savoir tenir son budget", April 1 1974

Her main piece of advice is to keep accounts. The picture shows a woman opening a booklet entitled "My budget", with two columns: income/expenditure. One of these pages is reproduced on the set. The presenter gradually fills in the columns while pictures show us a woman concentrating on doing additions and subtractions in her account book [pictures 6-7]. The picture thus has a normative value (the proper way to do one's accounts) that is supported by what the presenter is saying. When it comes to the purchase of electrical appliances, the latter warns in a dramatic and moralistic tone: "if you are going to make purchases like that, you'll need to be as cunning as a fox".



Picture 6-7 Troisième Chaîne, "Vie pratique: Savoir tenir son budget", April 1 1974

This account book was a tool for rationalising expenditure that had, since the interwar period, been widely distributed by home economics schools and by social assistance institutions who wished to ensure that child and housing benefits were put to proper use [picture 8].[6] Such institutions employed "housekeeping advisors" (home economics specialists) who worked in social centres on the new



L'argent et les papiers 333

RECETTES	DATE	DÉTAIL DÉPENSES EXCEPTIONNELLES	LOYER IMPÔTS ASSURANCES	ALIMENTATION	VÊTEMENTS	DIVERS	SANTÉ	MOYENS DE TRANSPORT	ENFANTS	LOISIRS CADEAUX	DONS EN ESPÈCES	INSTALLATION ENTRETIEN	SERVICE	VOITURE	TOTAL
Reste juin 222,32	1	mercerie rép. aspirateur essence	–	22,40	13.20	–	–	–	–	–	6.00	13.40	–	10.00	64.00
	2	cadeau mariage	–	17.60	–	6.85	–	3.70	–	28.50	–	–	–	–	51.15
	3	Linge gaz-électricité	–	15.30	45.00	–	17.00	–	–	–	–	64.50	–	–	141.80
	5	jupe Dr. Eliane 2e trimestre suppl. chapeaux enfants	750.00	23.00	–	5.40	–	2.60	24.50	–	7.00	–	52.00	10.00	874.50
	8	chapeau-balai	–	64.00	12.00	–	–	–	–	–	–	15.00	–	–	91.00
	10	teinturier chaussettes enfants abon. condits	–	–	–	–	–	–	6,20	68.00	–	–	–	–	69.20
	11	voyage à Tours	–	19.80	–	–	–	37.00	–	–	–	16.00	–	–	72.80
allot. Fam. 270.00	13	torchons coiffeur-théâtre	–	–	–	21.00	–	–	–	16.00	–	–	–	25.00	62.00
	14	essence pharmacie	67.00	9.30	–	8.70	27.20	–	–	–	–	–	57.00	–	169.20
	15	assurances bas	–	12.75	4.25	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	17.00
820,00	17	revenus	–	7.40	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	7.40
	18	–	–	20.50	–	3.70	–	3.70	–	–	2.50	–	–	–	30.40
	20	dentiste enfants	–	37.70	–	–	–	–	27.00	–	–	6.20	–	–	70.90
	22	–	–	10.20	–	2.40	–	–	–	–	–	–	63.00	–	75.60
	24	électricien	–	17.70	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	23.40	–	–	41.10
	27	fleurs cadeau annivers.	–	28.00	–	8.30	–	–	–	17.30	–	–	–	10.00	68.60
	29	coiffeur enfants	–	16.80	–	3.30	–	3.70	12.00	–	–	–	–	–	35.80
1.500,00	31	laine	–	27.40	34.50	–	–	–	–	–	15.00	–	58.00	–	134.90
2812,32 2072,35 739,97			817.00	349.85	108.95	59,15	44.20	50,70	69,70	119.80	29,50	138.50	230,00	55,00	2.072,35

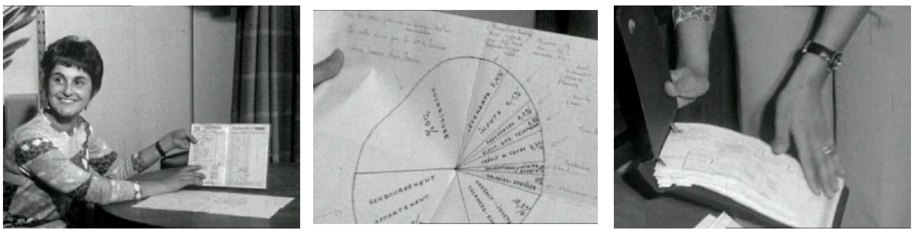
Picture 8 (1968) Encyclopédie de la maîtresse de maison, Paris: Club des amis du livre, 332-333.

estates to supervise domestic budgets and help women from modest backgrounds to "better" spend and "better" manage their money.

Television programmes followed suit, making documentaries about this profession. As was the case with the programmes offering practical advice, the dissymmetrical relationships between the advisors and the women jumps right off the screen. The female professional either sits behind a desk to receive women, or else stands in front of a blackboard to give a lesson on the organisation of space at home. Taking a moralising stance, she explains the importance of budget management when one moves into social housing: "women burden themselves with debts, it's a very big problem. (...) as soon as they find themselves with more space, they want to buy furniture. And then there are the sales representatives who ring the doorbell… They've been dreaming of having a bedroom for years. But that is not what they should have bought." And the advisors give a series of directives: prioritise purchases, learn to do it yourself and get to know the cheapest shops (Première Chaîne, "L'avenir est à vous: Conseillère ménagère", March 16 1964).

In 1971, another report shows ten or so residents from a large estate sitting round a table and sewing (Première Chaîne, "Vivre au présent: Le budget familial", October 25 1971). The advisor asks: "Have you thought about your budget?". A young woman replies: "Budgets are a pipe dream. If at the end of the month you've made ends meet, then bravo! I can't!" The advisor retorts: "You nevertheless need to remember that every month you have fixed costs such as rent and food. So every month you need to work out your income and your expenditure." [picture 9] The report ends with an interview with one of the participants. As this particular lady has put home economics tools into practice, the documentary uses her as a model. She shows her account book and a pie chart illustrating how her budget is divided. She is a highly organised woman who keeps all her bills neatly put away in a file [pictures 10-11-12].

Picture 9 Première Chaîne, Vivre au présent: Le budget familial, October 25 1971.



Picture 10–12 Première Chaîne, Vivre au présent: Le budget familial October 25 1971.

Money-management as a Real Job

Such programmes aimed at women continued their budgetary education. Textual analysis reveals a clear pedagogic and normative thread throughout the documentaries and reports, which targeted the general public and was often televisually focused on the work involved in keeping an account book. A recurring motif includes the portrayal of conscientious working-class housewives doing the housework or shopping – and a voice-over listing various items in the family budget. The woman and the interviewer do their sums: expenses (rent, food, children and travel) and income (salary and social benefits). These programmes therefore allowed women's voices to be included, often expressing anxieties over daily money-management. They had apparently integrated "normative" standards – the family budget, the legitimacy of an account book, the fear and shame of getting into debt.

Nevertheless, although television gave specifically? working-class women a chance to be represented themselves, their calculations in front of the camera demonstrated the problems of poor families and their true economic competences.

One report in 1972, for example, on "those with less than 1,000 francs", follows Françoise (a widow and mother of three living in social housing) to the supermarket [pictures 13-14-15] (Deuxième chaîne, "JT 20h: Les moins de 1000 frcs", October 25 1972).

Picture 13–15 Deuxième chaîne, JT 20h: Les moins de 1000 frcs", October 25 1972.

She explains her budget: her salary as a sales assistant: 900 francs,[7] child benefit: 970 francs, rent: 420 francs, less 220 francs of housing benefit.[8] As a result, "when I do my shopping, I don't buy the minimum, I buy between the two. I do my sums so that I don't spend more than I should." At the supermarket, we see her ask the butcher the price of the calf's liver: "You don't have anything cheaper?" She finally settles for three slices of cow's liver... just for her children. It is nourishing. "I have to go without" she says. "I'll be honest with you, I live from day to day. I can't save money on my salary, what with my loan repayments. I buy on credit, I can't do it any other way." Françoise has taken the family budget norms on board and expresses the guilt she feels for having taken out loans and not being able to save.

Another model of thriftiness is Mrs. Montagne, housewife, mother of 5, married to a worker and living in social housing in the Ardèche region (Deuxième chaîne, "Affaire vous concernant: couple pauvre", October 26 1981). The voice-over explains that she "looks after the home" and while she is doing the washing-up he talks to her about how she calculates her budget: "A dishwasher wouldn't be a useful expenditure. (…) It wouldn't be reasonable to buy one on our budget." Her children have given her useful gifts (a coffee maker and a yoghurt maker) [picture 16]. Mrs. Montagne does her shopping at the market, "it's the biggest item in the budget". By comparing prices, she saves 8 francs on a rabbit. The cameraman follows her to the baker's and zooms in on the bread price list for a few seconds to show just how much this basic product weighs on family budgets, even in 1981 – perhaps a way of demonstrating that the end of the post-war period makes it harder to balance the budget and thus complicates women's lives [pictures 17-18-19].

Picture 16 Deuxième chaîne,"Affaire vous concernant: couple pauvre", October 26 1981.

Picture 17–19 Deuxième chaîne,"Affaire vous concernant: couple pauvre", October 26 1981.

Calculations in front of the camera happen frequently in these television programmes, prompted by the common hardships of making ends meet – and despite the very earnest intentions behind affordable social housing programmes. As of 1954 social housing was allocated to low-income workers; those = with large families (over 3 children) had priority. Most tenants were low-ranked civil servants, employees, and blue-collar workers.[9] Notwithstanding social benefits and new social housing, however, financial problems were widespread due to a significant proportional increase in the working-class family's budget being needed to cover rent.[10] By the early 1970s, some tenants were able to buy a suburban house and leave the high-rise estates. Gradually, those original tenants were replaced by poorer people.[11] Yet meanwhile workers were the first victims of the deep recession: those remaining in social housing became unemployed and grew permanently poorer.

In their portrayals of these women, the journalists reveal the extent of women's chores with far more benevolence than is the case with the housekeeping advisor. They show how women do their best with such low salaries – more often than not lower than the average working-class salary, and with large numbers of children that they often have to raise on their own.

In 1967, the camera closes in for one minute on the hand of a lady who is rummaging through an old tin box full of buttons of all colours. She is trying to find four that match. Then a close-up of her fingers as she threads the needle (Première chaîne, "Les femmes...aussi: Micheline, 6 enfants, rue des Jonquilles", April 24 1967). Looking straight at the camera with a satisfied smile, she explains that "these are all buttons that I find in the street when I'm on my way to fetch my kids at their schools. I found these ones when I was walking to the Halles [wholesale market in Paris]. Everywhere. I always manage to find two of the same together. I've never bought buttons".

For 50 minutes this documentary follows Micheline, a 30-year-old resident of a tower block, mother of 6, married to a worker. All of her everyday chores are filmed in great detail and often with no cutting, so as to emphasize the work involved (housework, shopping, sewing, children, washing, cooking). The button sequence is especially significant in terms of her thrift and her work as a homemaker.While she goes about her daily business, Micheline picks up second-hand buttons lost in the street. The seconds it takes her to collect and wash them allow her to save precious pennies. She can repair clothes so that they last longer. She continues with her accounts: "What costs me the most is the children. The clothes are less of an issue, because as I'm not afraid to admit, there are a lot of people who help me out. But it's the food. Some like this, others don't like that. My husband is very-picky, so that costs a fortune." She goes to the wholesale market, which is cheaper than the shops around the social housing tower blocks. She haggles, which once again helps her to save money. Budget management has to allow for individual particularities: the children's tastes and her husband's health problems. The budget "is my wife's business" says the latter, with an embarrassed smile. The film shows a ritual scene, an age-old practice in working-class families: the husband passing his weekly wage packet over to his wife [pictures 20-21]. The household operates in


Picture 20–21 Première chaîne,"Les femmes...aussi: Micheline, 6 enfants, rue des Jonquilles", April 24 1967

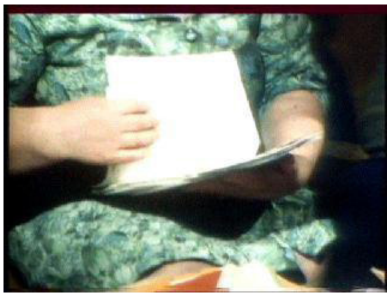
accordance with the breadwinner model: the husband goes to work, the wife looks after hearth and home (Potucheck 1997). Micheline earns a small wage that allows her to pay for the "holiday activity centre"[12] for her children: she does the washing for other families. Finally, she tries to balance an ever-tricky budget by controlling family consumption – by not allowing her son to buy lemonade for example.

On the whole, for Micheline, Françoise, Mrs. Montagne and all the other, the archives show women who are constantly doing their sums. Responsibility for the household's economy comes across more as a complex burden than as a privilege. As women from modest backgrounds, they cannot afford to be negligent. The reports and documentaries thus present these women's task of money management as a job (Pahl & Vogler 1994). Indeed, television uses close-ups when filming what the housewives do, just as it filmed, in those times, the detailed work done by workers and artisans. The camera systematically stays with them for several seconds in order to underline the women's hand-to-hand struggle with domestic finances: holding the purse, handling the coins and notes, examining the bills, counting the money, writing in the account book, sorting and filing the paperwork, scrutinising and comparing prices, touching and feeling the merchandise, carrying the shopping bag and rummaging through the accumulated second-hand treasure. From women's programmes to general viewing, for the very first time television was bringing into the limelight the domestic workload of women that had until then remained invisible.

It would seem that the television producers chose their models with care.[13] "A family [of modest means] that seems to be able to make ends meet" says the schoolteacher of Micheline's children. His expert opinion and moral support are given during the first few minutes of the documentary: families do well in these new homes because women keep control of their households.

Nevertheless, money management cannot be reduced to mere submission to an economic rationale imposed from on high by institutions that control family budgets. The domestic economy is horizontal and is firmly tied to close social relations; these women activate a network of sociability that guarantees them resources and donations (this is particularly the case for Micheline, Françoise and another lady from Biarritz) and sometimes a secondary income (washing the neighbours' clothes) ("JT 20h: Une famille budget 800 frcs Biarritz", August 25 1970). Moreover, the women take the opportunity offered by the interviews to talk about their own moral economy[14] which is defined in terms of individual situations. For example, Micheline makes the distinction between useful expenditure and superfluous expenditure. She prefers feeding her children to buying beauty products. While she sees make-up as "a waste of money", she does "not [systematically] disapprove of other people using it, such as a young woman with no family responsibilities. She simply points out that "I just don't have the time". She puts on a little lipstick on the rare occasions she goes out with her husband. Whilst make-up is certainly a matter of cost and morals, it is also a question of time: one needs time and opportunity to wear make-up. With her six children, Micheline has little of either.

Another example of moral economy is Mrs. Mercier, who has 6 children and who is separated from her husband who gives her no money. She has a disability pension and is unable to work. If she pays her rent, she cannot feed her children. The conclusion she has come to is that she cannot apply the budgeting rules: "it's impossible" (TF1,"A la bonne heure: qui habite les HLM?", May 22 1978). Then there is the couple who have made another decision; holding the debt file in her hands, the wife explains that they have trouble paying in September because they prefer to pay for their children to go on holiday so that they do not "hang around" in the streets and get into trouble [pictures 22-23] (TF1, "A la bonne heure", TF1, November 15 1976).

Picture 22–23 TF1, "A la bonne heure", November 15 1976.

We have established an initial picture of television in the post-war period – a television that was normative, a French institution, with the state simultaneously controlling the audiovisual world and social and family policies. Gender roles are clearly distinguished. Women are in the front line when it comes to keeping the accounts, finding resources and making savings. They are also at the origin of moral economies that contradict budgetary teachings. These "account book" documentaries nevertheless give them a platform for almost the entire duration of the reports. The women are not shown as mere budgetary strategists and performers of household tasks; they have a voice and they talk – not so much to the journalists as to the women who are watching. They are holding up a mirror and calling out to women who are in similar situations. When they punctuate their remarks with "you know…", they are talking to women who know how hard it is to make ends meet and to raise so many children. Their stories are relevant to other women. Expressing their views in this way to the camera, they are speaking to the public. They are thus encouraging and supporting the inner debates of the women listening to them in their social homes. This is clearly the objective of the television series Les Femmes... aussi - sixty-five documentaries produced between 1964 and 1973 by Éliane Victor. A way of talking to women about women, for almost an hour. "It wasn't a programme we watched for our entertainment" asserts Eliane Victor (Scatton-Tessier 2005: 977, 983). What was the result of the eruption and broadcasting of this discourse? In what way did it echo other public discourses by women belonging to social movements?

Emancipatory Perspectives

With these questions in mind, a different interpretation of the home-making, money-management and women theme becomes possible. My analysis of the corpus reveals clearly bifurcating lines: some documentaries let up on the educational pressure and examine more emancipatory perspectives which are representative of 1960's and 1970's politics: paid work and consumer protection associations.

Women Active in the Workplace

Other documentaries examine one of second-wave feminism's greatest demands: access to paid work. How can one properly "dwell", properly look after one's home and manage one's budget if one is working away from home? These documentaries reveal women's social insecurity, with low salaries, no childcare centres or social policies to support women at work, and the sharing of tasks within the family unit.

For example, in 1970, for 51 minutes the documentary Le prix du deuxième (television serie Les femmes...aussi) shows women calculating household finances in front of the camera and wondering if giving birth to a second child would be economically reasonable (Première chaîne, "Les femmes...aussi: Le prix du deuxième," February 11 1970). First segment: interview with a young woman called Arlette, holding her baby in her arms. She lives on a large estate. After having her second child, she has kept her job. For 2'52" the interviewer asks her about the family budget: the first child's school, the second child's nanny, travel, benefits and salaries. She is filmed up-close so that one can clearly see her facial expressions [picture 24]. When the sums have been completed, the interviewer's conclusion is unequivocal: "in fact there's no point in you working". After a few moments of silence, the young woman, surprised, opens her mouth to respond, but then changes her mind.


Picture 24 Première chaîne,"Les femmes...aussi: Le prix du deuxième," February 11 1970.

Finally she says that she had not taken account of the fact that she would lose her benefits when she went back to work. "At the end of the day, I'm showing you that whether you work or not, the result is pretty much the same" says the journalist. Arlette pouts, her silence is eloquent … she is trapped in her calculations, but her sceptical expression shows that as far as she is concerned the issue is elsewhere: one of continuing to have a job.

Picture 25 Première chaîne,"Les femmes...aussi: Le prix du deuxième," February 11 1970.

Arlette is a sales assistant in a large grocery store. The pictures show her serving customers [picture 25] while her husband is interviewed at home. "She's the one who wants to work, she makes her own decisions. That doesn't mean she's unhappy at home, but she prefers being at work, she's been working in retail since she was 12 or 14." Yet while a factory manager who was interviewed said that the majority of women stop working after their second child, Arlette wanted to carry on working. Why?

"I told myself I'd never get this job back, because nowadays in retail there's no tenure." She wants to keep a job that she enjoys, a job where she has tenure, with economic and social security and perhaps a certain amount of financial independence. The law passed on 30 December 1966 allows women to stop work for one year after giving birth and obliges employers to take them back, but not necessarily in the same position. The fact of working has also allowed Arlette to create a progressive organisation of the home (her husband puts the baby to bed, takes it to the nanny, makes his own meals, accepts the fact that his wife works). This is therefore a different family model shown on television, one that is potentially a source of inspiration for female viewers. Several of the women filmed formulated other responses to the question "why go back to work?": because "we had a laugh" at work, because "you quickly get bored in social housing", because home-making is repetitive whereas "at work it's different". In another documentary from 1965, Ernestine give another answer: to do something that you yourself enjoy. She is expecting her fourth child and was offered social housing 6 months ago, after living for 5 years in a garden shed. Sitting on her bed, she tells the journalist that two years ago she had bought some bedroom furniture that she had kept in storage: "65,000 [old francs] second-hand. My husband was doing his military service, I was the one who bought it. I was working, so I managed to put the money aside". She smiles, happy, radiant, proud of the purchase that she made all on her own (Première Chaîne, "Cinq colonnes à la une: Ils ont trouvé un appartement",, February 5 1965).

What solutions does the director of the film "Les prix du deuxième" suggest to make women's lives easier? First of all, during that period technological progress made it possible to reduce the number of hours worked. Anne-Marie, a typist with 3 children, works 36 hours a week ("achieved after many a long fight").[15] This union battle allowed all employees to retain the same retirement benefits. Secondly, a more radical proposal is that of a different social model. The documentary ends with pictures of parents dropping their children off at the childcare centre while a female doctor describes another model of society: "we might hope that both mother and father work less. And that the child spends its day in green spaces, spaces that are clean and nice. And that once the day's work is over, at around 4.30, mother and father come together to collect their child"[pictures 26-27].


Picture 26-27 Première chaîne, "Les femmes...aussi: Le prix du deuxième," February 11 1970.

Freedom for women to work, fewer working hours for men and women with no loss of income, a sufficient number of quality childcare centres next to the tower blocks, fathers becoming involved in home life – all of these demands coincided with those of the feminist movement and were relayed by left-wing director Jacques Krier. Although the documentary looks inside women's account books and gets them to do their sums in front of the camera, this time the reason is not so much to focus on women's domestic responsibilities as to highlight those of public authorities which do not do enough to ensure social protection for women who wish to work. Certain responsibilities (amenity charges, household chores) need to be shared within the home, while others should be undertaken by public institutions. The home-making, money management and women theme becomes more complex; Jacques Krier demonstrates the need for men and social institutions as part of this trio.

Women: Consumers up in Arms

Women were in charge of the rent and as such were on the front line when there was an increase. They then needed to go out of the home, make their voices heard and sometimes even join organised social movements. To properly manage one's budget, one's home and one's family also means standing up for oneself and joining associations.

The difficulties in paying the rent (constantly on the rise since the 1950s) encountered by social housing tenants throughout France led certain television programmes to devote entire reports to the problem (TF1,"A la bonne heure", TF1, November 15 1976). "Is there a social housing crisis?" asks the presenter of several segments in the A la bonne heure programme in 1976 – and it is women who reply [pictures 28-29]. First of all a female tenant, interviewed bread in hand, explains her budget: "We hang on in there, we hang on in, but people around here have a lot of problems with the bailiffs. Life is so hard. Even the most careful can no longer manage. I know that personally I never had debts, but I have to admit that since the start of this year I do have a few". At the supermarket, other inhabitants complain that the rise in social housing rents digs into the food budget: "once you've done your sums, there's not much left", "I can't do it. Just to feed the kids.

Picture 28–30 TF1, "A la bonne heure", November 15 1976.

My husband is a labourer, I have 5 children. I was behind with my rent. Bailiffs and ten grand in debts!" Another woman: "we make potato stews because we can't afford anything else".

Next, a woman is interviewed next to her window [picture 30]. Her face is marked, she is filled with emotion. Arms crossed, she talks about her debts, her voice cracks. Her husband has been ill, she has not made any payments for two months and the bailiffs came and threatened seizure. "This [debt] has been dragging me down for three years". As she talks through her budget, we understand why she cannot put any money aside; she is thus at the mercy of any tiny incident. By filming this woman close up, the cameraman demonstrates the full weight of being in charge of the budget – a moral weight that has physically marked her face. More than anything else, like the others, she speaks out to challenge the intransigence of the social landlord who simply does not care.

Other women are shy, not really daring to articulate any complaint. Like this retired woman living in La Courneuve in 1978 with her disabled son (TF1, "A la bonne heure: qui habite les HLM?", TF1, May 22 1978). Weighed down by debts, the company in charge of social housing has offered her a cheaper but very dilapidated flat, with no heating or bathroom. "I just want a shower … so we don't have to wash in the kitchen. I think those days are over now." She has made her point. Just a few words suffice to demonstrate the scandalous behaviour of the social landlord.

Social housing residents were regularly interviewed to protest against high rents. One example is Denise Girier, a tenant in Givors, whose husband is unemployed [pictures 31-32-33] (Antenne 2, " Antenne 2 Midi: Architecture HLM à Givors", July 2 1981). She is the one who deals with the rent and she is

Picture 31–33 " Antenne 2 Midi: Architecture HLM à Givors", Antenne 2, July 2 1981.

filmed rent receipt in hand, protesting against the rise in heating charges; she explains that with support from the communist local authority, residents were able to block rent payments.

In 1980 in Argenteuil a woman lays four blankets over her baby in her pram [pictures 34-35]. She pays a huge amount for heating but their building is very damp. Another resident, member of the tenants association, is filmed with a bill in her hand; she explains that they have decided to block payment of amenity charges [pictures 36-37] (Deuxième Chaîne, "C'est la vie: loyer et charges Argenteuil", January 10 1980). There are several reports monitoring these avenues of protest.

Picture 34–37 Deuxième Chaîne,"C'est la vie: loyer et charges Argenteuil", January 10 1980. Picture 38–39 Deuxième Chaîne, "C'est la vie", deuxième chaîne, January 1 1980.

For example, in 1980, one archive shows a tenants' meeting in a social housing flat in the north of France. One man, seven women and three children are present [pictures 38-39] (Deuxième chaîne, "C'est la vie", January 1 1980). This composition illustrates the tone of such movement: a meeting where women are in the majority and attend with their children – a composition similar to those of feminist groups and which departs from the traditional model of militant gatherings, pre-1968, with a majority of men. The report revolves around Arlette Bais, a militant from the district community union. She explains how she telephones neighbours to sound the alert so that they can block bailiffs coming to expulse families who have not paid their rent. And how residents park their cars in front of the tower blocks to prevent lorries from coming to remove seized furniture.

In France, the 1970s saw the rise in political power of consumer protection associations.[16] It was "district community" unionism – syndicalisme du cadre de vie in French – which covered everything that affected living conditions in the broadest sense: housing, the quality of public spaces, sports, cultural and social amenities, ecology, and the quality of consumer goods. Such movements were especially active on large housing estates, in an attempt to improve the quality of life. For local residents they represented first and foremost a pathway to socialisation, and secondly to politicisation. They encouraged women to speak out in public. In showing women who run public meetings and take action to block bailiffs, television reflected post-1968 transformations and a stronger female presence on the political stage. They became organisers of social life, taking charge of community issues – a task of a political nature that was anchored in everyday life.

In this respect archive analysis is more fruitful than the urban sociology of the time. Researchers who have studied district community unionism – and even more specifically its arrival in districts in the form of urban struggles[17] – never mention the presence of women. French urban sociology of the 1960s and 1970s, behind the Marxist figures of Lojkine, Lefevbre and Castells, cared not a fig for social relationships of gender or for the new roles that women were taking on in the social world (Dagenais 1980). A deafening silence. The central place of women that was hidden by sociology texts, was revealed on the small screen. It was a real invasion – nothing but women on television! Directors' attention was occupied by women's faces, words and bodies.

Calculating in Front of the Camera as Way to Become Public

Post-war French television took a plurivocal view of ongoing social and urban changes: the development of large social housing tower blocks, the emancipation of women social movements within district communities and the evolution of domestic economies. Television can be normative just as it can reflect or even encourage the evolution of mores.

Women's activities are tied to the welfare state which is revealed in all its complexity, controlling with one hand the rationalisation of domestic budgets and practices, and, with the other, improving living conditions and protecting individuals against vulnerabilities (Bock & Thane 1994, Lewis 1992, Esping-Andersen 1990). Looking after the home meant juggling between account books, social amenities, the material comfort of the new homes, social benefits, community movements and arrangements between family members and neighbours. Women have to come to terms with all of these factors in order to look after the home.

First of all, and most significantly, this analysis of the history of television reveals just how heavily home-making and money management weighed on women. Both the reports and documentaries show that there was no respite from their work in the home. But how much of this work were men aware of in the 1960s and 1970s?

Television reflected the deep social transformations and goalsof the postwar period: comfortable housing for all, social policies, women's emancipation, labour rights, growing consumerism, political movements. Its importance was profound. The audio-visual programmes studied in this review document the progress (with varying degrees of criticism) of the welfare state as it developed, spread and grew in significance. Film producers and directors were themselves influenced by this changing society. Their task was to show and explain these transformations, in concrete terms, to the French people. There were notable slippages: sometimes women's traditional roles and gendered values were represented; sometimes emancipation models and avant-garde ideas were advanced.

To conclude I will confine myself to emphasising two main research findings. Firstly, my study reveals the gendered dimensions of the welfare state. Housing and social policies were based on gender biases which replayed the labour and power divisions such as the dependence of women on men as bread-winners, women's domestic and family responsibilities. High-rise estates emphasised the economic dependency of women in the absence of transport, child care, employment, and activities other than domestic education. Women had to stay at home!

Nevertheless, some of these women used television to erase such boundaries when explaining their domestic and economic problems. Complaining on screen or joining consumer associations meant involvment in the public sphere to protest about their social conditions, via their particular experience of housekeeping and family life. Even if it was selective and limited participation, television accentuated and broadcast their voices to many homes across the country.

Other women that were filmed, such as Arlette (introduced above), were more radical in that they gave up home-making to work, became a union member, or told their husbands to cook. Moreover, district community unions (syndicalisme du cadre de vie) that developed in high-rise estates did not delimit the struggle for

Women's emancipation to the domestic experience. They joined other struggles for contraception, abortion, and against racism (Overney 2019). Television became a megaphone for on-going social transformations and political movements.

Secondly, my analyses deconstruct the stereotypes relating to women and their domestic activities. They are consistent with works that have cross-cut the analysis of gender with the history of consumption (de Grazia & Furlough 1996). Social sciences challenge the "separate spheres" ideology which caricatures consumption as purely feminine and production as purely masculine. These works show why consumption should not be considered as exclusively feminine and passive but as a dynamic process which is based on social relations and which generates them in turn. Television archives are useful material with which to examine the repressive or emancipatory effects of consumer society on women. Of course, in many of the programmes women embody the passive consumer: they do their shopping with their husband's money, do the housework and use the products and household appliances the merits of which have been extolled in television programmes for women. The pedagogical messages aimed exclusively at the female sex perpetuate the timeworn cliché that compares the spendthrift and gullible woman with the rational male consumer – an image that is very much present in Emile Zola's novel Au Bonheur des Dames (The Ladies' Delight) and that the these educational programmes take up for their own purposes: "if you are going to make purchases like that, you'll need to be as cunning as a fox".

My analysis of the corpus suggests that identities and gender and power relations can also be redefined through consumption. Firstly, the women are always filmed when in action, which destabilises the passive consumer model. They do their accounts, they touch and feel the merchandise and they compare prices at the supermarket. The documentaries put them under the spotlight. Secondly, these pictures put into perspective the notion of "depending on" one's husband. The man's salary is of course the household's principle source of income, but television highlights the behind-the-scenes work done by the women: savings made on small items, administrative claims, salvage, social benefits, and defence of moral economies. Finally, housing problems lead to speaking out in public. Television reveals women who on a daily basis adopt political stances that echo the demands of feminist movements. Women do their share to evolve these new towns.

Laetitia Overney, Associate Professor, École Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture Paris Belleville, UMR AUSser 3329 (Architecture, Urbanism, Society), is a sociologist. Her work involves studies of social housing, urban social movements and the 1960-1970 archives of the women's movement in France, such as personnal letters, almanacs, handbooks, papers, leaflets, television programmes. E-mail: laetitia.overney@laposte.net

Notes

[1]Influenced by C. Frederick's Anglo-Saxon domestic science (1919).
[2]Habitation à Loyer Modéré = low-rent social housing for people of low incomes.
[3]According to the 1954 census, 90% of French homes had neither shower nor bath, 73% had no inside lavatory and 42% had no running water (Insee: 1969).
[4]Thus, I am again taking up an idea suggested earlier by historians who have studied maternalism. The authors use the maternalism to describe how women in the U.S.A and western Europe use the language of motherhood to justify their involvement in the public sphere. The concept of maternalism is useful in analysing how women all over the world laid claim to social, civic and political rights and, thus, citizenship, via their particular experience of motherhood. (Gordon 1994, Van der Klein et al 2012)
[5]Construction increased in the late 1950s to cope with the housing crisis, particularly through the development of ZUPs (zones to be urbanised as a priority). New districts sprang up in the form of huge estates of over a thousand homes, bearing the stamp of modern architecture. Construction reached its peak in 1973 with 556,000 homes built.
[6]Linda Gordon describes this kind of economic and moral supervision in the U.S.A from the end of the nineteenth century as well as the beginning of economic aid for poor women and children (discussing the supervision of household budgets, child-rearing practices and the overall lifestyle of recipients). Her book sheds light on welfare programs that led directly to the view of the poor as inferior and unable to care for themselves and their children (Gordon, 1994). For an overview of the French historical context, see Isaac Joseph and Philippe Fritsch's research, which examines the supervision of poor families in France from the second half of the eighteenth century onwards (Joseph & Fritsch, 1977).
[7]The documentary concerns people who earn less than one thousand francs a month, i.e. equivalent to the average salary of a female worker in 1972 (969 francs) and less than the average salary for a male worker (1403 francs) (Baudelot & Lebeaupin, 1979: 17).
[8]In France, there are two ways to finance social housing: on one hand, by granting funds to social-housing landlords for the construction, on the other hand, by paying a benefit to the tenant to cover a part of the rent.
[9]The housing crisis was so serious in France in the early 1960s that even the middle class had difficulties finding a stable and pleasant place to live.
[10]Sociologist Michel Verret provides certain figures for France: in 1951, expenditure on the home accounted for 8% of the working-class budget (deteriorated housing with low rents), rising to 18.1% in 1972 (Verret 1979: 28).
[11]For example, from 1971, the French State imposes 30% of social housing reserved for poor families among new social housing built in the Paris region. Journal Officiel, june 5 1971.

[12]"Patronage" in French. An activity centre for children run by the Catholic church during the school holidays.
[13]There is no information in the archives about the making of the programmes. Eliane Victor leads one to suppose in her book that the women were found by word of mouth (Victor 1973: 11), for example among the film director's acquaintances.
[14]Thompson, a historian specialising in the 18th century, used the notion of moral economy to describe a community's economic values and practices. The complex nature of this notion has been discussed for some time (Thompson 1971), (Fassin 2009). Without wishing to continue the debate in this article, I use the term moral economy to underline poor people's ability to determine what is or is not acceptable, what is right and fair, and to orient their acts in accordance.
[15]The legal duration is 40 hours.
[16]This was the beginning of consumer protection laws – such as the 1972 law regulating doorstep selling.
[19]Militants protested against insalubrious housing, rising rents, gentrification and the destruction of social venues; they supported an urbanism that listened to inhabitants. For a presentation of these struggles, see (Miller 2003).

References

"JT 20h: Une famille budget 800 frcs Biarritz", August 25 1970.
Antenne 2, "Antenne 2 Midi: Architecture HLM à Givors", July 2 1981.
Baudelot, Christian & Anne Lebeaupin (1979): "Les salaires de 1950 à 1975," *Économie et statistiques*, 113: 1, 15–22.
Bock, Gisela & Pat Thane (eds) (1994): *Maternity and Gender Policies. Women and the Rise of the European Welfare State 1880s–1950s*, London & New York, Routledge.
Caigny de, Sofie (2005): "Catholicism and The Domestic Sphere: Working-Class Women in Inter-war Flanders," *Home Cultures*, 2: 1, 1–24.
Canteux, Camille (2014): *Filmer les grands ensembles*, Paris: Créaphis.
Cazeneuve, Jean (1980): *Sociologie de la radio-télévision*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
Clarke Jackie (2005): "L'organisation ménagère comme pédagogie. Paulette Bernège et la formation d'une nouvelle classe moyenne das les années 1930 et 1940," *Travail, genre et sociétés*, 13, 139–157.
Dagenais, Huguette (1980): "Les femmes dans la ville et dans la sociologie urbaine: les multiples facettes d'une même oppression," *Anthropologie et sociétés*, 4:1, 21–36.
Deuxième chaîne, "Affaire vous concernant: couple pauvre",October 26 1981.
Deuxième chaîne, "C'est la vie: loyer et charges Argenteuil", January 10 1980.
Deuxième chaîne, "C'est la vie", January 1 1980.
Deuxième Chaîne, "JT 20h: Les moins de 1000 frcs", October 25 1972.
Esping-Andersen, Gosta, (1990): *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
Fassin, Didier (2009): "Les économies morales revisitées'," *Annales. Histoire, Sciences sociales*, 64: 6, 1237–1266.
Frederick, Christine (1919): *Household engineering. Scientific Management in the*

home, Chicago: American school of home economics.
Gordon, Linda (1994): *Pitied But Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare*, London: Free Press.
Grazia de, Victoria & Elen Furlough (eds) (1996): *The Sex of Things: Gender and Consumption in Historical Perspective*, Berkeley: University of California Press.
Hoggart, Richard (1957): *The Uses of Literacy: Aspects of Working Class Life*, London: Chatto and Windus.
INSEE (1969): Résultats préliminaires du recensement de 1968: démographie générale, population active, ménages, logements, Paris: Insee.
Joseph, Isaac & Philippe Fritsch (1977): *Disciplines à domicile: l'édification des familles*, Fontenay-sous-Bois: Recherches.
Lazarsfeld Paul F. & Franck N.Stanton (1949): *Communications research 1948–1949*, New York: Harper & Brothers.
Lévy Marie-Françoise (1995): "Famille et télévision 1950–1986," *Réseaux*, 72–73, 177-193.
Lewis, Jane (1992): "Gender and the Development of Welfare Regimes," *Journal of European Social Policy*, vol. 2 (3), 159–73
Miller, Micheal James (2003): *The Representation of Place: Urban planning and protest in France and Great Britain, 1950–1980*, Farnham: Ashgate.
Overney, Laetitia (2019): "Les archives féministes du logement social: une mémoire discrète et émiétée," Bard, Christine, (ed.) *Les féministes et leurs archives (1968–2018)*, Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, upcoming book.
Pahl Jan & Vogler Carolyn (1994): "Money, power and inequality within marriage," *The Sociological Review*, 42: 2, 2363-288.
Potucheck, Jean-L., (1997): *Who Supports The Family? Gender and Breadwinning in Dual-Earner Marriages*, Redwood City: Standford University Press.
Première Chaîne, " Vivre au présent: Le budget familial", October 25 1971.
Première chaîne, "Cinq colonnes à la une: Ils ont trouvé un appartement", February 5 1965.
Première Chaîne, "L'avenir est à vous: Conseillère ménagère", March 16 1964.
Première chaîne, "Les femmes...aussi: Le prix du deuxième," February 11 1970.
Première chaîne, "Les femmes...aussi: Micheline, 6 enfants, rue des Jonquilles", April 24 1967.
Première Chaîne, "Vivre au présent: Le budget familial", October 25 1971.
Rudolph, C. Nicole (2014): *At home in Postwar: Modern Mass Housing and the Right to Comfort*, New-York: Berghahn Books.
Scatton-Tessier, Michelle (2005): "Rencontre avec Eliane Victor, la Grande Dame de la télévision française," *The French Review*, 78 : n°5, 976–987.
Segalen, Martine (1994): "The Salon des Arts Ménagers, 1923–1983: A French Effort to Instil the Virtues of home and Norms of Good Taste," *Journal of Design History*, VII, 267–75.
TF1, " A la bonne heure: qui habite les HLM ?", May 22 1978.
TF1, "A la bonne heure: qui habite les HLM ?", May 22 1978.
TF1, "A la bonne heure", TF1, November 15 1976.
TF1,"A la bonne heure", November 15 1976.
Thompson, Edward Palmer (1971): "The moral economy of the English crowd in the eighteenth century," *Past and Present*, 50, 76–136.
Troisième Chaîne, "Vie pratique: Savoir tenir son budget", April 1 1974.
Verret, Michel (1979): *L'espace ouvrier*, Paris: Armand Colin.
Victor, Eliane (1973): Les femmes...aussi, Paris: Mercure de France.
Van der Klein, Marian, Plant, Rebecca, Sanders, Nichole, & Lori Weintrob (eds) (2012): *Maternalism Reconsidered: Motherhood, Welfare and Social Policy in the Twentieth Century*, New-York: Berghahn Books.

Culture Unbound
Journal of Current Cultural Research

Landscapes of Thrift and Dwelling: Dwelling and Sociality in *Midsomer Murders*

By Stefan Zahlmann

Abstract

In its long history of airing the popular crime series *Midsomer Murders* does not only present various murder cases but also a glimpse into the opinions on gender, sexuality, age and ethnicity. These opinions mirror the attitude of the producers as well as the anticipated expectations of the audience. The dicussion of these aspects are inseperately linked to the categories of thrift and dwelling and it seems that the ways of living in Midsomer County are always overwriting the questions of guilt, atonement and punishment. Furthermore the episodes of the series offer strategies to an aesthetic evaluation of sociality in an fictional countryside. Here murders become not only a question of morality and crime but show the depth of human nature as a hidden reality underneath the scenery of rural purity.

Keywords: *Midsomer Murders*, cottage, mansion, public house, cultural diversity, sexuality.

Zahlmann, Stefan: "Landsacpes of Thrift and Dwelling: Dwelling and Sociality in *Midsomer Murders*", *Culture Unbound*, Volume 11, issue 3–4, 2019: 466–484. Published by Linköping University Electronic Press: http://www.cultureunbound.ep.liu.se

Introduction

When I was asked to contribute to a thematic section about thrift and dwelling in popular media, I immediately thought of *Midsomer Murders*. It is obviously a production that is closely tied to the era of "austerity Britain (1939-53)" (Bramall 2013: 1) and its long aftermath stretching to the present. In this series thrift and dwelling are aspects that allow the audience to follow not only a murder case but the struggle of poor versus rich, countryside versus city, old versus young, tradition versus modernity.[1] Landscape, heritage, ethnicity and gender set the stage for all these battles, intertwined in manifold ways with each other, rendering it far too complex to isolate one of these aspects. *Midsomer Murders* is located in the fictitious Midsomer County with Causton as county town and more than fifty mostly picturesque villages. In each episode at least one murder occurs, very often many more. The extremely high crime rate would fit better to a large city but adds at least some suspense to the otherwise very decorous lifestyle of the rural population. How to start discussing thrift and dwelling in such a series? Before trying to elucidate what all of these terms could mean in a television series – defining them, outlining their evolution within the series and what may be their relevance for (at least) British society – let us start with the first episode to see what happens when the shadow of murder looms over the sunny realm of Midsomer County, the garden of Good and Evil.

The Beginnings: *Midsomer Murders,* "The Killings at Badger's Drift", ITV, March 23 1997

Former school teacher Emily Simpson loves photographing rare orchids. On one of her plant forays, she sees something so traumatic that she rushes back to her cottage with her tricycle in a panic. Detective Chief Inspector Tom Barnaby and Detective Sergeant Gavin Troy, having been informed by a suspicious neighbor who is also a keen botanist, later find Emily lifeless at the foot of her stairs, her neck broken, supposedly due to a fall. When it becomes clear that the old lady was murdered, Barnaby discovers that before her death Emily called a helpline and referred to the situation of a women "just like Anabella".

The local undertaker Dennis Rainbird arrives at the scene almost at the same time as the police. Along with his mother Iris he not only profits from prepaid funeral programs but from blackmailing numerous locals. Eventually their spying and blackmailing goes too far and they are both hacked to death by the killer. The undertaker is gay, which is challenging for manly DS Troy, but his death is not seen as a punishment for his homosexual desire, but rather for his and his mother's greed.[2]

Following the trail of the mysterious "Anabella", Barnaby's inquiries lead him to Ty House, a mansion that has seen better days, but still has the charm of old splendor. The owner, Henry Trace, lost his first wife Bella in an apparent hunting accident, which was actually murder. Later her sister Phyllis, who was secretly in love with Henry, confessed to killing her and then committed suicide in her cell at the police station. But she had been tricked by the true murderer, and had never done anything wrong except in her fantasies.

It transpires that all the murders were committed by Henry's second wife-to-be, Catharine Lacey, who is incestuously involved with her brother Michael, a local artist. Emily's allusion to "Anabella" refers to a play in which this kind of incestuous love features, as Barnaby realizes at last, when he watches it with his wife in a local theatre.

The first death in the pilot of 1997 was the murder of an old, poor former school teacher,[3] a "spinster" (00:07:03),[4] living in the romantically named "Beehive Cottage" (poor, but industrious!) and interested in lovely plants. A grandmotherly economical woman, living alone in a cottage – this spinster stereotype is essential to *Midsomer Murders*, not due to her appearance in the first minutes of a series which aired more than two decades ago, but because this is iconic characterisation for crime fiction in general, along with its manifold links to the core subject of the series: thrift. The spinster as a figure connects this episode with the Golden Age of crime fiction, which extends back to Agatha Christie's work (Bergin 2012: 85), especially her books on Miss Jane Marple, who is in all aspects like an older sister of Emily Simpson. Merely by this allusion the series is rooted in a history of detective stories that ambiguously combine modern and traditional elements. Unlike the older Sherlock Holmes Stories (by Doyle) or Hercules Poirot cases (by Christie), both of which are very urban and modernist in style, and even though tied to earlier spinster figures in popular culture, the Miss Marple past is a postwar past, the classical era of thrift in Britain. While she travels between unquestioned entities, solving crimes "between city and country, on expertise in both environments" (Deen 2018: 135f), her younger version Simpson is able to act socially simply by living in a setting where landscape and city, heritage and modernity, are understood as mere cultural constructs – and this is a sign of growing "porousness of the rural village" (Deen 2018: 136), which in turn becomes the reason for conflicts about thrift that eventually lead to the crime plots in this series.

The pilot gives the series an exposition that remained virtually unchanged until today's seasons. One central element is the cottage as a home for nice ladies who are the social core of a lovely village. A cottage, surrounded by roses and filled with antique furniture represents an order that is well known from countless movies and TV productions of the fifties and sixties – or of productions that take place in these years. It is the special charm of *Midsomer Murders* that it offers a visual and narrative experience of this "heritage cinema" (Trimm 2018: 125f, McCluskey 2018: 34), not only by the characters depicted but by the villages and landscape – unfortunately with all the conservative features that make it so unfashionable for a modern audience. And this – the struggle to defeat a Britain in decline, to defend this "bastion of Englishness" (a controversial term that will be discussed in the following pages) – is the sign of an underlying plot conflict up to season 15: "Because permanence is felt to be admirable, the English landscape is pervasively antiquated. (…) The landscape is England's prime anachronism – a vast museumised ruin." (Lowenthal 2004: 142)

Here the theme of heritage is most visible: it is the double-edged sword of embracing a past that was perhaps never as bright as its media presentation suggests, and although lovely to behold, has always been considered an element of suppression in a world of social control, crime and judgment. It provides fake history for the audience, but it initiates a series that expects you to embrace not the presence of facts but the mere idea of authenticity to enjoy the plots.

The characters in the series are self-evidently unrealistic. Not because they are played by bad actors, but because there is an obvious disinterest in the actual intimacy of human life. Characters seem to be two-dimensional people taken from a romantic picture. In *Midsomer Murders* even the main characters from the police force remain distant to the audience (and sometimes to each other), which paradoxically becomes most apparent in the sterile scenes of their private life. Aside from these stereotypes covered in human flesh, there is only one real actor in the series, and that is the *stage* of the plot: the landscape. And its major role pertains to thrift and other values of public interest (Roe & Taylor 2014: 8).

The counterpoint to living in a cottage (signifying a life of humble thrift and inner beauty) is living in a mansion. This is not a life of thrift but often of carefully maintained remnants of former luxury. The "grand house" in this and in many other episodes has a real double meaning: it is not only a very big house, surrounded by a vast estate and impressive gardens, it is also inhabited by families of grandeur who can proudly look back on decades if not centuries of political and economic influence. At least until the very particular situation that is shown in the *Midsomer Murders* episode where this family is introduced. It seems that these families are on the brink of shifting from history to modernity. And due to the conservative undercurrents of this series it is most often a young woman, a newcomer, who turns the splendor into social relegation. In the pilot it is the scheme of the pretty young bride to combine the status of a Lady with the benefits of cheating on her wheelchair-bound old husband for a more attractive young man, who happens to be her brother. In plots like these the younger new wife has been unable to manage her greed for money properly.[5]

The cottage and the mansion are not a pair of opposites of dwelling but are complementary. The inhabitants of both spheres accept the same set of social rules and have no plans to change it. It is merely the crime that disturbs this traditional heritage and questions the legitimacy of an old order facing the challenges of modern times. The comforting and reassuring common ground is vanishing, the heritage is dishonored.

The duo of detective sergeant and inspector in the early seasons is the entity that has to deal with the problematic implications of thinking that a "murderer" is never held to be a part of the unchangeable old but is something new.[6] This novelty cannot be controlled by the set of inherited rules, and because of its criminal character cannot become a topic of discussing the necessity for change. Rather, for the Midsomer community, it becomes nothing less than an indication of a disrupted society. The authority of the policemen is the only force that is able to solve this conflict between old and new – not by enforcing modernity, but by reinstating the traditional rules. "Murder" in the show's early years is somehow the inevitable way of cleansing the Midsomer community of its own destructive elements. It is a sort of purgatory to defend the old, because the new has no legitimate status yet.

The phenomenological start of this essay, which simply describes what an audience sees in the first minutes of the series' pilot, the first impressions and how to approach the implications of *Midsomer Murders*, needs a theoretical base for discussing the relevance of thrift and dwelling and for defining its cultural dimensions for an audience.

Thrift and dwelling in *Midsomer Murders*

The relation of thrift and dwelling in *Midsomer Murders* becomes highly visible in the media dispute with heritage. This is not only an aesthetic element of the series, but becomes in the crime aspects, i.e. on the level of the stories told, a conflict between the status of a heritage-based cultural identity and human rights, basically represented in the right to not be physically harmed, but, in fact, in the awareness and acceptance of ethnic, sexual, and social difference as well. For the viewers, in the safety of their armchairs, watching the series gives an additional pleasure in contextualizing *Midsomer Murders* in the history of British crime fiction and countryside drama, enjoying "ecomuseal" (Davis & Corsane 2014: 118) allusions of various kinds. *Midsomer Murders* is an example within the genre of crime series that links the concepts of thrift and dwelling in rural culture. The most important feature in this entertaining blend is that it is not real at all, it is a mixture of past and present stereotypes, cultural citations of imagined national and local identities and – among many other fictions – of the countryside as a "value-laden entity" (Roe & Taylor 2014a: 1).

You do not find anything real concerning thrift and dwelling in Britain in this series, but you will no doubt glimpse a visual discourse on the meaning of thrift and dwelling considered to be apt for an international audience. The only reality confronting the viewer in this series is the joy or disgust you feel about the concepts shown – and this will make you part of the following discussion.

Midsomer Murders as a part of British cultural heritage

Midsomer Murders shares the fate of a great many media products that are negatively criticized by many viewers, secretly enjoyed by many more, but almost academically unrecognized (Bergin 2012: 83). The series is an ITV detective drama running since 1997. The pilot of *Midsomer Murders*, "The Killings at Badger's Drift", along with the first episodes, was based on the Inspector Barnaby novels of Caroline Graham and adapted by Anthony Horowitz. The start of the regular series in 1998 led to twenty-one seasons to date. Since in countries like Germany it is aired under the title *Inspector Barnaby* the production needed to create a sort of family connection between Tom Barnaby, the original character played by John Nettles, and John Barnaby, the new inspector embodied by Neil Dudgeon since season 14.

Although this new face was not the only change the audience had to accept, the new story lines, sets, and casts (with a focus on diversity of all kinds) were not as negatively received by the audience as one would imagine.[7] The obvious division between the "old" and the "new" seasons relates to a controversy caused by the former producer Brian True-May (Bergin 2012: 95). In 2011 True-May said in an interview that the series was "the last bastion of Englishness" and "that it appeals to a certain audience, which seems to succeed" (https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-12741847). In his eyes it seemed unproblematic for the audience that there are no prominently featured non-white characters. True-May eventually stepped down as producer, "to pursue further projects" (Bergin 2012: 92), and made way for a more ethnically diverse picture of British society since season 15.[8] His intention has been problematic, but the core of his argument remains the same: "Englishness" is the essential theme of this crime series. But within this concept must be included a struggle that shapes the episodes of all seasons. In this essay seasons 1 to 14 are sometimes called the "early" seasons, subsequent seasons the "new" ones, starting with 2012. Obviously True-May's proclaimed true Englishness is nothing more than an "England-Land" (Lowenthal 2004: 147), a media theme park to visit via television. And a way of fighting the doubters as to whether Britain ever existed in the way modern culture remembers it (Wand 2004: 242, Bergin 2012: 92).

Midsomer Murders is sold to a large number of countries and praised in reviews for its countryside aesthetics and rural crime plots. In the societies of Western television culture there seems to be a ready acceptance for mystery located in the concept of a "typically" British countryside.

Thrift and dwelling as media constructs

What is meant by categories like “thrift” and “dwelling” in this essay? Normally it is relatively easy to define both terms economically, politically, socially or historically in a way that seems to establish them as facts, positive entities or aspects that are so obvious that it makes them indisputable. A series like *Midsomer Murders* is pure fiction. It is not a “mirror” of facts, but always an enactment, a picture of a scene. A mirror might physically be objective, but what one sees in a mirror depends on the person looking into it. All major themes discussed in this text have to be considered the result of the work of subjects, numerous people involved in the production – and the creative, producing mind of each viewer watching episodes of this series (Tschiggerl et al. 2019: 81). Categories like thrift and dwelling enable academics to watch the series in certain ways, but are not defined in this media as they are in a scholarly textbook. Even though thrift and dwelling are the focus of this volume, one should consider that both aspects in *Midsomer Murders* are sometimes visible in a rather oblique or, on the contrary, an over the top way. Not losing focus seems possible by using a single term like “heritage” to gain a combined access to media concepts of thrift and dwelling.

For me thrift is therefore not a mere economic procedure but a media enactment of a cultural practice. It is, especially combined with the concept of dwelling, not only a way of living but an actively chosen or forced way of showing individual connections to a certain community, to concepts of sometimes multiple pasts, presents, and futures. It combines biographical features with social, aesthetic, historical, ecological, artistic, and even more aspects – in the case of *Midsomer Murders*, you have to add criminal aspects. It is symbolized in objects and practices as manifold as the persons that are involved. One very prominent way to discuss thrift in a crime series is to link it to murder: the need for money, if you are poor; the greed for more money, if you are rich, are the most obvious motives imaginable for a crime. But the plots in *Midsomer Murders* are generally more sophisticated, especially when thrift and dwelling open a field of tension of various emotions like revenge or desire. As regards the series I clearly differentiate between saving and thrift, and link both to the cultural spheres of the city and the countryside (Färber & Otto 2016: 27ff). In the societies of Western civilisation we all live in “urbanized” (Fouquet & Zeilinger 2009: 9) cultures – the concept of urban life is ubiquitous even if one avoids cities and prefers villages – and because of that we need cultural patterns and objects to connect ourselves to the spheres we would like to be associated with. Just to name a few countryside examples: folk music, organic food, jeeps, clothing, hunting – and even watching series like Midsomer Murders can connect us to a concept of living that seems to be easier to control by the individuum than life in an urban structure. Thrift in Midsomer Murders means a connection to the values of a rural or village society.

By "dwelling" I mean all forms of living in a sheltered home shown in this series: from a bed in a barn to traveling in a caravan[9] to living in a luxury mansion, willingly or unwillingly. In Midsomer County dwelling also determines the level of involvement in social structures – from the life of a hermit to a public figure. It establishes the ways of being present in public places, too, when it becomes key to spending time in a community.

For a visual media like television dwelling is a fundamental topic. The way of living and the style of a house for example instantly tells the audience a lot of aspects necessary for understanding the plot. In combination with the concept of thrift it establishes a connection between a character and the particular community the person wants or has to live in. Bearing the fictitious nature of *Midsomer Murders* in mind, it resembles a presence and a past of a "good old England", real or imagined, that is familiar to many. There is no real thrift shown in *Midsomer Murders*, not even the homeless have to be hungry,[10] thrift is only an enactment of a modest, mainly analogue[11] lifestyle. Thrift in Midsomer is only an embodiment of an "austerity chic" (Bramall 2013: 17), because life in the countryside is promulgated as being easy and uncomplicated.

If a series like *Midsomer Murders* is not an official record of thrift and dwelling in the contemporary British countryside, but subjective reflections on it, the question arises as to the aim of this sort of entertainment. Here the concept of heritage comes into play: here heritage is of course not a depiction of cultural remembrance in Great Britain but a media blend of collective memories of countryside clichés, of transferred values, traditions, and responsibilities – and of the rules of crime storytelling extending from Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Agatha Christie to the present. When citing these aspects this series offers a sort of reflexive, ironic, easy access to major topics concerning British cultural memory.

New Beginnings: *Midsomer Murders,* "The Dark Rider", ITV, February 1 2012

The impressive Quitewell Hall is the site of the annual Civil war re-enactment of the Midsomer Community. Inspector John Barnaby, the cousin of retired Tom Barnaby, and Ben Jones have to investigate the death of Bentham DeQuetteville, who fell from the roof of his mansion. Shortly before he died he told his son Toby that the headless Dark Rider Geoffrey had appeared on a white stallion, pointed at him and condemned him to die. Over the next few days the Dark Rider reappears twice, leading to the deaths of Julian and Ludo DeQuetteville, and dramatically changing the line of succession for the house and estate.

The Civil War battle re-enactment on Long Meadow is supervised by John Barnaby's wife Sarah, a member of the Midsomer Historical Society, and will, if the Roundheads win, alter the possession of the location. Long Meadow would become the property of Harry Fleetwood who would permit all social events. Fleetwood's wife Sasha turns out to be a partner in crime with Toby DeQuettville. She was the Dark Rider, and together they committed the crimes.

This was the first episode after the producer Brian True-May left the production team following his controversial interview, and the first of season 15. It seems that this particular episode not only revises the core values of the early years of *Midsomer Murders* but even reveals its artificial nature as a series. History and heritage form part of the plot and are a means of criticizing *Midsomer Murders* as well. The re-enactment of a historic battle, used by the protagonists to create a "usable past" (Smith 2004: 302), which is not at all in accordance with historic facts but rather with today's longings for more wealth by some members of the gentry, is turned into a beer- and violence-loaded turmoil to entertain the local villagers. Heritage becomes simply a fiction, and, if it does not meet the needs of the public, is nothing more than fraud. This attitude is also reflected in the setting of the "Old Houses": Quitewell Hall is a dusty house belonging to a family that is not even doing well. The inhabitants of the mansion are depicted as retarded, criminal and chained to a past that they despise but have to sell to the public to make a living. And the whole business is not even managed by an old aristocrat but is totally dependent on the efforts of the young working-class wife of the eventual heir. Dwelling, thrift, landscape, gender roles and heritage become aspects either to laugh at or to see with a totally new meaning. Although the change from Tom to John Barnaby occurred in episode 82, many features of earlier seasons remained untouched until this episode. *Midsomer Murders* starts in season 15 with a totally new way of presenting the plot of a crime series.

One of these beginnings has a flaw, however. Sarah Barnaby, who in this episode proclaims to Ben Jones that she is an individual, independent from her husband's ideas, tries to direct the re-enactment but fails horribly. She does not realize that "history" in Midsomer is not related to academic facts, but simply to public fun: the participants want to get totally drunk and end the occasion in a proper brawl, still in their historical costumes. And no one has written into her script that the series is now trying to be self-mocking. It is extremely cynical that her efforts to make history alive and to be part of the commonly shared past of a divided country population – a true heritage for the present – not only is not credited with success, but makes her look like a fool. Unlike Joyce, the wife of the former Inspector Tom Barnaby, Sarah is much more independent of her husband, successful in her job as a school teacher, and much more of a social team player than a mere housewife. The relationship with her husband is laid-back, since John is a very popular and relaxed policeman who (unlike Tom) does not need the help of his wife to get access to various social events.

“The Dark Rider” links thrift with history: the latter is presented as a common good that can be consumed by everyone whatever their social status. And due to its connection to thrift, it can be understood as straightforward fun - it is even possible for members of the DQ family to blend family history and their style of dwelling into the fabric of an all-English concept of community life.

The life of the local gentry, very often morally criticized in previous seasons when it turns out that a case is related to their misbehavior, now becomes a parody of people with wealth and ancestry: due to inbreeding over generations, the male members of the DeQuettevilles all seem somewhat “strange” in their habits, if not absolutely crazy. The series’ long tradition of presenting whimsical old people of status, previously brought to perfection,[12] in this episode at least gets a counterpoint in the atmosphere at Quitewell Hall. The name seems to allow the Midsomer community and especially the many foreign tourists to gain access to a picturesque concept of nobility. Separated from the (paying) visitors in their house only by red ropes the family fakes an aristocratic British lifestyle: painting, reading old books, drinking tea. And, of course, they despise the social order of Midsomer, represented by Barnaby and Jones. The only rules that count for the DQ family is, as in previous seasons for the nobility, the private order that is based on dwelling in a feudal mansion.

Their neighbor, Harry Fleetwood, represents another family of status. Due to a victory in the Civil War over the troops of the DQ family the Fleetwoods are their hereditary enemies. Harry lives in a high-tech mansion and, as always in *Midsomer Murders*, contrasting life in an historic mansion or a cottage enriches the concept of dwelling with the theme of modernity. Here the confrontation with heritage is shown as a battle of concepts. Historical heritage is always present but only in a controlled environment: it is shown as little tin soldiers, embodied in attractive sandbox arrangements of the historic battle between both families. This sandbox is the centerpiece of a home office that would suit a New York City investment bank. The modernist aspects of his lifestyle could not contrast more with Lady Isobel’s attempts at producing romantic landscape painting for house-touring tourists. The future of the gentry in this episode is about adapting family history to the challenges of social change. Harry is not the most likeable character in this episode – he is far too rich to be a really honest guy in the logic of this series – but in waiving the win of his wife’s bet (over the ownership of Long Meadow) with Julian, he at least shows that he has class and decency.

The relationship between Barnaby and his assistant in this case study is totally different from the subordination shown in the pilot or first seasons. Jones only reluctantly accepted Barnaby as a superior, since he had hoped that after Tom’s retirement he would become the new Chief Superintendent. His new boss, schooled in psychology (whereas Tom works by intuition) and dependent on his knowledge of local affairs becomes an object of his mockery. Not only is this totally exceptional – Barnaby usually plays jokes on his subordinates – it is matched by the fact that Jones has a girlfriend, gets a promotion to the Secret Service, and after his exit as a character reappears in episode 113 with an equal rank. Other assistants in the early seasons are depicted more or less as morons, overwhelmed by situations such as dealing with gays and lesbians, being unable to drive properly and so on. Detective Sergeant Daniel Scott, the second assistant, was a character that the production was unable to handle properly in the storyline. Introduced as a cocky assistant in episode 30, the manly and attractive DS was very flirtatious with some of the female witnesses. In his first episode Scott even charmed a gay character, who was until then very difficult to question, in such a way that his boss makes jokes about it.[13] The notorious flirting should not be the major feature of this character: he openly interprets his relocation to Midsomer as a sort of disciplinary measure to tamp him down. And he refuses to adjust to the rules and collective knowledge that make Midsomer the community it is. In episode 44 he suddenly becomes ill and his character is instantly replaced by Ben Jones. Subsequent to Jones, the characters are either extremely insipid or portrayed as cute, immaculate, sex-free country boys. Other than Jones and his girlfriend, none of them have a mature private life that is equal to Barnaby's marriage. Only the two Barnabys have real family lives, and even a family past that is relevant to the storyline, and their sexual identity not been challenged by any other policeman. Their subordinates even have problematic housing situations, underlining the central theme of dwelling in the Midsomer plots: if you do not live properly, you are not a proper member of the community. And if you have a family you are a link in a chain that binds you to its history, you are an essential part of a heritage that extends beyond your personal life and connects you with society.

The binary structure of cottage/mansion that is shown in the early years of *Midsomer Murders*, which in this particular episode extends to a newly built modern style Fleetwood Hall, is always based on dichotomies like "poor and rich" or "old and new". In any case, it is a rural way of living that is being portrayed. The fabric of community life in the new seasons opens up to a more urban lifestyle: Midsomer is no longer the secluded hideaway of rose-loving ladies and fox-hunting gentry, but also home to a working class, that lives in apartment blocks and buys groceries in suburban malls. The city and the countryside can be seen as cultural concepts rather than geographical spaces: Midsomer and its villages evince a mindset that promotes (especially in the later seasons) the spirit of community, ecological life, sexual and ethnic diversity, a model for "cosmic harmony and social justice" (Kohl 2006: 185) – based on, and to be understood as, an enrichment (Bramall 2014: 203) of the described true Englishness. The city, often the mere name "London" figures as the polar opposite of the countryside; although it is not visually shown, characters interpret it as a sphere of impersonality, pursuit of profits, and loneliness. Diversity, by contrast, not only enriches the crime plots but broadens the scope of cultural heritage – and the countryside – as well: "New cultural practices, especially to do with the family and religion, have become a feature of British landscape; skin color, identities, relationships of even British-born individuals." (Modood 2004: 85).

Dwelling is not only an aspect that is defined by an individual's attitude to thrift. It is a concept that includes or excludes people according to certain features. Gender, age, and ethnicity; being mentally or physically disabled is also something that enables individuals access to public spheres – or not, as the case may be.[14] Being old, female, and unable to walk is not considered problematic in Midsomer, if you are rich enough to compensate for each and every aspect by financial means. But it can be considered immoral – here thrift becomes the overriding aspect – if it is the result of trying to gain "status". One might even say that "naturally", in the logic of *Midsomer Murders*, the lady in question is confined to her wheelchair and her husband's mansion.[15] She finds her counterpart in a later episode where a hard-of-hearing young man is chatting in a pub with a hearing device that broadens his social sphere with ease.[16] While he seems to be deaf from birth, the lady suffers from the consequences of a riding accident. Again, aristocratic life in the logic of the series is considered less acceptable than thrift. It therefore depicts the negative aspects of heritage: the mental weakness of predominantly male or very old members of the gentry not only explains the motives behind many of the crimes, it also contrasts with the lives, well-being and struggle of the common people of Midsomer. It is a symbol of decadence – one of the fables of the British downfall (Aughey 2004: 47), so vividly and regularly interwoven with media crime stories.

Conclusion: The pubs, fairs and cricket games in the landscapes of thrift and dwelling

Dwelling in Midsomer is strongly connected to concepts of thrift. Even the addition of suburban apartments for the young and poor only expands, but does not erase, the dichotomy of cottage and mansion or of rural and urban areas, as well as the struggle to make a living in Midsomer or live up to Midsomer's social standards. In the cultural landscapes of an invented Britain – not rural at all, but seemingly natural (Shaw 2018: 73) – there have to be spheres that are open to the public, that enable people to interact with each other despite where they live. The need for plots wherein not every corpse is found at the foot of a private staircase or on a gravel drive behind a Bentley proves the necessity for public places. Sometimes the crimes themselves happen right in the public eye, sometimes future suspects meet or quarrel for all to see. But where? Midsomer Murders offers three different concepts of sociability associated with thrift and dwelling. All of them are deeply linked to the phenomenon of heritage and commitment: engaging with heritage, seeing oneself in a line of succession, and living in a tapestry of tradition, requires a way of life that is open to the public. To reiterate, thrift and dwelling are not seen as realities but as media concepts of everyday life.

The first concept is the public house. In the early seasons the pub is the legitimate place of social interaction. A pub offers food, drink and shelter for people who are thought to lead a thrifty life, as well as easing the stressful working schedule of wealthy people. In the episodes directed by True-May the "gentrified pub" (a former pub turned into a concept-based restaurant, e.g. for ethnic or vegan food) could in later seasons become the obvious setting for a crime in an ethnically diverse local community. Unlike the pub, which is mainly associated with the evening and (despite waitresses) with local men (women in the early seasons are confined to the domestic sphere of house and garden), the gentrified pub is open to all genders, ethnic groups and daytime traffic as well, which expands the range of possible crimes and suspects.

Even more open, to social accessibility and different sorts of crimes, are Midsomer's public fairs and shows, the second concept of sociability. The wide range of flower shows, animal fairs, book fairs, music fests, garden contests, even Wild West rodeos,[17] and more are not only open to Midsomer locals of all kinds but to tourists as well. The new seasons openly emphasize that life in Midsomer must be considered a staged form of living, a museum of Englishness, that needs the perpetual effort of villagers and money from the outside world simply to maintain the facade of thrift and rusticity. In this logic the admiration of outside visitors to these fairs extends the social fabric of the Midsomer community.

Increasingly open to new residents and guests are cricket games, the third concept of sociability.[18] The games shown in the series are not only sporting events but battlegrounds of social disruption in the early years and social change in the later. Problematic consequences of rural gentrification are portrayed by the example of a new set of rules, the "C-10",[19] which for fans of the game can easily be identified as an alternative way of playing cricket, Twenty20. It is open to all available forms of thrift in Midsomer as well as all concepts of dwelling. Here the gentry challenge the locals and vice versa. Even policemen and old ladies become equal competitors. The game is a recurring element of the series, and serves as an indicator of plot development towards more political correctness. Cricket becomes a reality inside a media reality. And given the saying that if Jesus did any sport it would be cricket,[20] this adds the concept of divine order to the worldly rules.

Somehow the episodes of the later years, i.e. the time after Brian True-May, seem to respond to all the questions that are raised in the early years. It is not only that the crimes can be interpreted differently, but that they are no longer whodunnit remakes of the golden Agatha Christie age; they open television up to discussions of social conflicts that shape the British present. It is obvious that the connections between thrift and dwelling after season 14 have changed. Although the dichotomy of cottage and mansion remains, it is no longer a symbol of an established conservatism, but is open to new sorts of crimes based on new forms of life and death respectively. There is a different use of concepts of the past compared to the early years. The media past underlines the necessity of living in the present and for the future. Nostalgia is not a stash of childhood memories any more, but rather a new way to understand and embrace the inevitability of change and time passing. One question remains: why do the seasons produced by Brian True-May remain so popular, and – if you read customer reviews at streaming services – are they often considered the "real" *Midsomer Murders*? A possible answer is that they are so deeply linked to the era of austerity Britain – and to even older middle class ideals of the countryside (Berberich 2004: 375, Berberich 2006: 209) – which is so intertwined with British cultural memory, that it seems almost "natural" to be setting mystery episodes in the countryside of Midsomer County. In other words: they symbolize an almost sacrosanct heritage of true Englishness untouched by audience criticism, which now lives in a globalized, digital world and engages in new cultural discourses. Following this logic, the media representation of this era of a commonly shared past has been actively used as a tool to defend a discourse that would keep diversity of all kinds at bay. It does not concern me if this style of television-making is still appealing to the public, I am simply interested in arguing that the later seasons try to discuss thrift and dwelling differently, by linking it intellectually with heritage, immigration and integration in a way that appeals to a more critical audience, and by means of humor: "New cultural practices (…) have become a feature of British landscape; skin colour, identities, relationships of even British-born individuals" (Modood 2004: 85). For me it is significant who these seasons include and who they exclude – and whether the concepts of identity promoted through heritage in these provide narratives for future social inclusion or exclusion. From this perspective *Midsomer Murders* is more than a television program, it is one battleground of a society struggling for a modern Britishness.

Stefan Zahlmann, Professor for History and Theory of Media Cultures from the 18th to the 20th century, Department of History, University of Vienna. Research interests: Theory of history, popular culture, ecology, animal studies, antiurbanism, science fiction, fantasy, computer games. E-mail: stefan.zahlmann@univie.ac.at

Notes

[1] The British rural setting in popular television was already the basis for my article on the series *All Creatures Great and Small* (1977-90). It shows similarities in dealing with thrift/dwelling and is historically much more linked with the time of "austerity Britain" See Stefan Zahlmann (2015): Tiere und Medien, in: Gesine Krüger, Aline Steinbrecher, Clemens Wischermann (eds.): Tiere und Geschichte. Konturen einer Geschichte der Animate History, Stuttgart (Steiner), S. 153-170.

[2] He drives an expensive, customised German car, which makes him suspicious, since it contradicts the Midsomer rules of thrift. In the world of this series being gay or lesbian is not linked to particular forms of thrift, but it does get the same police attention as promiscuity or adultery (see S02, E01 "Death's Shadow"; S02, E02 "Strangler's Wood") if the character is involved in a crime. In S02, E03 "Dead Man's Eleven" a gay character from a previous episode is mentioned as having moved to Morocco, in an apparent reference to Sebastian Flyte's fate in "Brideshead Revisited", who went to Tunisia. In S01, E01 "Written in Blood", when a gay soldier mets his lover in Turkey, homosexuality and exotism are obviously intertwined in the plots. In the early years of the series, gay and lesbian characters involved in crimes seem to leave the communities of Midsomer very soon (see S01, E03 "Faithful unto Death"; S03, E02 "Blue Herrings"), but in the later seasons they remain (see S16, E02 "Let Us Prey"; S18, E02 "The Incident at Cooper Hill"). In the later seasons being openly homosexual is portrayed as a legitimate way of living in a village community.

[3]In the logic of the early seasons open sexual activity is linked to crime, decadence, and luxury (see S01, E01 "Written in Blood"; S01, E04 "Death in Disguise"; S03, E03 "Judgement Day"). What better symbol for thrift than a poor old lady living in a cottage who is fascinated by beautiful flowers? This pilot concept was only trumped by the lives of four nuns, who run an almost derelict abbey and rely totally on the vegetarian bounty of their own gardens in S17, E07 "A Sacred Trust".

[4]Quotations from the episodes are cited as follows: hour/minute/seconds.

[5] See S04, E01 "Garden of Death". Here the young woman in the mansion has matured to a widow, who is very rich and has sex with the gardener. She is killed because she is not honoring the local memorial culture.

[6] See S02, E02 "Strangler's Wood".

[7] On amazon.com only one review can be found with the complaint that in the new seasons "[t]here's almost always perverts involved!"See: https://www.amazon.com/Midsomer-Murders-Series-16/product-reviews/B018HCA41W/ref=cm_cr_dp_d_hist_1?ie=UTF8&filterByStar=one_star&reviewerType=all_reviews#reviews-filter-bar

[8]https://www.theguardian.com/media/2011/mar/23/midsomer-murders-brian-true-may-english; https://www.radiotimes.com/news/2011-03-23/midsomer-murders-boss-brian-true-may-to-step-down/.

[9] At least three times people are depicted living in caravans: see S02, E04 “Blood Will Out“ (“Romanichals”, here called “travellers”, who are featured extremely positively due to their thrift); S18, E06 “Harvest of Souls“ (the owners of an amusement ride); S19, E04 “Red in Tooth and Claw“ (when the victim is forced to live in a caravan).
[10] See S03, E01 “Death of a Stranger“.
[11] See S07, E06 “The Straw Woman“; S10, E06 “Picture of Innocence“ (analogue photography); S12, E02 “The Black Book“ (information is gathered in a public library, not online).
[12] See S14, E02 “Dark Secrets“: The bizarre setting of William and Mary Bingham’s lifestyle depicts an extremely charismatic, but demented elderly couple living secluded from the world in a mansion filled with memories and waste, which they never want to leave.
[13] See S07, E02 “Bad Tidings“.
[14] Visible scars are a heavily distinctive feature in the Midsomer world that either are to be hidden (e.g. with gloves, see S07, E04 “Sins of Commission“), or which force people to hide at home (see S14, E02 “Dark Secrets“).
[15] See S08, E06 “Hidden Depth“. She even shows a longing for thrift. The very first morning after her husband is killed she has an English breakfast with brown sauce: “Brown sauce. I haven’t been allowed brown sauce for thirty years!” (00:48:52). Eating is very often connected to thrift; even Tom Barnaby is deeply rooted in a family history of eating a traditional condiment: see S08, E07 “Sauce for the Goose“.
[16] See S19, E02 “Crime and Punishment“.
[17] Among from the wide range of such shows in Midsomer Murders see S03, E03 “Judgement Day“ (village competition); S08, E03 “Orchis Fatalis“ (flower show); S13, E03 “Blood on the Saddle“ (rodeo).
[18] See S02, E03 “Dead Man’s Eleven“; S12, E03 “Secrets and Spies“; S19, E03 “Last Man Out“.
[19] See S19, E03 “Last Man Out“.
[20] See S02, E03 “Dead Man’s Eleven“.

References

Aughey, Arthur (2004): “Three Fables of Britishness”, Helen Brocklehurst & Robert Phillips (eds): *History, Nationhood and the Question of Britain*, Houndmills et al.: Palgrave Macmillan, 45-56.

Berberich, Christine (2004): ‘I was Meditating about England’: The Importance of Rural England for the Construction of ‘Englishness’, Helen Brocklehurst & Robert Phillips (eds): *History, Nationhood and the Question of Britain*, Houndmills et al.: Palgrave Macmillan, 375-385.

Berberich, Christine (2006): This green and pleasant land: Cultural Construction of Englishness, Robert Burden & Stephan Kohl (eds): *Landscape and Englishness*, Amsterdam: Rodopi B.V., 207-244.

Bergin, Tiffany (2012): Identity and nostalgia in a globalized world: Investigating the international popularity of Midsomer Murders, *Crime Media Culture* 9:1, 83-99.

Bluemel, Kristin (2018) & Michael McCluskey (eds): *Rural Modernity in Britain. A Critical Intervention*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
Bramall, Rebecca (2013): *The Cultural Politics of Austerity: Past and Present in Austere Times*, Basingstoke et al.: Palgrave Macmillan.
Bramall, Rebecca (2014): Memory, meaning, and multidirectionality: 'Remembering austerity Britain', Lucy Noakes & Juliette Pattinson (eds): *British Cultural Memory and the Second World War*, London, New York: Bloomsbury, 195-211.
Brocklehurst, Helen (2004) & Robert Phillips (eds): *History, Nationhood and the Question of Britain*, Houndmills et al.: Palgrave Macmillan.
Burden, Robert (2006) & Stephan Kohl (eds): *Landscape and Englishness*, Amsterdam: Rodopi B.V.
Davis, Peter (2014) & Gerard Corsane: Communities, heritage and new cultural landscapes: ecomuseological approaches, Maggie Roe & Ken Taylor (eds): *New Cultural Landscapes*, New York: Routledge, 118-135.
Deen, Stella (2018): The Spinster in Eden: Reclaiming Civilisation in Interwar British Rural Fiction, Kristin Bluemel & Michael McCluskey (eds): *Rural Modernity in Britain. A Critical Intervention*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 135-148.
Färber, Alexa & Birke Otto (2016): Saving (in) a common world, Anders Blok & Ignacio Farias (eds): *Urban Cosmopolitics*, London et al.: Routledge, 25-42.
Fouquet, Gerhard & Gabriel Zeilinger (2009): Die Städte in der Geschichte Europas, Gerhard Fouquet & Gabriel Zeilinger (eds): *Die Urbanisierung Europas von der Antike bis in die Moderne*, Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 7-14.
Kohl, Stefan (2006): Rural England. An Invention of the Motor Industries? Robert Burden & Stephan Kohl (eds): *Landscape and Englishness*, Amsterdam: Rodopi B.V.,185-206.
Lowenthal, David (2004): The Island Garden: English Landscape and British Identity, Helen Brocklehurst & Robert Phillips (eds): *History, Nationhood and the Question of Britain*, Houndmills et al.: Palgrave Macmillan, 137-150.
McCluskey, Michael (2018): Change in the Village. Filming Rural Britain, Kristin Bluemel & Michael McCluskey (eds): *Rural Modernity in Britain. A Critical Intervention*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 33-49.
Modood, Tariq (2004): Britishness out of Immigration and Antiracism, Helen Brocklehurst & Robert Phillips (eds): *History, Nationhood and the Question of Britain*, Houndmills et al.: Palgrave Macmillan, 85-98.
Roe, Maggie (2014) & Ken Taylor (eds): *New Cultural Landscapes*, New York: Routledge.
Roe, Maggie & Ken Taylor (2014a): New cultural landscapes. Emerging issues, context and themes, Maggie Roe & Ken Taylor (eds): *New Cultural Landscapes*, New York: Routledge, 1-23.
Shaw, Samuel (2018): Weighing Down the Landscape: The Quarry as a Site of Rural Modernity, Kristin Bluemel & Michael McCluskey (eds): *Rural Modernity in Britain. A Critical Intervention*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 69-83.
Smith, Adam I.P. (2004): National Identity, Re-enactment and Conflict: A usable Past?, Helen Brocklehurst & Robert Phillips (eds): *History, Nationhood and the Question of Britain*, Houndmills et al.: Palgrave Macmillan, 302-311.
Trimm, Ryan (2018): Heritage and the Legacy of the Past in Contemporary Britain, New York et al.: Routledge.
Tschiggerl, Martin, Thomas Walach & Stefan Zahlmann (2019): Geschichtstheorie, Wiesbaden: Springer.
Stuart Wand (2004): The End of Empire and the Fate of Britishness, Helen Brocklehurst & Robert Phillips (eds): *History, Nationhood and the Question of Britain*, Houndmills et al.: Palgrave Macmillan, 242-258.
Zahlmann, Stefan (2015): Tiere und Medien, Gesine Krüger, Aline Steinbrecher & Clemens Wischermann (eds): *Tiere und Geschichte. Konturen einer Geschichte der*

Animate History, Stuttgart: Steiner, 153-170.

Episodes

In addition to the two case studies in my essay the episodes listed below are referenced. Even if not cited, my remarks are based on all episodes between the pilot and Series (= S) 19, Episode (= E) 5, which have been watched at least once. I follow the counting of the Wikipedia page (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Midsomer_Murders_episodes#Series_7_(2003%E2%80%9304). The year listed is the year that the episodes were first aired.

Case studies

Midsomer Murders, "The Killings at Badger's Drift", ITV, March 23 1997
Director: Jeremy Silberton; screenplay: Anthony Horowitz, based on a novel by Caroline Graham; producer: Betty Willingdale, Brian True-May; cast: John Nettles (DCI Tom Barnaby), Daniel Casey (Sgt. Gavin Troy), Jane Wymark (Joyce Barnaby), Laura Howard (Cully Barnaby), Barry Jackson (Dr. Bullard), Renee Asherson (Emily Simpson), Rosalie Crutchley (Lucy Bellringer), Jonathan Firth (Michael Lacey), Emily Mortimer (Katherine Lacey), Julian Glover (Henry Trace), Selina Cadell (Phyllis Cadell), Christopher Villiers (David Whitely), Richard Cant (Dennis Rainbird), Elizabeth Spriggs (Iris Rainbird).

Midsomer Murders, "The Dark Rider", ITV, February 1 2012
Director: Alex Pillai; screenplay: Michael Aitkens; producer: Jo Wright; cast: Neil Dudgeon (DCI John Barnaby), Jason Hughes (DS Ben Jones), Fiona Dolman (Sarah Barnaby), Tamzin Malleson (Dr. Kate Wilding), Raquel Cassidy (Diana DeQuetteville), Kerry Fox (Betty DeQuetteville), James Callis (Toby/Julian DeQuetteville), William Gaunt (Ludo DeQuetteville), Eleanor Bron (Lady Isobel „Izzy" DeQuetteville), James Clay (Simon DeQuetteville), Murray Melvin (Bentham DeQuettville), Natalie Mendoza (Sasha Fleetwood)
Paul Ritter (Harry Fleetwood), Louisa Clein (Amanda Harding).

Additional episodes

S01 E01 Written in Blood (1998)
S01 E03 Faithful unto Death (1998)
S01 E04 Death in Disguise (1998)
S02 E01 Death's Shadow (1999)
S02 E02 Strangler's Wood (1999)
S02 E03 Dead Man's Eleven (1999)
S02 E04 Blood Will Out (1999)
S03 E01 Death of a Stranger (1999)

S03 E02 Blue Herrings (2000)
S03 E03 Judgment Day (2000)
S04 E01 Garden of Death (2000)
S07 E02 Bad Tidings (2004)
S07 E04 Sins of Commission (2004)
S07 E06 The Straw Woman (2004)
S08 E03 Orchis Fatalis (2005)
S08 E06 Hidden Depths (2005)
S08 E07 Sauce for the Goose (2005)
S09 E02 Dead Letters (2006)
S10 E06 Picture of Innocence (2007)
S12 E02 The Black Book (2009)
S12 E03 Secrets and Spies (2009)
S13 E03 Blood on the Saddle (2009)
S14 E83 Dark Secrets (2011)
S14 E07 A Sacred Trust (2011)
S16 E02 Let Us Pray (2014)
S18 E02 The Incident at Cooper Hill (2016)
S18 E06 Harvest of Souls (2016)
S19 E02 Crime and Punishment (2016)
S19 E03 Last Man Out (2017)
S19 E04 Red in Tooth and Claw (2017)

Links

All of the following links were visited for the last time on Feb 28 2019.
http://midsomermurders.org/midsomer.htm
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Midsomer_Murders_episodes#Series_7_(2003%E2%80%9304)
https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-12741847
https://www.radiotimes.com/news/2011-03-23/midsomer-murders-boss-brian-true-may-to-step-down/
https://www.theguardian.com/media/2011/mar/23/midsomer-murders-brian-true-may-english

Culture Unbound
Journal of Current Cultural Research

The Moral Economy of Thrift: The Production of the Indebted Self in the Reality TV-series *Getting Out of Debt* and *Life or Debt*

By Silke Meyer

Abstract

In this article, the intersection of the economic and social dimensions of thrift is analysed under the special condition of debt. The debt context serves as a focal glass exposing agents, their social practices and strategies of accumulation capitals with regard to appropriate spending. In order to capture the many layers of thrift, the concept of moral economies is applied. This concept tries to reconcile two seemingly divergent dimensions of human behaviour which can be described as individualistic, calculating and serving a self-interest (economy) on the one hand and community-oriented and benefitting a common good (morality) on the other hand. Starting out with an overview over studies on moral economies in historical and social science since the early 1970s, I will explain the heuristic use of the concept for the case of debts research and apply it to representations of thrift as visualised and popularised in the reality TV shows *Raus aus den Schulden* (*Getting Out of Debt*) and *Life or Debt*. Here, the images of homes are clues for the cultural productions of appropriateness on TV: What are suitable ways of living when in debt? What are adequate scenes of dwelling and narratives of dealing with debts and which normative structures regulate those stories, the perception of the self and potential social exclusion? By examining the TV show as a strong voice in the debt discourse, thrift turns out to be a cornerstone in the internal and external regimes of governing debt in the micropolitics of TV.

Keywords: Debts, debt discourse, reality TV, subjectification, moral economy.

Meyer, Silke: "The Moral Economy of Thrift: The Production of the Idebted Self in the Reality Series *Getting out of Debt* and *Life or Debt*", *Culture Unbound*, Volume 12, issue 3–4, 2019: 485–500. Published by Linköping University Electronic Press: http://www.cultureunbound.ep.liu.se

Introduction

Economic practices are also moral practices, and economic anthropology is mostly interested in this hybrid character. The notion of thrift is a perfect example of the nexus of economic decisions and moral orders: Thrift means economising appropriately, with an eye to social norms, situations, and interactions. In their seminal paper, Aneta Podlicka and Jason Potts described thrift as "consuming wisely and resourcefully" (2013: 2) and emphasised the long-term perspective of mindful consumption and careful prosperity. The argument of appropriateness is so engaging that we almost forget to enquire: Who gets to decide what is appropriate, wise, and resourceful for whom (and what is not)? What are the historical and social specifics of mindful consumption and careful prosperity? Historically, the answer to these questions is the idea of the bourgeois. Thrift developed its moral gravity with industrialisation: Its social status started out as an entirely unremarkable quality of human life which turned into the signature feature of respectability and virtue within the middle classes during the rise of industries and capitalism (McCloskey 2011). With deep historical roots in middle-class values, thrift still achieves social viability by offering a sense of social positioning, acceptance, and belonging.

In the following article, I will analyse the logic of thrift, its moral order, and its social class convention through the perspective of debt. The context of debt serves as a specific lens demonstrating the moral dimension of thrift through its mode of operation as cultural capital. Debtors experience economic and social exclusion because they have proven to be the opposite of thrifty; they have not spent their resources wisely, they have lived beyond their means and have to be corrected and educated. I will look at representations of those ways of educating not only debtors but also the audience of popular TV shows that deal with personal bankruptcy. In analysing and comparing a German and a US TV show, I aim to deconstruct the making of an indebted self within its historical and social context. My focus is on the role of thrift—when in debt, the thrift economy contains a social promise of belonging and can be used to mend financial and moral mistakes.

In order to grasp the social distinction included in thrift, I will employ the concept of moral economies. Starting out with a short history of the concept since the early 1970s, I will outline the heuristic benefit of the concept in order to study the nexus of economy, debt, and social class. I will thereby draw on representations of thrift as visualised and popularised in the reality TV show *Raus aus den Schulden* (*Getting Out of Debt*) and compare them with the US show *Life or Debt*. In both shows, the images of homes are clues to the cultural production of appropriateness: What are suitable ways of living when in debt? What are acceptable scenes of dwelling and narratives of dealing with debt and which normative structures regulate those stories, the perception of the self, and potential social exclusion? Representations of thrift hereby use the heavy weight of middle-class history to convince the audience of the rights and wrongs of being in and getting out of debt. Thrift here turns out to be a cornerstone in the internal and external regimes of governing debt in the micropolitics of TV. The twist, however, lies in a broken bond. While thrift and appropriate ways of dealing with debt invoke the promise of social inclusion, the TV shows send a different message. Debt is shown as an individual, even personal, problem. Getting out of debt is therefore a personal achievement, making political and structural reasons for financial problems invisible.

What Makes a Moral Economy?

The history of an idea is more easily written when there are founding figures, in this case a founding father. [1] The historian Edward Palmer Thompson studied food protests embedded in what he called the moral economy of eighteenth-century English crowds (Thompson 1971, 1991). Although Thompson did not invent the term, it is interesting that he so famously applied it to a period when morality and economy seemed to have begun to go their separate ways. From about 1750 to 1850, industrialisation paved the way for early capitalism at the expense of social justice with individual needs outranking the idea of a common good. It is certainly no coincidence that it was eighteenth-century thinkers who felt the need to reconcile the spheres of the moral and the economic. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, for example, promoted the general will (volunté general) as a moral economy. According to Rousseau, if public and private welfare followed principles of reciprocity, individuals would act morally and not maximise their own fortune at the cost of others (Götz 2015: 149).

Since then, the term has gained currency in historiography as well as in the social and political sciences, while, at the same time, its scope has broadened. Initially, as in Thompson's work, it was used to describe "some legitimating notion" of the social groups who revolted against impending changes to society's economic and social fabric in pre- and proto-industrial England. These people based their actions on "a belief that they were defending traditional rights and customs" (Thompson 1971: 78) rather than following their own interests. Thompson's aim was to frame the uprisings, associated by other historians with "degeneration" (1971: 76) and "plunder", in a less "instinctive" (1971: 77) and savage way.[2] In his view, the protests were more than a "rebellion of the belly" (1971: 77) since they expressed historic ideas about the common good, fairness and appropriateness, as well as a critique of those who profited from the (new) market logic of capitalism. Although the rebellions were triggered by rising prices, abuses of office, and starvation, people protested not only because of their individual plight but also against a liberal market economy and a political system which allowed and encouraged the profits of a few at the expense of the many. Instead of reacting in a "spasmodic" (1971: 78) and irrational way, protesters acted "upon a consistent traditional view of social norms and obligations, of the proper economic functions of several parties within the community, which taken together, can be said to constitute the moral economy of the poor." (1971: 79) This view, which casts the protests as a political act rather than as an atavistic impulse, was "passionately held"(1971: 79).

Thompson has been criticised for imposing his Marxist views onto historic agents and thus romanticising pre-industrial economies.[3] While this makes for a fair argument especially regarding his earlier work, the use of the term moral economy does not automatically imply social romanticism. Moral economy does not describe a warmer and better form of economic exchange and it is not used in order to introduce a moral perspective as an authoritative tool in analyses. Nor should the concept be used to position oneself as a researcher (Suter 2016: 118). Its merits, rather, lie in the complex ways in which it allows one to explore conflicts of moral and legal positions and reasoning. The study of a moral economy examines situations and phenomena in which idioms, narratives, and practices of historical agents collide. These cognitive dissonances and their social negotiations become focal points for explaining why people sometimes act against their own interests.
This take on moral economy is the basis of James Scott's analysis of the rural economies in today's Myanmar and Vietnam (Scott 1976). Scott is particularly interested in the peasants' ethic of subsistence. Rather than rebellions, he studied resistance and the conditions that led to uprisings in the 1930s. The economic strategies of the peasants were not directed towards maximising profit, but rather at minimising the risk of food scarcity and hunger. This security of subsistence binds the peasant to the landowners and to their community. The moral economy of the peasant is thus based on a class-oriented paternalistic system managing the expectations and preferences of landowners and peasants and is defined by social values rather than by food prices and market logics. However, and very much in line with Thompson, the moral economy is based on traditional ways of sharing and on a system of solidarity which is interrupted by liberal market economies. Both authors share this political message and the significance of a class consciousness within the moral economy of the poor or of the peasant.

More recently, historian Laurence Fontaine used the concept to analyse pre-industrial modes of giving and receiving credit (and trust) in Europe. Just as Thompson and Scott did earlier, she placed economic activities firmly within a web of class relations (Fontaine 2008). Credit was used to turn economic obligations into social bonds and created, regulated, and eroded social ties. Fontaine emphasised that this paternalistic form of embedded economy constitutes stability on the one hand while establishing dependency and subordination on the other. For the eighteenth century, however, Fontaine detected a shift in the credit discourse: The growing middle classes emancipated themselves from their social obligations by framing credit more as an economic transaction than a moral obligation. Disembedding the credit economy, for example by introducing financial institutions, standard rates, time limits, and a competitive market of credit brokerage, freed debtors from their moral obligation and eventually made way for equality and democracy in rural France (Fontaine 2014: 297-320). Fontaine used moral economy as a concept linking debt discourse and practices to social class and a class-specific debt discourse.

While such studies of moral economies focused on areas of historic economies, Lorraine Daston expanded the concept by applying it to the history of the social sciences and the changing argumentation when producing, constructing, and legitimising knowledge (Daston 1995). She thus not only widened the concept beyond economy as the production and circulation of wealth in pre-modern society (as did Thompson, Scott, and Fontaine), she also expanded the notion by stressing the intimate connection of values and emotions. Her definition of moral economy is "a web of affect-saturated values that stand and function in well-defined relationship to one another". Their logic is dynamic and contingent, but not arbitrary: "Although it is a contingent, malleable thing of no necessity, a moral economy has a certain logic to its composition and operations. Not all conceivable combinations of affects and values are in fact possible." Altogether, it is "a balanced system of emotional forces with equilibrium points and constraints" (Daston 1995: 4). Moral economy is about the appropriate, desirable and existing connectivity of society (Tellmann 2013), about the aptness of practices and images in the process of constructing an (economic) subject between individual preferences and collective opinions and expectations.

To emphasise this contingency, Daston used the term in the plural rather than in the singular. Her main contribution, in any case, was her emphasis on emotions and affects in the system of moral economies. Emotions are stabilising and challenging factors, because social structures, norms, and obligations need to be felt in order to be effective. Morality is thus part of constituting a social subject brokering individual priorities with common expectations and obligations. Monique Scheer (2012) pointed out that emotional practices can be read as a form of social self-positioning. By naming and communicating emotions, individuals take on a specific subject position.

Despite her merits for reintroducing moral economy into the academic discourse, Daston has also received criticism for depoliticising the concept. In her work, the model of moral economy is no longer used to describe an unjust social order. It is this political dimension that Didier Fassin wished to re-introduce in his work on the moral economy of immigrant labour. He defined moral economy as "the production, distribution, circulation, and use of moral sentiments, emotions and values, and norms and obligations in social space." (Fassin 2009: §37). In his analysis of the social status of refugees, he compared the narratives of flight (risk management, finances, and expressions of emotions) and reasons for leaving home (political suppression, lack of religious freedom, or sexual orientation) and argued that within the general discursive frame of gender sensibility and sexual democracy, the moral hierarchy has shifted. People have more chance of receiving asylum when they cite genital mutilation, forced marriage, politically motivated rape, forced prostitution, and homosexuality as reasons rather than political suppression or economic suffering (Fassin 2016).

While Fassin succeeds in recouping the political dimension in the notion of moral economy, the question remains whether the term moral economy is the most appropriate for his analysis. In fact, we could also ask whether in Fassin's and Daston's work the terms 'discourse' or even 'culture' are similarly suitable. Compared to those terms, the notion of moral economies has the added value that it accounts for class-informed traditions and frameworks of sense-making (Palomera & Vetta 2016). Without this perspective, "if simply equated with 'values' and emptied of class content, moral economy loses its raison d'être" (Palomera & Vetta 2016: 414). In discussions of what is fair, just, and appropriate, the aptitude of a narrative depends on a social position of the subject and only makes sense in this framework. What connects an individual interest with the "mental states of collectives"—what Daston further described with Ludwig Fleck's terminology of "*Gefühls-* as well as a *Denkkollektiv*" (Daston 1995: 4–5)—is the notion of a class-informed identity. By returning to the concept's roots in the works of Edward Palmer Thompson and taking class into the equation, we can answer the question of who decides what is appropriate, wise, and resourceful for whom by taking class into account.

The Debt Crisis in Germany and the Moral Economy of Thrift

Private debts and insolvency are social problems that have gained prominence in Germany since the 1990s. The changing economy and its effects on employment, the modification of the welfare system, alterations in consumer options and consumer behaviour (for example, credit cards, online shopping, and leasing offers), and, most of all, a new and more liberal credit policy by banks and department stores as well as the introduction of a subprime credit market in Germany led to financial crises not only in working-class, but also in middle-class households. In 1999, private debts made up 74 percent of the gross domestic product in Germany, higher than in the US (70 percent) and in the UK (72 percent) (Mertens 2015: 16). Social and political pressure ran so high that the government introduced a new insolvency law. Since 1999, it is possible to declare private bankruptcy, which means that a "righteous debtor" (InsO §1, meaning a bona-fide citizen) can be discharged of residual debts after a period of good conduct. The entire proceedings usually last about four to six years (with four years being the current length of the period of good conduct). They comprise a series of restrictions and obligations like the duty to work or apply for work, to allow access to one's financial affairs and to inform the credit counsellors about change of address and other matters (Meyer 2017: 328-360).

On top of these obligations, during the period of good conduct, it is necessary to practise, express, and even feel thrift in economic behaviour. Through specific thrift capabilities such as prudent housekeeping, bargain shopping, repairing, re-using, DIY, and gardening, the individual manages to participate in the world of consumption without spending too much money. At the same time, it complies with imperatives of sustainability, subsistence, and ethical consumption. The thrifty subject thus achieves a positive way of self-positioning; thrift produces "a social payoff" (Podkalicka & Potts 2014: 233). This payoff can be derived from expressions of frugality as well as from statements of class-based taste, of citizenship, of ethical consumption, or of political protest. The moral order of thrift implies "society's 'yeses' and 'nos'—that are not only embedded in its laws and governing institutions but are more or less internalized, so that they become 'second nature' to most of the people who constitute society." (Yates & Hunter 2011: 12)

Demonstrating thrift can therefore mend financial failures like debts. When debtors demonstrate an awareness of thrift, they show a recognition of a social norm and acknowledge its values of modesty, unpretentiousness, and simplicity. In the debt discourse, they thus take on a subject position of the "righteous debtor" leading a life of "good conduct". This process to become a "righteous debtor" through thrift is basically the plot of the popular reality TV show *Raus aus den Schulden* (*Getting Out of Debt*). From 2007 to 2015, the show ran on the private channel RTL with a market share of between 15 and 23 percent, with up to 5 million viewers per broadcast. It was centred on the counsellor Peter Zwegat, who used to work for a public debt administration in Berlin and was cast as the show's protagonist. The show was broadcast at prime time and quickly became a huge success, with twelve seasons and several special episodes. Each episode presents a case where debt counsellor Peter Zwegat is summoned to help out debtors by appealing to their conscience, sorting out paperwork, talking to creditors and employers, and generally guiding them through insolvency. The protagonists are real people with real financial problems who have applied and been cast for the show. Bank clerks, employees of job centres, revenue offices, and creditors are also real.

Each episode opens with a summary of the—often hopeless—situation of the indebted individuals. It includes the introduction of the indebted protagonists, their household and family affairs, and how they got themselves into debt. The audience receives intimate information about parenting and schooling problems, relationship crises, unfaithful partners, divorce and separation, financial mismanagement, and expensive lifestyles. Through emotional portrayals, intimate details, and authentic locations, the show feeds the voyeuristic desire of its audience. Next, counsellor Peter Zwegat is introduced. In the trailer, action music is used to underline his heroic appearance, the counsellor is shown striding purposefully down a street or in action at his desk, at the telephone, briefcase in hand. When he arrives at the scene, he introduces himself with the slogan: "You called, here I am." Dramaturgically, his appearance marks a turning point in the life of the debtor. The camera then takes us into the home of the protagonists, showing place names and doorbell plates to create authenticity. Viewers are shown the (often slightly too big) size of the house or flat, the number of children and pets, the (extravagant) interior design, the (numerous) possessions like clothes and shoes, the (exquisite) foods, the (expensive) hobbies and means of transport, and the (latest) gadgets and media equipment. From all these (not so subtle) clues we derive our judgment about failure or success in the financial crisis. Take, for example, the case of Marco S. (21 years old) and his girlfriend Marina (20 years old) from Lüdenscheid. After finishing school, Marco took up a trainee position at McDonalds and also began his career as a consumer (S8, E8 "Marco S. und Marina D. aus Lüdenscheid", first broadcast 27/10/2010).[4] When he explains to the camera how he buys gadgets without having to pay for them, his words are underlined with images of a room cluttered with equipment like a brand new film camera, an entertainment system with TV, PlayStation, and DVD player, and an amplifier (0:10-0:15). We also learn that the couple owns two laptops on lease, an iPhone, and have subscribed to the pay-TV station Sky (4:08-4:37). After this demonstration of overconsumption on credit, the camera zooms in on a pile of documents. Marco admits that he does not know how much he owes because he has thrown away most of the bills and reminders. This manner of—or rather lack of—filing serves as a demonstration of indifference and apathy. In every episode, Zwegat asks his clients to bring their debt papers and, from the way they return with files either neatly filled with documents or with baskets full of loose letters, requests, and reminders, the audience is given a clear image of the respective debtor and his or her financial destiny.

After Marco confesses that he does not know the amount he owes, the camera pans into the bathroom where dishes pile up in the shower (5:26), the cut suggesting a strong link between financial and domestic chaos. More dishes are stacked in another room, while the voice-over informs the viewer that Marina's parents gave the couple a kitchen interior which is, however, still being stored in the nursery. The camera roams through the rooms showing unpacked boxes and unassembled pieces of furniture, none of which is in place or functional (5.26-5:55). The message again is one of thrift incompetence and a lack of housekeeping skills. Although they are given furniture for free, they do not manage to create a home with it. Being either messy or tidy becomes a moral issue in the TV show, associating dwellings with guilt and lack of control (Löfgren 2014: 88–90).

During the episode, no stereotype of the deadbeat is left out. We learn that the couple rarely get up before 11 am, they are unable to fill in a form in order to apply for welfare, and they do not even know where to find a mailbox (while the camera shows one standing in front of the house). While Peter Zwegat looks around the flat, the voice-over delivers facts and figures about the three rooms (two bedrooms)—"56 square metres, 256 Euros rent"—just as soberly and gloomily as the images portray the dwellings. The unfinished nursery in particular is shown as a careless environment full of junk. The semiotics of stuff are conveyed not only by the objects themselves but also by their arrangement, or rather non-arrangement, in "non-descript heaps, bundles, piles, assemblage" (Löfgren 2014: 84). The throwntogetherness of stuff is shown as the opposite of a working order in housing, documentation, and finances. The couple's lack of concern for their finances is paralleled with their lack of taste and their inability to create a homely and comfortable environment. When Marco und Marina again fail to collect relevant documents and fill in forms, Peter Zwegat takes them to a nearby bridge as the final symbol of living homeless and depicts their prospective life under the bridge in strong language (24.14-26:08).

Appropriate emotions are an important part of any moral economy. In the TV show, feelings are linked to numbers, i.e. debtors are expected to show shame, astonishment, frailty, desperation, or defiance when Peter Zwegat begins to do the maths. The debtors are shown seated in their homes, the camera filming close to their faces. The counsellor stands opposite at a flip chart, calculating income and expenses in excruciating detail with a red pen. Visually, these lists are superimposed over the picture of the debtor, thus debts are linked to a name and a face. The close-ups enable the viewer to study their emotions in detail: narratives and idioms of shame, guilt, and regret are juxtaposed with scenes of indifference, disdain, and aggression. In both cases, the recognition or violation of a normative social order is represented. This emotional practice is a cornerstone in the process of debt relief. In many cases, debtors express their feelings of guilt along with a sense of responsibility and initiative. In Marco's case, rather than showing the discursively appropriate emotions of shame, remorse, and guilt, he is pictured showing indifference, defiance, and anger, which adds to the image of him as an unreasonable and undiscerning person. Just like his actions, his emotions are not appropriate. He plays the role of the moral hazardeur who sponges off his mother and milks the state for support while borrowing more and more money. By maximising his benefits and minimising his effort, he might show financial shrewdness but offends the moral economy of thrift. It does not come as a surprise that the reason for his debts is as superficial as his endeavour to get out of debts. He quit his job and went shopping because, in his words, "I just wanted to be free and do whatever I felt like doing, no boundaries, enjoy my life to the full" (05:00-05:10). The scene is repeated in the trailer and can be seen as a condensed version of the moral economy of (non-)thrift. Not only is he economically incompetent and disorganised, Marco is also portrayed as selfish, superficial, and irresponsible. His irritation with the world of debts is materialised in gadgets, junk, and mess. On the screen, he repudiates the moral economy of thrift by acquiring stuff without using it. His clueless rebellion against the financial order is echoed in this production of disorder, a subversive comment on taxonomies of order and mess, value and trash (Dion, Ouidade & Guillard 2014).

A very different case can be seen with the single mother Nicole K. from Bielefeld (S9, E11 "Der Fall K. aus Bielefeld", first broadcast 9/11/2011).[5] At the beginning of her story, we follow the camera towards a bland white apartment building in a housing estate. Inside, we meet the 32-year-old debtor and her son Darren-Lee (11 years old) and learn that, after her wild youth without finishing school, running away several times and doing drugs, she has been in debt for more than a decade. Now, at the age of 32, she wants to turn her life around: She goes back to finish school; she wants to be a role model for her son and to show him that "it is never too late" to achieve one's goals with "a little bit of diligence and motivation" (1:25-1:38). Demonstrating thrift skills, she "has studied a lot and worked hard" and now wants to keep going (2:20-2:25). The tour through Nicole's home shows a spotless and comfortable flat. According to the voice-over, the furniture is second-hand and simple but tastefully arranged, the rooms are tidy, even Darren's small room is very neat with a made-up bed and folded clothes (9:52-10:48). In a simple but orderly kitchen, we can see her preparing a healthy tomato salad for her son. Thrift competence, i.e. making the most of a small budget, is shown as cultural capital.

The interviews with Nicole are filmed in the living room. Behind her, there is a filing system with labelled trays in place, and we can also see an old TV and a computer. All the scenes convey an impression of order, tidiness, and understatement, underlining the sincerity with which Nicole wants to master her life and her debts. When asked for her documents, she brings in a shoebox with neatly stacked files (14.55-15:12). These sympathetic visual assessments of her character are accompanied with an emotional scene in which she confesses how scared she is about her son's future. Here, tears well up in the otherwise very composed woman's eyes. Her devotion to her son combined with the images of determination, diligence, self-initiative, and tidiness frame her as a good debtor. Although she ran into debt for much the same reasons as Marco, i.e. "out of stupidity, bad luck, and naivety", the cultural capital of thrift helps her out of debt in a socially acceptable manner.

In the TV show, the social script of being in, and being relieved from, debts uses the moral economy of thrift as a reference point. However, thrift competence refers not only to patterns of consumption and financial decisions. Thrift here implies a consciousness about middle-class values, cultural capital and social positioning. The well-balanced system of the appropriate use of resources includes emotions (showing care and affection towards family members as a motivation for spending, taking responsibility, and regretting bad decisions), values like education, industriousness, and diligence, practices of order (filing, providing healthy food, keeping simple, clean dwellings, and demonstrating work ethics and diligence). This constitutes the appropriate state of mind when aspiring for a financial and moral discharge. The close-up and detailed portrayal of dwellings provides evidence of an attitude of thrift: Orderly homes and tidy filing represent notions of accuracy and correctness, including in one's finances; modest interiors, cars, and hobbies show a sense of suitable and appropriate consumer habits. The financial crisis is thereby linked to an appropriate middle-class lifestyle (not too fancy but not too gloomy either, frugal but tasteful and, most of all, tidy and proper). Thrift is the touchstone of endowing finances and consumption with attributions of good and bad, of appropriateness and extravaganza, in short: with appropriate ways of living.

Micropolitics of Debts TV in Germany and in the US

Whereas the simplistic portrayal of the good and tidy as opposed to the bad and messy debtor is rather stereotypical and follows—as well as reinforces—the predominantly negative image of debtors, the figure of the counsellor is more complex, offering insights into debt regimes and their potency with debtors. When Peter Zwegat is introduced, he is shown in front of the Reichstag, the seat of the German government, the location (and dwelling) underlining the public mission and mandate of the counsellor. However, in terms of governmental studies, his appearance is not that of a state authority or a teacher; he does not reinforce regulations or lecture about the rights and wrongs of debts discharge. Rather, he represents "the voice of reason" and "the people's voice" (mark the iconography of the Reichstag and the German flag). His authority is mandated by public opinion and thereby achieves normative efficiency (Nohr 2014). He provides advice rather than rules, his character is all about self-guidance rather than instructions, an incarnation of the governmentality of debts. The micropolitics of TV thus work as a process of subjectivisation at the intersection of internal and external guidance (Seier 1991).

The specifics of Zwegat's character become even clearer when compared to his US colleague Victor Antonio from the TV show "Life or Debt". Introduced as a business strategist, Antonio takes the role of a straightforward and tough, sometimes rude individual, telling his clients what (not) to do and, time and again, how stupid they are. Overall, however, he is shown as a likeable man who is driven by the same aim as Zwegat, which is to help clients out of debt. But, as can be seen in the trailer for season one, Victor Antonio wants to "teach" his clients, he is going to "kick their arse", they have "to pay the price (…) crawl through the glass".[6] There is a lot of swearing and shouting, arguments about consumers' choices, like a room full of shoes which Antonio reacts to with "are you f***ing kidding me?", expensive cars ("how does an executive assistant drive a hundred-thousand-dollar car?"), and entertainment units. We are shown cluttered rooms, messy garages, and piles of documents ("this is not an office, this is a junk hole!"). Again, homes are used to portray people as irrational, short-sighted, and selfish, in one word: unthrifty. But whereas Peter Zwegat raises his eyebrows and looks reproachfully at the debtors, Victor Antonio blames his clients vociferously and swears at them.

Another striking difference between the two shows is the way we learn about the debtors' homes. The US show has a camera installed in the house which Victor Antonio uses to assess the behaviour of his clients, when they get up in the morning, whether they keep their home tidy, and clean up after meals. The debtors are monitored in their home whereas Zwegat relies on self-control. *Life or Debt* is about an external regime setting people straight financially whereas *Raus aus den Schulden* is about accepting moral responsibility as the way out of debt. Victor Antonio is angry with his clients when they do not obey him, while Peter Zwegat is disappointed in them when they do not take his advice. The show offers a way out of debt not by following financial rules but by implanting self-technologies and thus optimising the indebted self (Meyer 2017). Both shows work with popular strategies from reality TV like personalisation and authentication, showing private situations and intimate scenes and, most importantly of all, using emotions (Bente & Fromm 1997, Ouellette & Hay 2008, Palmer 2003). In both shows, there is a lot of crying, despair, anger and, eventually, rays of hope. The difference lies in the morality of the message with regard to social positions. In the US, debts and bankruptcy have long been a normality in middle-class circles (e.g. Sullivan, Warren & Lawrence 2000). Thrift is seen more as an economic tool than a moral order. In *Life or Debt*, debts are portrayed as the result of a wrong business decision, a poor investment, a high risk, or living beyond one's means. A financial crisis can happen to anybody, regardless of social background. And, following the

American dream, anybody can get out of debt, as long as they clean up their act and try hard enough. In the German show, Zwegat's pedagogical programme uses thrift as a class-based ideal one needs to aspire to because it promises a way out of debt as well as a feeling of social inclusion and exclusion. Thrift here carries the moral weight of being or not being middle-class, of doing the right thing not only financially, but also morally.

A similar conclusion can be drawn from comparing the two national laws on personal bankruptcy: The German law promotes "the righteous debtor" as defined by their "good conduct"; debtors need to prove themselves worthy of having their residual debt discharged. The US legislative by contrast offers debtors a "fresh start" as soon as they declare themselves bankrupt (Napoletano 2012) and, rather than stigmatising debtors, the law offers them economic agency by promptly reintroducing debtors into the consumer market.

Conclusion: Risk Management or Struggling with Class? De-politising Debt

Overcoming debt financially and morally is dealt with differently in the US and in Germany. The US insolvency law is not a pedagogical programme based on years of good conduct and righteousness, on the contrary: It leads to an immediate discharge in order to allow a fresh start for the consumer. As can be derived from TV visualisations, debt relief in the US context is based on entrepreneurial reasoning—Antonio repeats the phrase that households have to be run and guided out of debt like businesses—whereas the German show underlines the role of hardship, guilt and good conduct in the debt relief programme. Thereby, the regime of debt relief reproduces an inner industry of the indebted self and suppresses transitions of economic structures like the employment market and changes in the welfare state. The inner industry is visualised on TV in thrift practices, proper dwellings and living conditions.

With the role of thrift, the struggle with debt in Germany becomes a class issue. While middle-class oriented debtors possess enough thrift competence to achieve good conduct and thus a moral discharge, other debtors fail to do so. The German insolvency discourse is another example of what Loïc Wacquant calls the Centaur-state which encourages social inequality by an ambivalent class system:

> [A] Centaur-state [...] displays opposite visages at the two ends of the class structure: it is uplifting and 'liberating' at the top, where it acts to leverage the resources and expand the life options of the holders of economic and cultural capital; but it is castigatory and restrictive at the bottom, when it comes to managing the populations destabilised by

> the deepening of inequality and the diffusion of work insecurity and ethnic anxiety. Actually existing neoliberalism extolls 'laissez faire et laissez passer' for the dominant, but it turns out to be paternalist and intrusive for the subaltern, and especially for the urban precariat whose life parameters it restricts through the combined mesh of supervisory workfare and judicial oversight. (Wacquant 2012: 74)

However, the structural element of class in the neoliberal debt economy is hardly addressed in the TV show. Problems like a subprime credit market for those who do not have access to the prime section, socially unequal terms of financialisation, and the ramification of a changing law on people without education or long-term unemployment are not made the subject of discussion.[7] Accordingly, it is up to the individual to solve their problem, whereas banks, the finance market and the state legislative is off the hook. Debts are thus depoliticised, they are no social problem but personal ones. And while some can deal with those problems because of their social background and access to capital like thrift, others cannot and have to take the blame.

Silke Meyer is professor at the Department of History and European Ethnology at the University of Innsbruck. Her research interests encompass economic anthropology, debts and credit, transnationalism, migration and remittances. Recent publications include a monograph on the indebted self and narratives of private insolvency (published with campus 2017).

Endnotes

[1] The term moral economy has provoked renewed interest especially since the financial crisis of 2007/08. Recent, more general papers by Carrier (2018), Götz (2015), and Siméant (2015) give useful overviews of the history of the concept. Palomera and Vetta (2016) as well as Fassin (2009) re-politicised the concept by bringing back social class and capital.

[2] Thompson also criticised the use of "the unsatisfactory term of riots" (1991: 260), given that after the Riot Act of 1714, any outdoor congregation was declared illegal. Calling the protestor rioters, even in retrospect, thus suggests that they were criminals. I would like to thank Niels Grüne for this information.

[3] For example, James Scott: *The Moral Economy as an Argument and as a Fight*. In: Adrian Randall & Andrew Charlesworth (eds.): Moral Economy and Popular Protest: Crowds, Conflict and Authority. Basingstoke 2000, S. 187-208. In his later review, Thompson himself conceded that the problem centred on the word "moral": "'Moral' is a signal which brings on a rush to the academic head. Nothing has made my critics angrier than the notion that a food rioter might have been more 'moral' than a disciple

of Adam Smith." (1991: 271)

[4] The episode is available here: https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x6rso7z (accessed 29/1/2019)

[5] The episode is available here: https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x5z6e41 (accessed 29/1/2019).

[6] The trailer is available here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=beR6vBTS27o (accessed 29/1/2019).

[7] This phenomenon is, of course, not new, see David Caplovitz' classical study on the reasons why the poor pay more.

References

Caplovitz, David (1967): *The poor pay more: consumer practices of low-income families*. New York: Free Press.

Carrier, James G. (2018): "Moral economy: What's in a name," *Anthropological Theory*, 18:1, 18-35.

Daston, Lorraine (1995): "The Moral Economy of Science," *Osiris*, 2nd ser., 10: 2, 2-24.

Dion, Delphine, Sabri Ouidade & Valérie Guillard (2014): "Home Sweet Messy Home: Managing Symbolic Pollution," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 41, 565-589.

Fassin, Didier (2009): "Moral economies revisited," *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, 64:6, 1237-1266, English version here: https://www.cairn-int.info/article-E_ANNA_646_1237--moral-economies-revisited.htm#re1no1 (accessed 28/1/2019).

Fassin, Didier (2016): "Vom Rechtsanspruch zum Gunsterweis. Zur moralischen Ökonomie der Asylvergabepraxis im heutigen Europa," *Mittelweg 36: Wandern. Zur Globalgeschichte der Migration*, 25:1, 62-78.

Fontaine, Laurence (2014): *The moral economy of credit. Poverty, Credit, and Trust in Early Modern Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.

Götz, Norbert (2015): "Moral Economy: Its Conceptual History and Analytical Prospect," *Journal of Global Ethics*, 11:2, 147-162.

Life or Debt, trailer, Spike TV.

Löfgren, Orvar (2014): "The black box of everyday life: entanglements of stuff, affects and activities," *Cultural Analysis*, 13, 77-98.

McCloskey, Deirdre (2011): "The Prehistory of American Thrift," James D. Hunter & Joshua J. Yates (eds): *Thrift and Thriving in America*. Capitalism and Moral Order from the Puritans to the Present. Oxford: Oxford UP, 61-87.

Mertens, Daniel (2015): *Erst sparen, dann kaufen? Privatverschuldung in Deutschland*. Frankfurt am Main/New York: campus.

Meyer, Silke (2017): *Das verschuldete Selbst. Narrativer Umgang mit Privatinsolvenz*. Frankfurt am Main/New York: campus.

Napoletano, Gino (2012): *Privatinsolvenz und Restschuldbefreiung: Fresh Start oder "bürgerlicher Tod"? Rechtspolitische Überlegungen zur Entschuldung natürlicher Personen unter besonderer Berücksichtigung ökonomischer Aspekte*. Hamburg: Dr. Kovaç.

Nohr, Rolf F. (2014): "SuSi-Fernsehen. Beratung, Empowerment und Denormalisierungsangst," Andrea Seier & Thomas Waitz (eds): *Klassenproduktion. Fernsehen als Agentur des Sozialen*. Münster: LIT, 193-212.

Ouellette, Laurie & James Hay (2008): *Better Living Through Reality TV: Television and Post-Welfare Citizenship*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Palmer, Gareth (2003): *Discipline and Liberty. Television and Governance*. Manches-

ter: Manchester UP.
Palomera, Jaime & Theodora Vetta: "Moral economy: Rethinking a radical concept," *Anthropological Theory*, 16:4, 413-432.
Podkalicka, Aneta & Jason Potts (2014): "Towards a general theory of thrift," *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 17:3, 227-241.
Raus aus den Schulden, "Marco S. und Marina D. aus Lüdenscheid", probono Fernsehproduktion GmbH, RTL, October 27 2010.
Raus aus den Schulden, "Der Fall K. aus Bielefeld", probono Fernsehproduktion GmbH, RTL, November 9 2011.
Scott, James C. (1976): *The Moral Economy of the Peasant. Rebellion and Subsistence in South East Asia*. New Haven: Yale UP.
Seier, Andrea (2009): "Mikropolitik des Fernsehens. Reality-Fernsehen als Regierung aus der Distanz," *KultuRRevolution. Zeitschrift für angewandte Diskurstheorie*, 45, 47-52.
Siméant, Johanna (2015): "Three bodies of moral economy: the diffusion of a concept," *Journal of Global Ethics*, 11:2, 163-175.
Suter, Mischa (2016): Rechtstrieb. Schulden und Vollstreckung im liberalen Kapitalismus 1800–1900. Konstanz: Wallstein/Konstanz UP.
Tellmann, Ute (2013): "Verschulden. Die moralische Ökonomie der Schulden," ilinx. Berliner Beiträge zur Kulturwissenschaft, 3, 3-24.
Thompson, Edward Palmer (1971): "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century," *Past & Present*, 50:1, 76-136.
Thompson, Edward Palmer (1991): *The Moral Reviewed. Customs in Common: Studies in Traditional Popular Culture*. New York: Merlin, 259-351.
Wacquant, Loïc (2012): "Three steps to a historical anthropology of actually existing neo-liberalism". *Social Anthropology/Anthropologie Sociale* 20, 1, 66-79.

Culture Unbound
Journal of Current Cultural Research

Thrift, Imperfection and the Popular Feminist Apartment Plot on Television

By Claire Perkins

Abstract

This paper will explore the ways in which thrift operates as a signifier of a specific type of lprecarity and imperfection in young women's lives in several popular series associated with the current 'golden age' of women's television production. The twenty-something women of series including *Girls*, *Insecure*, *Broad City, Fleabag, Can't Cope Won't Cope* and *Search Party*, have all been raised in comfortable middle-class homes and are now living independently in major global, expensive cities. The precarity of the ways in which they dwell, at both a practical and figurative level, is a symptom of what has come to be understood as 'adulting'—where relatively privileged millennials struggle with the rituals and realities of adult life in a starkly neoliberal society. Through a focus on the narrative device of the apartment plot, this paper will examine how the concept of thrift, with its central spectrum of necessity and choice, can illuminate both the everyday practices and the overarching logic of the adulting phenomenon as represented in this wave of television production. By attending to a variety of contemporary series by, for and about women, it will also argue for the ways in which both thrift and adulting can be understood as specifically gendered behaviours.

Keywords: Thrift, adulting, imperfection, apartment plot, *Insecure*, *Girls*, neoliberalism

Perkins, Claire "Thrift, Imperfection and Popular Feminist Apartment Plot on Television ", *Culture Unbound*, Volume 11, issue 3–4, 2019: 501–516. Published by Linköping University Electronic Press: http://www.cultureunbound.ep.liu.se

Introduction

The best-known scene in *Girls* (2012–2017) occurs in the first episode (S1, E1 'Pilot'), when the middle-class, academic parents of series creator Lena Dunham's character Hannah explain that they will no longer be financially supporting her life in New York where, two years after graduating college, she works as an unpaid intern. Hannah is outraged. 'Do you know how crazy the economy is right now? All my friends get help from their parents'. By the end of the episode she is bargaining with them, explaining that all she needs is $1100 a month for the next two years in order to finish her memoir. 'I am so committed to this book that I am willing to get pretty thrifty on this,' she implores. This pair of scenes have been referred to by numerous *Girls* commentators in the years since the program premiered, with the act of critical repetition discursively positioning them as the core statement in a series that is now understood to be central to the contemporary depiction of white, middle-class women navigating emotional and existential dilemmas. The canonisation of these specific scenes arguably rests upon the way they encapsulate something specific about contemporary *young* women in this situation; which is both the precarity and the entitlement of dwelling in an expensive city under an intensified regime of neoliberal capitalism. In this sense, Hannah's use of the term 'thrifty' is loaded and compelling. Its obvious affect derives from the way in which the viewer is invited to judge her situation, where her proposed thriftiness amounts to no more than accepting a reduced stipend from her parents to continue living without working in one of the most expensive cities in the world. From Hannah's perspective, though, the proposed financial situation is a sacrifice that is necessary to support her project of self-discovery, where she is, in her words, 'becoming who I am meant to be'. In this sense, thrift in the series is intimately connected not only to lifestyle but to the more expansive question of *how to live*. In this paper I argue that thrift is evoked in this way in a group of contemporary dramedy series made by, for and about young women, including *Girls, Insecure, Fleabag, Broad City, Can't Cope Won't Cope* and *Search Party*. Using the HBO series *Insecure* (2016–) as my central example, I examine how thrift is evoked as both a stylistic and thematic trope through the central device of the apartment, or what Pamela Robertson Wojcik calls 'the apartment plot' (2010). Attending to the thrifty ways in which the young female protagonists of these series *dwell* can, I suggest, illuminate the logic of 'adulting' that distinguishes the series as products of intensified neoliberalism.

The 'imperfect' apartment plot

The Peak TV landscape is crowded with women-centric dramedy series, which has led to a strong discursive impression of the current moment as a 'golden age' for women in television, especially in the Anglophone West (see, for instance, Press 2018, Nussbaum 2019). This evaluation, as well as the series themselves, are expressions of what Sarah Banet-Weiser calls 'popular feminism', in the sense that both provide conflicted opportunities for gendered issues and discourses to circulate in popular and commercial media (2018). Acclaimed series such as *Transparent*, *The Good Wife, Enlightened, Divorce, Catastophe* and *The Letdown* function in this way by orbiting around acutely gendered events such as the breakdown of a long-term relationship, the birth of a child, the dramatic loss of a job or a complete transformation in gender or social identity. In exploring the opportunities, contradictions and stresses of these acts of regrouping, these series are all directly engaged with the underlying meaning of thrift, as the question of what it means to thrive (Hunter & Yates 2011: 570). The female protagonists are reevaluating their lives and choices in light of this question, and attempting to forge new pathways. For the midlife, middle-class women who are most often represented in this situation, the economic realities that attend their decisions are not central or definitive. They are able to cope financially without their strategies becoming a narrative focus, with housing being one of the key sites for how this is communicated. In the series featuring women in their twenties, though, the emphasis is different. The younger women of the series I am focusing on are at a different stage in their lives, where they are not regrouping but *grouping*—figuring out who they are and want to be. The logic of thriving is central here also, but so too is the more popular sense of thrift as frugality (Podkalicka & Potts 2014: 227). Because they have less money, the ways in which the younger women cope economically is necessarily more central to their lives, and figures as more of a narrative preoccupation. This works in tandem with how the manner in which they *dwell*, at both a practical and figurative level, tends to be the engine of the drama, as series that are primarily character and observation-driven—qualities that often find these series identified as 'indie' or 'lo-fi'. Again, housing is central to both this set-up and its sensibility.

In the Heideggerian sense, 'dwelling' captures the way in which a being is *in* the world—referring to where one is *at home* or has a place. And in these series this place is not just the characters' physical housing but their city as a whole, which in each is evoked in careful, close-up detail. There are relatively few shots in any of these series that take in a broad, spectacular sweep of their city's skyline, as is standard for iconic urban series such as *Friends* or *Grey's Anatomy*. Instead, the city manifests vividly through the details of streetscapes, public transport, cafes, bars and parks. It is through these details that the characters' economic reality is written, insofar as it is emphatically communicated that they walk and take the bus or train—dwelling close to the ground, rather than skimming above it. In their apartments, this mode of subsistence is consistently conveyed through a carefully drawn thrift aesthetic, which is the primary visual trope that distinguishes the series as a 'youth' or 'millennial' cycle in the broader wave of contemporary women-centric television. Jason Jacobs and Steven Peacock have discussed how television as a medium uniquely allows its viewers to 'live into' a place—getting to know it intimately and experientially as an effect of seriality and duration. The effect is central to what they argue is the prominent feature of television's serial form, which is its ability, quite distinct from film, to 'moment-by-moment add layers to the sedimentation that is its own history' (Jacobs & Peacock 2013: 11). As sites returned to again and again, the apartments and houses of television characters are a privileged space for this sedimentation of time, and thus hold a particular power to communicate not just narrative and character information but the affective meaning of the series as a whole.

Girls, Insecure, Fleabag, Broad City, Can't Cope Won't Cope and *Search Party* have a unique grasp of this fact in the way they render physical place as the index of a more expansive sense of dwelling. Insofar as this careful attention is designed to express a relative lack of material means, attending to the thrift aesthetic of these series can illuminate much about the individual works as well as what they might collectively mean as a wave of contemporary feminist production. And, because this effect in these series by and about young women is so closely tied to the specific space of the *apartment*, I suggest that Wojcik's notion of the 'apartment plot' is a useful category to mobilize here. The apartment plot is defined as a narrative in which 'the apartment figures as a central device [meaning] that the apartment is more than setting, but motivates or shapes the narrative in some key way' (Wojcik 2010: 3). While most of the examples that Wojcik and others who have taken up the concept discuss derive from film, she notes that the apartment plot has been a 'crucial unacknowledged mainstay of television' from—in the American context alone—*I Love Lucy* (1951) through *The Honeymooners* (1955) and *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* (1970) to *Seinfeld* (1988) and *New Girl* (2011) (ibid. 3). Crucially for the series under consideration here, Wojcik argues that it is not only the space but also the *temporality* of the apartment that structures events, reflecting something about character temporality—such as being young or single—or shaping the temporality of the narrative through characters moving in or out. This temporal logic hinges on a contradiction between a sense of dwelling—where characters are identified by and with a place of residence—and the sense that their place is constantly changing (Wojcik 2014: 4) and has, I suggest, a specific resonance for contemporary series featuring young women in the way that it highlights both immobility and precarity as defining themes.

The opening shots of *Insecure's* first episode (S1, E1 'Insecure as Fuck') demonstrates this central function of the apartment, mapping protagonist Issa Dee's (series creator Issa Rae) identity onto her thriftily drawn residence. Moving through space in a manner that is classic for the apartment plot—laying out a large urban space before narrowing to focus on the apartment as a microcosm of the city—the shimmering cinematography depicts a montage of South Los Angeles—Randy's Donuts, the Vision Theater, faded weave and fried chicken shops, firmly grounding the series in the place that is fundamental to *Insecure's* exploration of young black womanhood. After introducing Issa in her workplace—a non-profit for supporting black youth called 'We Got Y'All'—the episode cuts to a static tableau shot of the exterior of Issa's home: a faded, low-rise condominium named 'The Dunes' (a real-world Inglewood apartment complex). This specific shot, as well as the location for the next scene, are repeated numerous times through *Insecure's* first two seasons. Inside, Issa is in her bathroom rapping—an activity that is a central aspect of her self-expression and narration throughout the series. In a sequence of three shot-reverse shots Issa regards herself in the mirror and languidly performs: *go Shorty, it's my birthday, but no one cares because I'm not having a party, because I'm feeling sorry for myself…*(S1, E1 'Insecure as Fuck'). As she trails off, the discouragement in her voice is underlined by the echoing acoustics and the mise-en-scene of the small, 1960s-style bathroom: flat lighting from a frosted window, yellow tiles on the wall, blue shower curtain, basic aluminum framed mirror. A couple of thin, limp towels hang on a rail that an old-fashioned hairdryer is also slung into. Over the next few scenes we see the apartment's other spaces, all of which are functional and livable, but similarly cramped, badly lit and aesthetically outdated. The furniture is mismatched and the 1960s styling further evident in the poky kitchen servery, narrow decorative shelving and wood-panelled ceiling fan. A lack of storage is made clear in the managed clutter that accumulates on the floor and every surface. In the bedroom, a plastic shoe rack flops over the door and clothes hang from hooks on the walls. A large rug in a Turkish style hangs over the bed, implicitly obscuring damage or grime.

The apartments in which the young women of *Girls, Broad City, Fleabag, Can't Cope Won't Cope* and *Search Party* dwell are all presented in a very similar manner. In each, an outdated aesthetic is prominent in the style of the abode itself and the furniture it contains, and an overwhelming lack of space is evident in the way possessions are arranged and stored. All of the women live with housemates or a partner. I'm arguing that this mode of presentation conveys the theme of thrift in at least two ways. First, the outfitting of these spaces is obviously meant to look inexpensive and cobbled together. The individual styling is often careful and expressive, but furniture appears to be second-hand or cheaply made, and the dingy, period style of the apartments themselves clearly conveys that they are rented, and beyond their tenants' control—or means—to update. In *Insecure*, the point is underlined by the contrast that is repeatedly evoked between Issa's apartment and that of her lawyer best friend Molly (Yvonne Orji)—a sleek, roomy, high-rise space with formulaic upper middle class styling: floor to ceiling windows, ambient lighting and stainless steel appliances. Second, the fact that these women live this way is positioned as a deliberate choice. The spaces may be small and tired but none would be cheap to rent, located as they are in gentrified or rapidly gentrifying neighborhoods in Los Angeles, New York and London.[1] So the fact the characters live thriftily in these specific kinds of apartments spells out a priority to live in a city that is positioned to be central, possible and intimately connected to their aspirations. The protagonists are all 'finding themselves' but, in this, they are driven by at least one clear value or belief. Hannah in *Girls* is committed to her goal of being a writer. Fleabag is battling to keep open the café that she opened with her best friend before the friend died. Issa says at the beginning of *Insecure* that she works in a non-profit because she 'wants to give back'. In some cases, the outdatedness or implausibility of this goal becomes a key dimension of the series' storyline. But the point is that each *has* a vision for how they want to live, and being located in a metropolitan centre is fundamental to this, and prioritized over material comfort. In this way, the apartments in which they live are central to their projects of *thriving*.

All texts, of course, use setting to convey information about character circumstances and ideals, and the vast number of television series set in urban centres have a particularly acute sense of this logic. This leads to the often-cited cliché that the city is itself 'another character' in the narrative. The effect is perceived through the particular and idiosyncratic way in which a city is presented, which—for common sites like New York and Los Angeles—can vary enormously as a way of conveying defining themes around class and race. The location and presentation of TV characters' residences is the most visible and central channel through which this narrative information is communicated and, in the manner of the effect cited above—whereby television homes become a privileged site for the sedimentation of time and history—it can be argued that *all* TV series set in cities are apartment plots, insofar as 'the narrative could not occur without the apartment' (Wojcik 2018: 3). Wojcik is particularly interested in examples where the apartment is key to the plot's trajectory of events, but I suggest that the style of 'indie' series that I am considering, which are defined by the *lack* of a strong plot, are equally applicable to the concept. In these series, the central dramatic tension lies with the intersection of characters' choices—how they want to live—and their precarity—the structural factors that are holding them back—and the site of the apartment is central to this defining struggle. As an omnipresent visual space, it is a constant reminder of how thrift behaviors are organized along a spectrum of 'choice' and 'necessity'. As Podkalicka and Potts write, when thrift is a consequence of material scarcity it is not deliberately socially consumed, but when it occurs amidst plenty it functions as a form of social signaling about the moral qualities of the thrifty agent (2014: 231). As a wave of production that is overwhelmingly concerned with the social and emotional dilemmas of characters from staunchly middle-class backgrounds, these series fit most obviously with the latter meaning. Specifically, they take a particular interest in the meaning of thrift within what Yates and Hunter theorize as the 'moral order' of late capitalist abundance in America, and in this way function as a form of 'reactionary thrift' in which the language of restraint grounds a broad critique of this system (2011: 12).

#adulting

At one level there is nothing unusual about these characters' thrifty manner of living, which builds on a long and colourful narrative tradition of living cheaply and freely in a big city as a young person—'the canon of the studio apartment' as Penelope Green has called it, referencing Anita Brookner, Barbara Pym and Rona Jaffe (2016). In such examples, space and comfort is sacrificed by young women who leave behind a regional or suburban childhood for the possibilities—diversely rendered—of life in an urban centre. Wojcik considers this tradition by attending to how the subcultural type of the single 'Bohemian Girl' features in the apartment plot throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Identifying that the single girl is, in the marriage boom era, clearly marked as unconventional, she discusses how a young woman's choice to live alone in the city at this time represents a provisional state rather than a permanent identity. Linked to Joan Didion's characterization of the experience of single girls in New York in the 1960s as a 'reprieve' from the demands of domesticity and family that shaped their childhoods and—for most—will distinguish their futures, the bohemian state is directly positioned as the choice of white, middle-class girls to rebel against the conventional patterns of their upbringing to temporarily embrace a style of modernity that is closely associated with artistic and intellectual life. Quoting a *Mademoiselle* article from 1960, Wojcik specifies that the Bohemian is, in this way, a 'well-bred well-educated girl with a cultural bent' (2010: 152). The place and function of the apartment is central to this subculture in representing an 'alternative private sphere … that challenges the association between women and domesticity' to produce 'a particularly modern feminine identity' (148).

The contemporary popular feminist apartment plot differs in important ways from this bohemian precursor to produce a notably different type of feminine identity—one that is clearly distinguished as a product of neoliberal times. Most obviously, young women such as Issa in *Insecure* are not presented to be living out a short-term reprieve from domesticity. As a partial result of the institutionalization of 'emerging adulthood' that I will consider below, women choosing to live in city apartments in their twenties no longer signifies a period of modernity or unconventionality preceding marriage and stability, instead functioning as much more of a norm in itself. As part of this shift, the connotations of freedom and experimentation that attend the bounded bohemian window of the 1950s and 1960s are now overlaid with a strong sense of precarity. Both sets of characters are choosing to dwell in urban centres and living thriftily to support this, but the presentation of the choice is quite different. As Wojcik writes, the messy, under furnished nature of apartments such as Holly Golightly's in *Breakfast at Tiffany's* (Blake Edwards, 1961) signifies a rootlessness that is primarily dictated by eccentricity rather than poverty—a 'wilful perversity' (2010: 152) that will eventually be safely recuperated by marriage. Apartments such as Issa's or Hannah's in *Girls* look different—they are obviously maintained and furnished for as little as possible, but this is done with care and style. These young women are not rootless but settled—indeed, *stuck*—in their spaces. The apartment in this scenario does not just map an indeterminate space of possibility en route to somewhere else; it primarily signifies an enduring state of immobility. From a generic perspective, this immobility can be linked to the 'indie' identity of the series, where the principles of transformation and progression that distinguish classical narrative structures are self-consciously rejected in favour of observing the minutiae of characters' day to day existence. At a sociological level, it makes the series compelling meditations on the related phenomena of emerging adulthood and recessionary culture. As Diane Negra and Yvonne Tasker have observed, recessionary media culture typically implies that management of the self can effect positive change, in line with how postfeminist culture suggests that it is individual women (rather than systems of gender hierarchy) that require modification (2014: 2). In their engagement with the logic of thrift, these series push back against both of these commands.

'Emerging adulthood' is the term used by behavioral psychologists to describe a 'new stage of the life span' that exists between adolescence and adulthood. First proposed by Jeffrey Jansen Arnett in 2000, the period is understood to roughly span the ages of 18-25, and reflects a macro change in what people expect life to be like in one's twenties. Whereas for most of the twentieth century it was typical for people in industrialized societies to meet standard milestones during their early to mid-twenties—consolidated career pathway, marriage, child(ren), property—it is now the norm to regard this period as one of self-exploration and instability (Arnett 2006: 3-4). While this shifted perception in how one 'should' come of age is in no small part the welcome result of civil rights' advances of the 1960s onward, it is also a clear effect of neoliberal capitalism weakening the social and institutional structures that both supported and restricted young people in this process throughout history. As James Coté has discussed, the deinstitutionalization of the entry into adulthood has accompanied the rise of individualization as the imperative to rely on one's own resources and sense of agency; to, precisely, *manage* oneself: 'More than ever before, coming of age in the 21st century means learning to stand alone as a self-sufficient person, capable of making choices and decisions independently from among a wide range of possibilities' (Arnett 2006: 4).

As a sociologically defined life stage, emerging adulthood has a compelling media corollary in the term 'adulting'. Born on social media and defined by the urban dictionary as a verb meaning 'to do grown things and hold responsibilities such as a 9-5 job, a mortgage/rent, a car payment, or anything else that makes one think of grown ups', the term is most familiar as a quasi-ironic hashtag that accompanies posted statements or images of quotidian victories, or failures, in domestic or work spheres, for example: 'I just bought a new mattress and it was expensive #adulting' or 'Just caught myself shouting "Yeh boy" really loud in the supermarket for a box of discounted weetabix. Is this what being an adult is all about? #weetabix #adulting'. Such reports emphasise the individuation of emerging adulthood; the personal toll of the imperative to *be* adult, and the (partially) faux pride when one gathers one's resources—physical, mental or economic—to accomplish a 'grown up' task. The former sentiment, though, just as often leads to the documentation of a hapless *failure* to adult: 'Using an oven thermometer to take my temperature because I don't own a regular thermometer #adultingfail'. The ironic sense of disappointment that pervades this presentation of self in the terms of adulting underlines emerging adulthood as a state not of positive growth but of immobility. Adulting is temporarily *acting* like an adult, but with a paradoxically ambivalent sense of faith in the authenticity of the concept. In the think-piece culture that has seized upon the term, this paradox is a common focus, grounding numerous explorations of how adulting raises the question of what adulthood actually is, how it has been understood across different generations, and what its markers might be—from owning storage items and household appliances (see Johnson 2015) to skeletal maturity and coming of age ceremonies (see Beck 2016). In one of the most expansive cultural reflections, Anne Helen Petersen has recently considered how the neoliberal logic of optimization shapes adulting in the specific terms of paralysis (2018).

While the internet speak around adulting is not explicitly incorporated into the scripting of *Girls, Insecure, Fleabag, Broad City, Can't Cope Won't Cope* and *Search Party*, much of its sentiment is—to the point where the concept arguably underpins both their individual premises and their discursive identity as a group. The logic is evident from their taglines: 'Living the dream. One mistake at a time'; 'Almost getting it kind of together'; 'Nowhere to grow but up' (*Girls* S1, S2, S4), 'She's trying hard AF'; 'Glowing up ain't easy' (*Insecure* S1, S3) and 'The fun can't last forever. Can it?' (*Can't Cope, Won't Cope* S1). The underlying theme that 'adulting is hard' is the distinguishing feature of these series as examples of a shift in programming identified by Lauren DeCarvalho: from the work-*based* to the work-*related* sitcom or dramedy. Where the former are set in one stable work environment, the characters of the latter move in and out of work, highlighting issues of employment and economic survival (DeCarvalho 2013: 368). This identity extends the scope of the newer programming from specific workplace plots to broader issues around how characters choose to live. A key theme in feminist television studies focusing on productions of the 1960s onward is to examine how instances of workplace series like *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* historically allowed networks to capitalize on the marketability of certain liberal feminist ideals without engaging with the wider structural implications of social change. As I will cover further below, the issues around thriving and choice that define the newer series put them in an equally conflicted dialogue with feminist discourses. For the moment, though, I want to return to the idea of the apartment plot to consider how it might underpin this subgenre of the work-related comedy or dramedy as a genre with an acute sense of economic verisimilitude.

Thrift and thriving

Insofar as any critical attention has been paid to these young women's television apartments, it has tended to focus on the 'authentic' nature of the spaces, as part of a perspective that acclaims the 'realism' of this wave of production. The primary theme in this style of commentary is a focus on the emotional and affective realism of the series, where the protagonists' defining qualities of anxiety, anger and discontent are celebrated for frankly disclosing feelings and experiences that women have long been encouraged to suppress. The naturalism that is perceived here is in part an effect of an emotionally honest style of character presentation that rejects postfeminist commands to be upbeat and confident, promoting instead a broad sense of 'imperfection'. But in a related way, it is an effect too of the series' intense focus on the minutiae of exactly how the characters dwell day to day, which, because of their choice to live in expensive, competitive urban centres, is necessarily focused on issues like getting and keeping work and on making rent. This narrative situation means that being broke is a fundamental part of the characters' identity, and never far from the choices they make—a notably different identity from the 'wilful' poverty of the women of the Bohemian apartment plot. The location and styling of their apartments are a key site for this concern with verisimilitude,[2] and distinguish the series sharply from other TV apartment plots such as *Sex and the City*, where the freelance writer Carrie Bradshaw's (Sarah Jessica Parker) improbably large and lovely brownstone apartment on New York's Upper East Side completely obscures issues of money and opportunity. *The New York Times* took some of these issues up in a 2016 article that mapped out the floorplan of Carrie's apartment alongside that of *Girls* character Marnie Michaels (Alison Williams)—showing that the latter, located in Chinatown and colloquially known in the show as 'the shitbox', is less than one quarter the size of the former (Kaysen 2016). In a comment that neatly links the emotional and economic realism of these contemporary television apartment plots, the author claimed that 'as rising rents squeeze young New Yorkers, the TV apartment has become grittier, dirtier, and even more cramped. You could almost say it is angry'.

All the series in this group contain numerous instances where this economic reality structures plot moves and key narrative themes. In Season 4 of *Girls*, for instance, Hannah is accepted into the prestigious Iowa Writer's Workshop and moves away from the poky apartment in Greenpoint, Brooklyn that she has occupied, with a variety of roommates, for the entire series. Immediately afterwards, at the beginning of the season's second episode (S4 E2 'Triggering'), her new apartment is the site through which the radical shift in her situation is expressed. Touring rental spaces with a broker, she is floored to discover the amount of space she can afford for $250 a month, and asks what she could get for $800. The scene cuts to an even larger apartment, housed in a grand Tudor style house and full of natural light, large flowing living spaces and leadlight fixtures. As she excitedly settles in, she shows Marnie the space on skype, exclaiming that it took her four minutes to do so, whereas 'in New York it would have taken four seconds'. The apartment is—very briefly—the site through which Hannah imagines a whole new lifestyle where she bikes to class, eats grapes for a snack and generally escapes the malaise and discontent that defines her life in New York. 'Honestly', she tells Marnie, 'I feel like I made the right decision, which is a totally new sensation for me'. 'Iowa is incredible', she goes on, 'we should all move here and start the revolution'. On the first night in her new apartment, though, a bat startles Hannah and she is forced to sleep on her bathroom floor. Three episodes later, she is back in New York.

Other series use characters' means of dwelling to link their narrative flow even more closely to themes of economic verisimilitude. In *Insecure*, the metaphorical resonance between Issa's place in life and *in space* is continuously riffed upon. The series' opening scenes described above insistently convey a sense that Issa is stuck—in an unsatisfying job, a stalled relationship, and her cramped apartment. Over the course of the first two seasons, she does break up with her partner Lawrence (Jay Ellis) but little about her work or domestic life changes, and the latter in fact becomes a site for the expression of her *increasing* precarity. More so than any other series mentioned here, Issa's financial situation is an explicit theme in *Insecure*, and is frequently drawn attention to in conversation with her friends, as well as through the emphatic visual contrast between the spaces she occupies and others in the series, such as Molly's glossy apartment, the opulent

Malibu Airbnb that Issa and her friends rent out at the end of season one, or the light and spacious place that Lawrence moves into after they break up and he gets a lucrative tech job. The latter is one aspect of how this break up forces a direct confrontation with economic reality that preoccupies much of season two, which takes a growing interest in the gentrification of Inglewood—Issa's historically black, South L.A neighbourhood. After the break-up she wants to live alone, but is forced out of 'The Dunes' by a rent increase that is in line with the appearance of a new promenade in place of the old neighbourhood stores and other gentrifying developments. In a discussion in the last episode of season two (S2, E8 'Hella Perspective'), her friends are blunt about her prospects. Celebrating what the rest of the group are doing with their lives—getting pregnant, getting fit, taking interviews—Issa's friend Tiffany (Amanda Seales) awkwardly can't think of anything for her and, when Issa claims she is moving, the others are incredulous: 'you ain't got no money!', another friend Kelli (Natasha Rothwell) exclaims, 'you can't live anywhere but way out … I'm talking Lancaster, West Covina'. Issa is here situated as a definitive victim of gentrification, insofar as her history and identity is linked to a location that is rapidly and formulaically transforming, and that she can no longer afford. The central place of the apartment itself in this is emphasized when Issa and Lawrence visit the vacant space for a final time. With its rundown qualities amplified by its echoing emptiness, and the weight of their past in it hanging in the air, both reflect on how they wanted to be better for themselves and for each other, and how they have each failed in particular ways to live up to the expectations they set.

It is of course common for a scene such as this, where characters survey a now-empty space in which they have lived out many years, to feel nostalgic and emotional. It is a key affective strategy of the apartment plot, insofar as it explicitly prompts reflection upon the characters' temporal identity and the ways in which they have changed over the course of their time in the space. The affect is particularly acute in the context of television space, for viewers have also spent a substantial amount of time with the dwelling, and can therefore directly empathize with the surreal combination of familiarity and unfamiliarity that a vacated residence evokes. With its keynote of disappointment, this moment in *Insecure* pushes both meanings of *thrift* that I acknowledged at the outset to the foreground, and in a manner that highlights the spectrum between necessity and choice that is at the core of this concept. First, it is made clear that Issa's frugal way of living is no longer enough to sustain her choice to live in this urban centre. She has been able to prioritize this choice by living thriftily, but this level of control has now been taken away from her. Second, and directly following on from this reality, her nomination of this locale as a space in which she can *thrive* is no longer feasible. The regret of this realization is made evident in a montage that follows the conversation between Issa and Lawrence where, in a common stylistic move for the series, Issa's speculation upon different scenarios plays out on screen. As the two say goodbye at the door of the empty apartment, Issa imagines Lawrence dropping to his knee and asking her to marry him, followed by the two of them flopping, laughing, onto their couch in wedding clothes, and then entering the apartment with Lawrence carrying a baby boy. In the real turn of events, a second later, Lawrence simply says goodbye and walks away.

The generic nature of the events that Issa imagines foreground how her speculation is occurring through a filter of disillusionment. Set against the long conversation that she has just had with Lawrence, though, the montage does highlight how neither have managed to thrive in the space. As an extended moment of disappointment and regret, the scene is a stark reminder of the extent to which failure and states of imperfection distinguish this wave of comic and tragic-comic production by and about young women. The keynote of *Insecure* is, precisely, *insecurity.* A lot of the popular commentary around the series links this state to Issa's social awkwardness, taking its cue from Rae's earlier web series, *The Misadventures of Awkward Black Girl*. Theorising this awkwardness in terms of abjection, Rebecca Wanzo argues for the feminist importance of the affective mode as a strategy of immobility, which disrupts the sitcom's narrative tendency to support a 'domestic status quo or move women toward marriage and greater professional fulfilment' (2016: 33). In the series' first season, this immobility is primarily expressed in terms of Issa's emotional stasis and her uncertainty around her goals and aspirations. As the series continues, though, her paralysis begins to be expressed in more material ways. When her car is wrecked in season two, she has to take the bus and car pool instead of having it repaired. Soon after she takes a second job as a Lyft driver to cover the extra rent when Lawrence moves out. And finally, in a move most critical to the themes I have outlined here, she moves at the very end of season 2 (S2, E8 'Hella Perspective') out of her apartment and in with another ex-boyfriend who is a key character in the series—Daniel (Y'lan Noel), whose couch she uncomfortably sleeps on for the first several episodes of season three. As these developments accumulate, Issa's thrifty behavior becomes less about choice and more about necessity. She is not struggling to survive exactly, but she is struggling to do so within the locale and means of dwelling that the series has established are central to her identity.

It's at this stage in the series, then, that *Insecure's* engagement with the logic of thrift as thriving during an extended period of emerging adulthood becomes most compelling. In all of the series discussed here, the characters' efforts to 'become who they are meant to be'—as Hannah claims at the outset of *Girls*—align with the logic of thriving insofar as they demonstrate a drive for each to live their 'best life'. Angela McRobbie captures both the aspirational and regulatory dimensions of this nebulous idea with her concept of the 'perfect', as 'a heightened form of self-regulation based on an aspiration to some idea of the 'good life' (2015: 9). The principles of individualization, competition and self-discipline are here prominent, with the perfect manifesting as 'a kind of neoliberal spreadsheet, a constant benchmarking of the self, a highly standardized mode of self-assessment, a calculation of one's assets, a fear of possible losses' (McRobbie 2015: 10). In varying ways, these practices underpin practically every storyline of the series I have considered here, extending deep into the minutiae of the emotional, social and economic decisions that make up the low-key action. The widespread emphasis on failure and discontent that defines them demonstrates starkly how the pressure to thrive amidst the moral framework of the perfect is overwhelmingly challenging. This is a point McRobbie herself picks up on when she discusses *Girls* as a 'seemingly realist counter' to the notion of perfection, which instead endorses 'imperfection' through inversions such as the main characters' physical appearance and the series' attentiveness to the reality of earning a living in New York City (2015: 13). McRobbie is critical of *Girls*, though, for ultimately presenting the imperfect as another version of its opposite, in a relatively manicured and celebrity-driven idea of failure. In an important point for the themes addressed in this article, she locates this problem in how Dunham presents imperfection as part of the process of growing up, locating herself within 'a framework of painful youthful femininity, out of which she must, at some point, grow'. This space of 'seemingly endless youth'—or what I have above considered through the ideas of 'adulting' and 'emerging adulthood'—is, for McRobbie, a western white privilege whereby the support of well-off parents (and other trappings of middle class abundance) effectively exonerates Dunham's characters from the responsibilities that will come later on: 'she does not at this point in time have to be as "driven" in a bid to gain female control and success as her older counterparts' (McRobbie 2015: 15).

The logic of perfection and imperfection that is operative here resonates strongly with the spectrum of thrift behavior. Imperfection is positioned as a *choice*, which manifests at least in part from the attitude of the young women's parents, who either directly or indirectly refuse to financially support their daughters. Put another way, it could be said that the *necessity* of the imperfect lifestyles dramatized in these series extends only so far as the parents' boundaries, which is an observation that sits precisely with the critique of 'emerging adulthood' as a category that some perceive as a luxury only available to those with sufficient means (Syed 2015: 5). This is a theme that is frequently raised in *Girls*, with Hannah's father Tad (Peter Scolari) always the softer parent who can't stand to see her 'suffer' and is quick to respond to her needs. The (single) father of the character Fleabag is the direct opposite—both emotionally and financially distant towards his daughters, despite the conspicuous display of his considerable wealth throughout the series. *Insecure* sits within the thematic concerns of this wave of production, and foregrounds the qualities of discontent and immobility that I have argued characterize its particular expression of imperfection. With an exaggerated interest in material precarity, though, as well as no evidence of a family support network and a defining concern with the transformation of a black Los Angeles neighbourhood, Rae's series offers a distinctly classed and raced perspective on thrift behavior as both frugality and the imperative to *thrive*. Through the central device of the apartment plot, *Insecure* presents 'adulting' as an experience that is less about '[licensing] self-obsession' (McRobbie 2015: 15) and more about critiquing the moral order of neoliberal capitalism.

Claire Perkins is Senior Lecturer in Film & Screen Studies at Monash University. She is the author of *American Smart Cinema* (2012) and co-editor of six anthologies including *Indie Reframed: Women's Filmmaking and Contemporary American Independent Cinema* (2016), *Transnational Television Remakes* (2015) and *U.S Independent Film After 1989: Possible Films* (2015). E-mail: claire.perkins@monash.edu

Notes

[1]Commentaries on these series often take up the function of the show itself in this issue of gentrification. See, for instance, 'Insecure romanticized South LA. Now it's grappling with the side effects' (2018). Tanya Saracho's series Vida (Starz) makes this topic its central theme.
[2]Another key site for this commentary is how the characters are dressed, which also frequently focuses on realism and thrift purchases. See for instance, 'How to Shop Like Insecure's Issa and Molly' (2016) or '3 Reasons Why the Fashion of Broad City is so Important – and actually Emblematic of Twentysomething Life' (2015).

References

Arnett, Jeffrey Jansen (2006): 'Emerging Adulthood: Understanding the New Way of Coming of Age,' Jeffrey Jansen Arnett and Jennifer Lynn Tanner (eds): *Emerging Adults in America: Coming of Age in the 21st Century*, Washington DC: American Psychological Association, 3-19.

Banet-Weiser, Sarah. 2018. *Empowered: Popular Feminism and Popular Misogyny.* Durham: Duke University Press.

Beck, Julie (2016): 'When are you really an adult?' *The Atlantic*, January 5, https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2016/01/when-are-you-really-an-adult/422487/ Accessed August 2, 2017.

DeCarvalho, Lauren J. (2013): 'Hannah and her Entitled Sisters: (Post)feminism, (post)recession and Girls,' *Feminist Media Studies*, Volume 13 (2), 367-370.

Green, Penelope (2016): 'Tiny Home Test Drive,' *The New York Times*, June 10, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/12/realestate/testing-the-first-micro-apartments-in-new-york-city.html Accessed September 11, 2018
Hunter, James Davison & Joshua J Yates (2011): *Thrift in America: Capitalism and Moral Order from the Puritans to the Present*, New York: Oxford University Press.
Jacobs, Jason & Steven Peacock (2013): *Television Aesthetics and Style*, London: Bloomsbury.
Johnson, Sophie Lucido (2015): 'How do you know you've really become an adult? An illustrated essay,' *The Guardian*, October 3, https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2015/oct/03/adulthood-adulting-millennials-growing-up Accessed August 2, 2017.
Kaysen, Ronda (2016): 'Fictional New York City Apartments Get Real,' *The New York Times*, September 16, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/18/realestate/fictional-new-york-city-apartments-get-real.html Accessed February 18, 2019
McRobbie, Angela (2015): 'Notes on the Perfect: Competitive Femininity in Neoliberal Times,' *Australian Feminist Studies*, Volume 30 (83), 3-20.
Negra, Diane & Yvonne Tasker (2014): *Gendering the Recession: Media and Culture in an Age of Austerity*, Durham: Duke University Press.
Nussbaum, Emily (2019): *I Like to Watch: Arguing My Way Through the TV Revolution*, New York: Random House.
Petersen, Anne Helen (2019): 'How Millennials Became the Burnout Generation,' BuzzFeed News, January 5, https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/annehelenpetersen/millennials-burnout-generation-debt-work> Accessed January 5, 2019
Podkalicka, Aneta & Jason Potts (2014): 'Towards a general theory of thrift,' *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, Volume 17 (3), 227-241.
Press, Joy (2018). *Stealing the Show: How Woman Are Revolutionizing Television*, New York: Atria Books.
Syed, Moin (2015): 'Emerging Adulthood: Developmental Stage, Theory, or Nonsense?' Jeffrey Jensen Arnett (ed): *The Oxford Handbook of Emerging Adulthood*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 11-25.
Wanzo, Rebecca (2016): 'Precarious-girl comedy: Issa Rae, Lena Dunham, and Abjection Aesthetics,' *Camera Obscura*, Volume 31 (2), 26-59.
Wojcik, Pamela Robertson (2010): *The Apartment Plot: Urban Living in American Film and Popular Culture, 1945-1975*, Durham NC: Duke University Press.
Wojcik, Pamela Robertson (ed.) (2014): *The Apartment Complex: Urban Living and Global Screen Cultures*, Durham: Duke University Press.

Culture Unbound
Journal of Current Cultural Research

Making do on not much: High Energy Striving, Femininity and Friendship in *Broad City*

By Akane Kanai & Amy Dobson

Abstract

In the years following the 2008 global financial crisis ("GFC"), feminist media scholarship has drawn attention to the gendered calls in Western media culture to remake subjectivity in line with imperatives of thrift required in conditions of austerity. In the shared symbolic environments that "gender the recession" (Negra & Tasker, 2014), media ranging from news, reality television, and film have placed further, intensified demands on women's domestic, affective, paid and unpaid labour, requiring attitudinal orientations combining future-oriented enthusiasm, positivity, entrepreneurialism, a continued faith in (budget-conscious) consumption and investment in the home and the family. This article considers the US comedy *Broad City* as an articulation of how young women are critically grappling with such shifts in gendered social relations and labour markets in the cosmopolitan setting of New York City. We suggest, in the depiction of the central female friendship between Abbi Abrams (Abbi Jacobson) and Ilana Wexler (Ilana Glazer) in *Broad City*, the show foregrounds the necessity of young women's "high energy striving" but produces an alternative configuration of the normative relation between femininity and labour. In the show, contra the "retreatism" Negra and Tasker document idealising women's work in the home as a means of combatting an austere future, the thrifty fun, care, support, and love Abbi and Ilana strive to create together spills across public spaces, spanning the streets of the city, outdoors in parks and on stoops. Abbi and Ilana are continually depicted labouring in some way, though such labour does not generally result in financial or career-based reward, but rather, produces psychic and emotional sustenance for the women's friendship and a means of affectively investing in each other. Thus, in *Broad City's* acknowledgement of the high energy striving required to survive, the show critically questions the relation of such feminine striving to the promise of career, financial success, and the idealised direction of such striving towards the domestic and hetero-patriarchal family. Instead, the show emphasises the material importance of such striving in relation to the bonds of women's friendship in conditions of material and social hardship, suggesting a different orientation to women's work and its place in recessional culture.

Keywords: Young women, affect, recessional culture, neoliberalism, labour.

Akane Kanai & Amy Dobson: "Making do on not much: High Energy Striving, Femininity and Friendship in Broad City", *Culture Unbound*, Volume 11, issue 3–4, 2019: 517–533. Published by Linköping University Electronic Press: http://www.cultureunbound.ep.liu.se

Introduction

In the first episode of the US TV comedy *Broad City*, "What a wonderful world" (S1, Ep 1), we meet best friends, Ilana Wexler and Abbi Abrams, played by the showrunners Ilana Glazer and Abbi Jacobson. Ilana and Abbi are two Jewish women in their 30s surviving and attempting to thrive in New York City, epitomising generational and gendered shifts in the social contract. While Ilana and Abbi have benefited from increased access to education they also experience the failed promises of "passionate work" (McRobbie 2016), career fulfilment and financial stability for the middle classes. Both graduates of New York University ("NYU"), the two women are, several years later, yet to capitalise on their educational investments. In the show's early seasons, the free-spirited, eccentric Ilana is employed at a call centre named "Deals! Deals! Deals!", where her controversial social media promotional tactics end up getting her fired. Abbi, who aspires to be either an artist or a gym trainer, works as a cleaner at Soulstice Gym, a high end establishment where the seemingly glamorous work of training beautiful, sometimes celebrity, bodies is contrasted with Abbi's actual tasks that involve removing bodily excretions from its shiny surfaces. In episode one, Ilana and Abbi seek to make a little extra cash to see rapper Lil' Wayne, and enterprisingly attempt to busk in a park. However, in the competitive world of New York City busking, they are outshone by a talented dancer who uses their drumming rhythms to perform to the delight of onlookers, who reward the dancer but not Abbi and Ilana. They then respond to a Craig's List ad to clean a man's apartment in their underwear, Abbi with considerable reluctance. Having performed their part of the bargain, the client, played by comedian Fred Armisen, pretends he has no money to pay them, because, as he explains in baby talk, he is a "baby". In response, Abbi and Ilana destroy the meticulous tidiness of his home, upending tables, and knocking over carefully arranged knickknacks. At this point, the client's pants drop, and he is revealed to be wearing a nappy. Abbi and Ilana burst into uncontrollable laughter, steal some alcohol, and the episode ends with the two friends sitting outside on a neighbourhood stoop, in the cold New York winter's night, drinking together merrily.

This absurd romp through the exploitations, humiliations, and joys of attempting to make a living in New York offers audiences a comedic yet critical take on how middle class young women, that is, those who have been encouraged to see themselves on a particular trajectory towards career "success", are negotiating a "post-girlpower" cultural context (Harris and Dobson 2015) of precarity, insecure employment and lowly paid work (Adkins 2016). We suggest *Broad City's* portrayal of the difficulties of survival in such conditions grapples with shifts in gendered social relations and labour markets, as part of a suite of recent US television that moves from workplace and home-based sitcoms to centre young women's experiences, and their lived and felt economic and social insecurities (deCarvalho 2013). We focus on *Broad City* as a feminist intervention into otherwise prevalent cultural narratives that reinvigorate highly gendered and unequal expectations in the context of economic downturn, and call on women to act as savvy investor-entrepreneurs across domestic and public spaces (McRobbie, 2016; Negra and Tasker, 2014). Key to our argument is the alternative configuration of the relation between femininity, labour and thrift in the show. Broad City centres the high energy striving that is required of young women in order to make do with few material resources. However, it valorises this thrifty striving, showing its psychic and emotional sustenance of the women's friendship, which spills across the public spaces of the city, rather than directing such energies towards purely domestic "home-making" and the accrual of capital and private property.

We explore how *Broad City* represents instances of young women's "affective dissonance" (Hemmings 2012) with gendered discourses and feeling rules of post-Fordist configurations of labour. Drawing on a feminist framework privileging affect as a site of social orientation, in this article, we attempt to articulate how the kind of high-energy striving that is required to survive "thriftily" in such conditions is tied to contemporary youthful femininity. Such affective striving, on the one hand, may be seen as part of the "passionate work" that re-embeds youthful femininity within the promises of capitalist flourishing. Yet, importantly, Abbi and Ilana's characters embody this kind of normatively feminine high energy striving, we suggest, while also critically foregrounding the social and material conditions in which this affective gendered subjectivity has emerged. Abbi, and particularly Ilana often strive aimlessly or unsuccessfully, fail at their endeavours, work very hard for little, or unpredictable material return (waitressing tips, selling their art, and busking). At the same time, they direct excessive amounts of energy into each other, investing in their friendship over both work and other kinds of relations. This affective striving, then, is not confined in its direction to the self or the domestic home space; nor is it directed towards the neoliberal investment in intimate others as future labouring subjects. Abbi and Ilana's collective energy is articulated as necessary for their day to day affective survival, generated from moment to moment across the streetscapes of the city, public transport, park benches, and on neighbourhood stoops. Thus, in *Broad City's* acknowledgement of the high energy striving required under recessional conditions, the show critically questions the relation of such striving to idealised gendered economic subjectivities and the promise of career and financial success. Instead, the show emphasises the necessity of such striving in relation to the bonds of women's friendship in conditions of material and social hardship, and inevitable "failures" (Halberstam, 2011) suggesting new understandings of what "home" might entail.

Femininity, high-energy striving and thrift in post-recessional media culture
In the wake of the 2008 global financial crisis ("GFC"), feminist media scholars have noted certain shifts in the representations of women in Western media culture. In the early 2000s, Negra and Tasker (2014) note that media culture addressed to women audiences showed significant ties to the bubble culture of the first decade of the twenty-first century. Across US film and television, young women were featured as affluent, self-fashioning consumers who were negotiating an abundance of "choices" in lifestyle, career and leisure. Post-recession, such representations of consumption and women's spending power have been uneasily negotiated and "downsized" (p. 14), with figures such as the "recessionista" and "frugalista" (Nathanson 2014) emerging. Writing on fashion bloggers' championing of savvy spending, Nathanson (2014: 144) observes that conditions of austerity do not necessarily limit, but rather, reconfigure gendered patterns of consumption as "young women are encouraged to define themselves through working within economic restraints that encourage heightened attention to creative approaches to consumer culture", often modelling the collapse of distinctions between consumption and production. As taste cultures emerge in the cultural "space between postfeminist discourses and economic exigency" (Nathanson 2014: 137), women continue to be charged with the roles of responsibly determining appropriate household and personal consumption, while increasingly modelling such prudent yet desirable consumption-production through media. We witness the rise of feminine micro-enterprise in the visibility of "mommy bloggers" who recommend lifestyle "hacks" and shortcuts, attempting to capitalise on the performance of domestic work (Taylor 2016), as well as fashion, beauty and lifestyle bloggers who demonstrate their entrepreneurial value in the performance of everyday life (Duffy & Hund 2015). Such movements are also exemplified in the rise of the digital craft economy on sites such as Etsy, in which the (perfect) home becomes a central signifier of value in the production of high-labour, low volume creative goods (Luckman 2016). The home and the so-called private sphere, then, must be capitalised upon in order to succeed in competitive economic conditions, intensifying the demands of women for continuous labour as well as a future-oriented, prudent, investor orientation in all aspects of life.

Women have long been "flexible" workers, blurring the boundaries between reproductive and productive work (Adkins 2016). As such, post-GFC media culture does not abandon but reconfigures gendered labour practices, aligning new norms with economic subjectivities deemed suitable for adapting to worsening and more competitive conditions. In view of the increasing de-collectivisation of everyday life, the retreatist representation of thrift or responsible consumption on "investment" pieces of homeware and fashion, and pleasure in domestic labour has become salient across film (Thoma 2014), financial reporting, and news media (Negra & Tasker 2014), reality and makeover television (Hamad 2014), the online craft economy (Luckman 2016) and influencer culture (Nathanson 2014). As such, we suggest the mediated representation of thrift may both encompass a reflection of new financial exigencies that women are expected to bear, as well as the normative gendering of the labour that is expected to soften the impacts of financial crisis. Such representation signals not simply a shift in economic conditions but the increasing burden, and indeed, high energy striving, that women are required to take on in "making do" in a context where distinctions between personal and home life and professional life are collapsed in favour of the demonstration of value in all spheres of life (Gregg 2011).

Entangled in this injunction to strive in all spheres of life is the increasingly salient formulation of "passionate work" whereby labour is conflated with self-fulfilment. Angela McRobbie describes it as follows:

> … a distinctive mode of gender-retraditionalization (as defined by Adkins) whereby the conservatism of post-feminism re-instates young women's aspirations for success within designated zones of activity such as creative labour markets, which then becomes spaces for the deployment of highly normative femininity such as 'girlish enthusiasm', which can be construed as a willingness to work all hours for very little pay in the hope of gaining a foothold in the field of work (Adkins 2002). (McRobbie 2016: 110)

In McRobbie's (2016) argument, the language of the "dream job", often found in glamorous portrayals of the creative industries, is now part of the commonsense vocabulary for young women across social axes like class and racialisation. In these circumstances, the demonstration of pleasure in work becomes a vital marker of normative femininity; not demonstrating such pleasure becomes a clear mark "of personal failure or of being the wrong person for the job" (McRobbie 2016: 103).

We observe that McRobbie (2016) poses a critique of the way these neoliberal feeling rules (Kanai 2019) of "girlish enthusiasm" attach young women to an impossible trajectory within neoliberal capitalism. We take up this focus on the affective regulation of subjectivity to highlight the ways in which media culture generates attachments to the "good life" in recessionary culture. Indeed, there is a strong mutuality between the production of "positive" feelings like resilience, confidence and optimism and the affective investment young women are encouraged to make in precarious conditions of labour (Banet-Weiser 2018, Gill and Orgad 2015), leaving little space for dissatisfaction or critique (Kanai 2019). The gendered affective regulation attached to passionate work may be seen as a corollary to increasingly commonsense discourses of human capital, whereby individual character and attitudinal traits such as flexibility, thrift, perseverance and future orientation are explained as the solution for achieving social mobility, employability and self-determination in capitalist economies that structurally produce unequal outcomes (Kafer 2013, Taylor 2018).

Yet, we suggest that it is also possible to imagine an alignment of such gendered enthusiasm and passion that is oriented primarily towards important social and collective bonds, and away from capitalist re-attachments. We suggest that such possibilities are seen in the recent growth of women-produced media culture where many young women themselves, both within and outside of the creative industries, are engaging critically with notions of the kind of high-energy feminine striving mandated in these conditions, and the failed promises of neoliberal higher education and passionate work, even for white middle class women. Media culture that engages with these post-girlpower conditions includes the proliferation of post-recessional television in the US featuring young, urban women negotiating economic duress such as *2 Broke Girls*, *New Girl*, *Girls*, and television that centres the professional and personal dissatisfactions and anxieties of young women like *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*, *Insecure*, *Jane the Virgin*, and *The Mindy Project*. Lauren deCarvalho (2013) suggests that the spate of programming featuring a focus on young women's economic insecurity may in fact re-intensify masculine authority in the wake of the expression of lack of ambition and drive by young women, suggesting this is in relation to the popular TV show *Girls*. However, we suggest that there are also productive cultural shifts here, in which upbeat, can-do and self-confident affects associated with neoliberal girlpower myths are critically examined and sometimes overtly eschewed. Such television may offer some important cultural spaces for the expression of young women's "affective dissonances", resentment, critique, and anger with both the material conditions and feeling rules of neoliberalism (Dobson & Kanai 2018, Negra & Tasker 2014).

Following Clare Hemmings (2012) we suggested the importance of highlighting such cultural representations in the process of a broader feminist cultural "affective divestment" in gendered neoliberal success narratives (Dobson & Kanai 2018) and mythologies of "the good life" (Berlant 2008, 2011), through an analysis of the affective politics of contemporary media culture as a site for the collective symbolic investment in particular ways of life. For Hemmings, a feminist politics necessarily begins with a dissonance that is felt with the current social arrangements: effectively, "[I]n order to know differently we have to feel differently" (2012: 150). It is this affective dissonance that provides the grounds for politicisation, Hemmings suggests, orientating the self towards social transformation. Our analysis of affect and feelings rules in post-GFC television created by and centred on young women attempts to chart the complexities and contradictions of the psychic life of neoliberalism (Scharff 2015), where young women's anger and insecurities appear to be finding more cultural footings, amongst strong ongoing cultural drives towards gendered notions of confidence, perfection, resilience, shamelessness, and invulnerability (McRobbie 2015, Kanai 2019; Gill & Kanai 2018). In our analysis of some of the key themes across the series, we suggest *Broad City* as contributing to this critique through the orientation of such high energy striving not towards capitalist re-attachments but feminist solidarity.

Our analysis of the series over the arc of its five seasons from 2014-2019 is concerned with contemporary feminine subjectivity and feminist politics. In our research on US post-recessional television created by and centred on young women, we mobilise Hemmings' notions of "affective dissonance" as a framework to help us identify and analyse the prominence of negative affects in recent post-recessional TV created by young women. We have analysed recent US television created by and centre on young women in terms of expressions of anger, insecurity, anxiety, and dissatisfaction in their lived experiences, particularly in relation to working life (Dobson and Kanai 2018). Here we build on this previous analysis to consider notions of feminine subjectivity as related to the activities of "thriftiness" and "home-making" in *Broad City*. Again thinking through the frame of "affective dissonance", we firstly overview the story of the friendship of the two protagonists, and then go on to draw attention to specific stories across the seasons in *Broad City* that deal with themes of thrift and home-making, specifically portraying disaffection with the kinds of linear trajectories and privatised, individualised technologies of self mandated in recessional culture, but also evince a feminist hope in the power of social bonds.

Broken Post-Fordist Promises and the Foundations of Friendship

Released in 2014 on Comedy Central, *Broad City*, like *Girls*, *2 Broke Girls* and other US post-recession programming focused on young women, is premised on negotiating financial exigency without the guarantee of a promising future. Over its five seasons, neither Abbi nor Ilana are on track to an "upwardly mobile" trajectory of fulfilling, creative work. While having attended the prestigious NYU in their early adulthood, most likely at considerable cost, Abbi's "dream" career paths—that of artist and/or gym trainer—will likely not pay off that investment. Beyond this long term goal in the romantic pursuit of autonomy and self-expression, Abbi simply cannot find enough work and a market for her art to materially sustain herself. Accordingly, Abbi's job during the first two seasons of the show is to work as a cleaner at the gym. The frequent requests for Abbi to clean up vomit, pubic hair and other bodily traces are foregrounded as "drudge work" and indeed, Abbi's job represents one of the most casualised, and devalued occupations at the gym (and in wider Western society). It is this gap between Abbi's position and her desires that effectively questions the kinds of affective fantasies that are presented to young women as achievable and doable in the wake of increasing manifestations of social inequality. Abbi's desired occupations reference the luminous idealised "top girls" (McRobbie 2009) of the post-Fordist contract: either the upwardly mobile young woman who autonomously builds a career in the creative industries (McRobbie 2016); or the young woman who literally demonstrates her value through investment in her body through exercise and wellness (Harjunen 2017). The disjuncture between Abbi's reality and dreams is clear; she herself does not fit the "top girl" specifications. In her physical exercise, she is too aggressive and competitive; in her artistic pursuits she is not sufficiently confident.

Ilana, by way of contrast, has fewer aspirations. At Ilana's job at sales company Deals! Deals! Deals!, it is made evident that Ilana invests no effort and takes no responsibility in her job, much to the frustration of her fellow workers. Via this framework, *Broad City* takes aim at the necessary link between labour and reward. Later in the series, after Ilana is fired, she finds work at fancy fusion restaurant Sushi Mambeaux (S4, Ep 2 "Twaining Day"). The restaurant at first mandates that Ilana undermine the diners and be "mean" in order to maintain the cool prestige of the restaurant and effectively upsell menu items. Rather than force herself to play this role, Ilana instead decides to "be herself", and, through her natural effervescence and charm, she finds herself richly rewarded, cashing in 800 dollars on her first shift. Ilana is suddenly "rich" at a moment by just being "who she is" when Abbi, who is represented as the more diligent, hardworking and responsible, is penniless.

In contrast to dominant state-based representations of thrift in recessional culture and its connection to idealised forms of economic subjectivity (Bull & Allen 2018), the enforced thrift of the show is severed from any necessary connection to personality or self-management on the part of the two protagonists. Rather, it is used as means of showing how, despite the odds, they persevere in thriving while subsisting in the larger setting of New York City and its dynamics, difficulties, and odd and funny people. As noted above, while the two women are NYU graduates and thus command a certain level of cultural capital, this cultural capital has failed to convert into economic capital. This disconnection is effected, notably, during most of Season 4, where Ilana is temporarily flush with cash. (Notably, it is this literal cash under her bed that is later responsible for a bedbug infestation (S4, Ep 9 "Bedbugs"). Ilana does not know what to do with her money; for herself, she spends $480 on getting her nails done. She lavishes her money on Abbi in the form of an extremely expensive handbag, at a time when Abbi is destitute and has spent two hours recycling empty bottles to make four dollars. Abbi is touched by this present and treats it as a talisman, waltzing into the upmarket lifestyle store Anthropologie and seemingly effortlessly finding a job there, in a story arc parodying rom-com conventions. However, such good luck is short lived; she is then mugged at gunpoint, her handbag stolen, together with the remaining $374 to her name. The glamorous sales position she thought she was being offered turns out to be one as a security guard for the store.

In short, Abbi and Ilana can only rely on their genuine affection and support for each other. The fundamental place of their friendship as the foundation for the show is foregrounded in the episode "Sliding Doors" (S4, Ep1), which features as the origin story of the pair's friendship. Riffing off the 1999 film of the same name, the episode positions two alternative storylines beginning from the deciding moment in 2011 where the Abbi and Ilana, strangers at this point, miss or manage to catch their train. In the alternate universe where Abbi and Ilana miss the train due to a guy vomiting on the train platform, Abbi and Ilana meet and become friends straightaway in what is positioned as a "Good Day in New York City". In contrast, in the universe where Abbi and Ilana manage to catch their train, they have an awkward encounter, sit on opposite ends of the carriage and proceed on their separate ways in a "Bad Day in New York City". In the Bad Day, Ilana awkwardly tries to join a group of Black dancers on the train, accidentally gets kicked in the teeth, and inadvertently insults them by presuming they are poor when they are also students at NYU in the prestigious Tisch performing arts school.

Abbi similarly struggles in the Bad Day: she is harassed by a street seller of water guns, and attacked by the serial pest, the "New York Snipper", who cuts off her ponytail. Ilana is bullied on the basis of her Jewish appearance by the mean white girls she lives with in a NYU flat. Contrastingly, in the Good Day, Abbi, telling Ilana that she is also Jewish, gives Ilana the confidence to wear her hair curly when she has been straightening her hair to hide her Jewishness. Ilana fires up at the water gun street seller when he harasses Abbi. This Good Day, the episode later reveals, is fantasy. After discussing the thrill of Barack Obama's election as president and the certainty that a woman president will follow, at the end of the Good Day storyline, both Abbi and Ilana get run over by a bus featuring a prominent advertisement for Donald Trump's reality show, The Apprentice. The Bad Day, we see, is actually the Real Day; Abbi and Ilana meet on a park bench, dejected after their respective horrible days. They smoke weed, eat pizza, and thus the friendship begins more modestly; a friendship based on sustaining each other through the degrading, embarrassing, and fatiguing everyday experiences that New York City often presents.

This origin story positions the friendship as an essential affective resource that significantly differs from the "girlfriendships" associated with consumption, luxury and aspiration that Alison Winch (2013) has documented in both makeover television and sitcoms such as Cashmere Jungle, Lipstick Jungle and of course, *Sex and the City*. It is this emotional glue that secures the sense of belonging and "ontological security" (Giddens 1991) required for the two women to continue thriving in this dynamic but also difficult city. The show re-orients the high energy striving that is usually directed towards the domestic home and intimate others as objects for the investment of reproductive labour in hetero-patriarchy, towards this refreshingly aspiration-less but emotionally crucial friendship. In this relationship, Abbi and Ilana take turns in routinely egging each other on to do things they ordinarily would not be able to do, embarrass themselves in the pursuit of helping out each other's sexual prospects, impersonate each other to fill rostered shifts in hostile and strictly-run food coops, act as nurse when the other is ill, and rescue each other when high on prescription medication in the store Wholefoods. Thus, while the two friends have fun together, their amusing experiences often constitute the elaborate and energetic gymnastics required to get by in competitive urban centres of capital, and recover from the constant series of mishaps and uncomfortable experiences encountered in this environment.

Finding Comfort, Security and Sustenance Across Public and Domestic Spaces

In *Broad City*, public spaces feature as the "home" that drives much of the narrative and amplifies and expands the scope of Abbi and Ilana's friendship; it is this urban New York landscape of park benches, subways, food coops, remote postal delivery depots, boutiques, neighbourhood bodegas, and public basketball courts that Abbi and Ilana inhabit. We have noted above that the "home" has long featured as a site through which women's work is channelled into the labour underpinning capitalist endeavour and the necessary sustenance of labouring bodies. *Broad City* allows the high-energy striving of Abbi and Ilana's friendship to exceed the confines of the home and the capitalisation of intimate and domestic spaces, by allowing this affective energy to develop and move across domestic and public spaces. *Broad City* notably celebrates public life in New York City, much like Sex and the City some time ago, a show that also crucially extended feminine intimacies and friendships from the domestic sphere to the city's cosmopolitan culture (Nash and Grant 2015). However, due to Abbi and Ilana's material financial limits, *Broad City* differs in that New York City is not primarily depicted as a site of glamorous consumption. It is also not foregrounded as a site of tourism: contrasting experiences of the city are set up neatly in Season 1 (S1, Ep 6, "Stolen Phone"), where a tourist mistakenly takes Abbi's phone and the two must track its progress around Times Square, the Statue of Liberty, and other busy tourist destinations. Rather, New York City features as a playground for the friends' escapades which often are to do with the possibilities of fun these women can creatively generate together within their clear financial limits, and the strength of their friendship in sustaining each other despite the odds.

One of the crucial linchpins that frames *Broad City* from the outset is the mutual relation between the desire to thrive in New York City, and the reality of subsistence in one of the most expensive cities in the world to live in. The episode "BnB-NYC" (S3, Ep7) foregrounds the situation where the nightlife of New York City is positioned as the women's "home" for the night. Abbi and Ilana thriftily rent out their apartments using a website platform similar to the Airbnb accommodation platform. Although their apartments are not the glossy kind usually featured in Airbnb highlights, they are quickly snatched up given the real estate stranglehold. But because the two mistakenly time their postings, their BnB bookings mean they have nowhere to stay. They attempt to camp on the roof of Ilana's building, but their tent is blown off their heads in a huge gust of wind. They are momentarily homeless. The two then go clubbing, crashing a fancy birthday party where they pretend to know the host. Following what seems like flirtatious texting, Abbi returns to her apartment hoping to hook up with her BnB guest, only to find that her BnB guest has stolen all her belongings. There are repeated portrayals throughout the seasons of this show of "crashing" in New York City—that is, squatting, making do, trying to rub the edges off the city's sharp surfaces, stoops, benches, corners, and doorways. As such, Abbi's and Ilana's affective bonds, and the labour that they invest in such bonds, are presented as crucial to making a comfortable home out of this city.

Notably, the home lives of Abbi and Ilana do not correspond to the idealised forms of domesticity that mark contemporary lifestyle trends for women. In keeping with the show's overall portrayal of the home space as an unglamorous, uncomfortable, and sometimes a literally infested site, in Season 4, Ilana confronts the nightmare of bedbugs in her apartment (S4, Ep 9, "Bedbugs"). Ilana's own mother, brother, and boyfriend treat her as a plague carrier when she needs to stay elsewhere during the bedbug treatment and will not let her into their homes. And yet, despite the general fear of contagion that bedbugs pose, Abbi readily accepts Ilana in her apartment, after taking the necessary and ingenious precautions of wrapping her in several layers of plastic bags, while Ilana consoles Abbi over her abovementioned mugging. The scenes that take place in their domestic spaces reinforce the notion of the friendship itself as the key comfort of "home", via scenes of the two women hanging out together in their apartments in slightly physically awkward or overtly uncomfortable positions and surrounds—for instance, squashed together on Ilana's bed, which takes up most of the floor space in her room, huddled around a tiny space heater in an otherwise-freezing apartment, in the episode discussed below (S4, Ep 6, "Witches"), and wrapped in plastic to prevent the spread of Ilana's bedbugs (S4, Ep 9, "Bedbugs").

The domestic space of the shared apartment is, at best, an unpredictable source of comfort in the series—too cold or hot, too small to allow for privacy or space, and, for Abbi, unprotected from her flatmate's slob boyfriend Bevers, who is frequently in the apartment space in various states of undress. Such domestic uneasiness is juxtaposed with Abbi's clearly foregrounded desires for domestic comfort. As a fan of the store Bed, Bath and Beyond, and the upmarket women's clothing and lifestyle brand Anthropologie, Abbi's desires for the affirming comforts of luxurious domestic lifestyle products such as candles, bedsheets, and a space heater that Drew Barrymore recommends (mentioned throughout season 4) are hardly ever met. Featured as the more conventional friend in contrast to whacky and irrepressible Ilana, Abbi's desires might be understood in terms of the attachments to normalcy and convention that Lauren Berlant (2008, 2011) has articulated in her discussion of women's intimate publics and cruel optimism. Yet, we suggest Abbi's desire for certain high-end domestic and lifestyle-oriented brands, products, and objects are foregrounded not necessarily to affirm Abbi's entrapment through consumption, but to showcase a legitimate desire for stability and security, that women must continually work to furnish for themselves.

The domestic scenes and plotlines around living arrangements in the show across the seasons often reinforce the financial instability of these two young women and the emotional, material, and logistical problems that arise as a result of living in New York City on a tight budget. The plot of the episode "Florida" (S4, Ep 7) dramatises this situation. In this episode, Abbi and Ilana travel to Florida with Ilana's mother and brother. While Ilana's mother cleans out her late grandmother's retirement village condo in preparation for its sale, the two friends stumble on an open-house inspection in the complex. They are awed by the spaciousness of the apartment, with Abbi commenting in amazement that "the kitchen is its own room." When the estate agent overhears them he nods and smiles, "It's a home." Abbi replies, knowingly, "Ah, a home. We don't have those. We have New York City apartments." When the two friends find out the cheap monthly rent they immediately decide to apply for tenancy, despite not meeting the usual age requirements for doing so. Envisaging a life of significantly greater domestic comfort, and financial and logistical ease in the warm climate and leisure-oriented lifestyle of Florida, the two work themselves into a state of frenzied excitement about a dream life together in Florida. They immediately put in behind-the-scenes work in order to increase their chances of finding a new Florida home. They befriend the elderly residents and persuade them to vote for their application at the upcoming board meeting by involving themselves in the leisure pursuits of the retiree residents. They referee ladies' tennis matches, offer free gun polishing, and flirt with elderly men in wheelchairs. While they ultimately decide to return to their freezing New York apartments due to the racist dynamics of the retirement village. The episode thus foregrounds the tension between the protagonists' desires for the material comfort and security envisaged in these more legitimised and legible "homes, and the question of what "comfort" might mean politically, of what kinds of "homes" might be liveable and for whom.

The episode "Witches" (S4, Ep 6) both works with and expands desires for comfort beyond the domestic sphere, beginning with Abbi and Ilana freezing together in Abbi's apartment because the heating in the building is broken. Their conversation revolves around Abbi's desire to purchase a space heater recommended by Drew Barrymore when she saves enough money. With the reference to Barrymore's recommendation (a running gag across the series), the heater symbolises both a physical comfort that is just beyond Abbi's financial reach, as well as the kind of cool, comfortable and effortless domestic lifestyle epitomised by Barrymore as a Gen-X celebrity. Her desire for the space heater drives Abbi to take to the streets entrepreneurially to sell a stack of greeting cards she once made. She sets up a table at a local market and is gifted some soup and a scarf to protect her "wing area" by a friendly older woman also selling craft in the market. Abbi notes that she is "actually warmer out here" than she was inside her apartment, reiterating a central theme of the series that the domestic is not necessarily a space of shelter and comfort. However, this friendly encounter unsettles Abbi: she is discomfited by her affinity with the older white woman, both in terms of her aging feminine appearance and her status as an old and still visibly struggling artist.

Beyond acknowledging the desire for domestic security, this episode also grapples with the entangled bodily, career, and financial insecurities women negotiate in relation to the impossible time/body demands of the contemporary sexual contract. Meeting such a contract notably requires the capacity to freeze time so that regardless of age, women appear "youthful" and "girlish" in keeping with the understanding of the body as an "asset" (Negra 2008), while also achieving career and financial success early on in youth in order to effectively participate in the world as consumer-citizens (McRobbie 2009). Following her dread of ageing in poverty catalysed by meeting her co-seller, Abbi meets a fresh-faced dermatologist at her stall, an Asian woman who is 51 but miraculously looks even younger than Abbi who, as Abbi defensively notes, is "still in her 20s". Abbi consequently makes an appointment to get Botox injections with the small amount of cash she has made. However, questioning her motives for doing so, Abbi halts the injection process halfway through, and by the end of the episode, comes to live with her aging self. With Ilana, she serendipitously encounters a gathering of self-proclaimed "witches" in a local city park at night-time. The group includes Abbi's older craft seller, as well as Ilana's elderly Black female sex therapist, who plays the role of a magical healer from a concurrent plot in the episode. Abbi runs off to convince the other "miracle worker", the dermatologist, to join in the celebration too, and the group of noticeably racially and generationally diverse female "witches" come together chanting and dancing around a bonfire. Significant here is the location of this event, outside in a public park at, on a cold New York City winter's night. The women's "magic" is channelled not into individualised healing but into this collective public ritual of togetherness, which the show playfully depicts as cracking the façade of a Trump skyscraper. The culmination of the episode highlights thrifty fun, literal warmth, and support as available via the occupation of the city's public spaces in the affective ties of the community of women who come together here.

Affective Dissonances and Re-investments

In advanced capitalist economies, McRobbie (2016) asserts that young women have a crucial symbolic role to play because of the ways in which ideas of meritocracy, youthful femininity, affective striving and creative self-fulfilment are knitted together to obscure the material inequalities of conditions of labour. While work appears to be increasingly varied and "flexible" in its movement outside of traditional sites such as the factory and the home, labour and notions of self-fulfilment are condensed in such a way as to disarticulate the possibility of structural critique, positioning any kind of dissatisfaction as a problem of the self. We have suggested that *Broad City* directly grapples with such hollow promises while taking seriously the affective striving that young women perform in their everyday lives. Whilst such post-Fordist labour conditions require an affective investment in capitalism, we have argued that *Broad City* acknowledges the normative, gendered nature of such high-energy striving but orients such affective energies towards women's friendship and a hope in the power of collective social bonds. In doing this, notions of home-making are materially expanded from the private and the domestic, to a broader view of solidarity and social and affective sustenance.

Importantly, through an enlarged view of home-making and through the centring of women's friendship in the series, *Broad City* provides new ways of thinking through the necessity of care in a context in which women's work is continuingly trivialised, and only valued when converted into capital. As feminist scholars such as Sylvia Federici (2013, Federici 2012) have established, capitalism produces a durable and ongoing crisis in the work of care, the burden of which is overwhelmingly borne by women. Yet, refusing care work as socially necessary labour risks "destroying ourselves and the people we care for" (Federici 2013). Here, through *Broad City*, we have questioned what it means to challenge such movements in post-Fordist capitalism through attention to both the affective dissonances and requisite girlish enthusiasm and high energy striving required to imagine alternative configurations of support and sociality. It is this attention to the necessity of the investment of energy in strengthening social relations and bonds that we have focused on in this article, as a means of surviving the harsh material realities of recessional culture.

Dr Akane Kanai is a lecturer in the School of Media, Film and Journalism at Monash University. Her research on femininity, race, sociality and the politics of affect in media has been published in outlets including Feminist Media Studies, the Journal of Communication, and Cultural Studies. Her book, *Gender and relatability in digital culture*, is published by Palgrave Macmillan. Email: akane.kanai@monash.edu

Dr Amy Shields Dobson is a Lecturer in Internet Studies at Curtin University. Her work focuses on youth, gender politics, social media, and feminine subjectivities. She is the author of *Postfeminist Digital Cultures* (2015), and editor of *Digital Intimate Publics and Social Media* (2018) with Brady Robards & Nicholas Carah, both published by Palgrave. Her recent projects include research into cyber-safety and sexting education, female genital cosmetic surgery, and girls' and young women's social media cultures.

References

Adkins, Lisa (2016): "Contingent Labour and the Rewriting of the Sexual Contract," Lisa Adkins & Maryanne Dever (eds): *The Post-Fordist Sexual Contract: Working and Living in Contingency*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1-28.
Banet-Weiser, Sarah (2018): *Empowered: Popular Feminism and Popular Misogyny*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
Berlant, Lauren (2008): *The female complaint: the unfinished business of sentimentality in American culture*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
Berlant, Lauren (2011): *Cruel Optimism*, Durham, NC: Duke University Pres.
Broad City, S1, Ep 1, "What a Wonderful World," Comedy Central, January 22, 2014.
Broad City, S1, Ep 6, "Stolen Phone," Comedy Central, Feburary 26, 2014.
Broad City, S3, Ep 7, "BnB NYC", Comedy Central, March 30, 2016.
Broad City, S4, Ep 6, "Witches", Comedy Central, October 25, 2017.
Broad City, S4, Ep 7, "Florida", Comedy Central, November 8, 2017.
Broad City, S4, Ep 9, "Bedbugs", Comedy Central, November 29, 2017.
Bull, Anna, & Kim Allen (2018): "Introduction: Sociological Interrogations of the Turn to Character," *Sociological Research Online*, 23:2, 392-398. doi: 10.1177/1360780418769672.
DeCarvalho, Lauren J (2013): "Hannah and Her Entitled Sisters: (Post)feminism, (post)recession, and Girls," *Feminist Media Studies*, 13:2, 367-370. doi: 10.1080/14680777.2013.771889.
Dobson, Amy Shields & Akane Kanai (2018): "From 'can-do' girls to insecure and angry: affective dissonances in young women's post-recessional media," F*eminist*

Media Studies, 19:6, 771-786.
Duffy, Brooke & Emily Hund (2015): ""Having it All" on Social Media: Entrepreneurial Femininity and Self-Branding Among Fashion Bloggers," *Social Media + Society*, 1:2, 41-58. doi: 10.1177/2056305115604337.
Federici, Silvia (2012): *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction, and Feminist Struggle*, PM Press: Oakland, CA.
Federici, Silvia & Maria Vischmidt (2013): "Permanent Reproductive Crisis: An Interview with Silvia Federici", Mute, March 7 2013: http://www.metamute.org/editorial/articles/permanent-reproductive-crisis-interview-silvia-federici (accessed November 1, 2018).
Giddens, Anthony (1991): *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
Gill, Rosalind & Kanai, A. (2018) "Mediating Neoliberal Capitalism: affect, subjectivity and inequality." *Journal of Communication*. 68:2, 318–326. doi: 10.1093/joc/jqy002
Gill, Rosalind, & Shani Orgad (2015): "The Confidence Cult(ure)," *Australian Feminist Studies* 30:86, 324-344. doi: 10.1080/08164649.2016.1148001.
Hamad, Hannah (2014). "Fairy Jobmother to the Rescue: Postfeminism and the Recessionary Cultures of Reality TV." Diane Negra & Yvonne Tasker, *Gendering the recession: Media and culture in an age of austerity*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 223- 245.
Harris, Anita, & Amy Shields Dobson (2015): "Theorizing agency in post-girlpower times." *Continuum* 292, 145-456. doi.org/10.1080/10304312.2015.1022955
Harjunen, Hannele (2017): *Neoliberal Bodies and the Gendered Fat Body*, New York: Routledge.
Hemmings, Clare (2012): "Affective Solidarity: Feminist Reflexivity and Political Transformation," *Feminist Theory* 13:2, 147-161. doi: 10.1177/1464700112442643.
Kanai, A (2019). "On not taking the self seriously: Resilience, relatability and humour in young women's Tumblr blogs." *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 22:1, 60–77. doi: 10.1177/1367549417722092
Luckman, Susan (2016): "Micro-enterprise as Work–Life 'Magical Solution'," Lisa Adkins & Maryanne Dever (eds), *The Post-Fordist Sexual Contract: Working and Living in Contingency*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 91-108.
McRobbie, Angela (2009): *The Aftermath of Feminism: Gender, Culture and Social Change*, London: Sage.
McRobbie, Angela (2015): "Notes on the Perfect." *Australian Feminist Studies* 30: 83: 3-20. doi: 10.1080/08164649.2015.1011485.
McRobbie, Angela (2016): *Be Creative: Making a Living in the New Culture Industries*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
Nash, Meredith, & Ruby Grant (2015): "Twenty-Something Girls v. Thirty-Something Sex And The City Women." *Feminist Media Studies* 15:6, 976-991. doi: 10.1080/14680777.2015.1050596.
Negra, Diane (2008): *What a girl wants? Fantasising the reclamation of self in postfeminism*. London: Routledge.
Nathanson, Elizabeth (2014): "Dressed for Distress: Blogging and the 'New' Pleasures of Fashion." Diane Negra & Yvonne Tasker, *Gendering the recession: Media and culture in an age of austerity*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 136-160.
Negra, Diane, & Yvonne Tasker (2014): "Introduction. Gender and Recessionary Culture." Diane Negra & Yvonne Tasker, *Gendering the recession: Media and culture in an age of austerity*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1-30.
Scharff, Christina (2015): "The psychic life of neoliberalism: Mapping the contours of entrepreneurial subjectivity", *Theory, Culture & Society* 33, 107–122.
Taylor, Jessica (2016): "Laptops and playpens: 'Mommy Bloggers' and Visions of Household Work." Lisa Adkins & Maryanne Dever (eds), *The Post-Fordist Sexual*

Contract: Working and Living in Contingency, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 109-128.
Thoma, Pamela (2014): "What Julia Knew: Domestic Labor in the Recession-era Chick Flick". Diane Negra & Yvonne Tasker, *Gendering the recession: Media and culture in an age of austerity*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 107-135.
Winch, Alison (2013): *Girlfriends and Postfeminist Sisterhood*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Culture Unbound
Journal of Current Cultural Research

Spark Joy? Compulsory Happiness and the Feminist Politics of Decluttering

By Laurie Ouellette

Abstract

This essay analyzes the Marie Kondo brand as a set of neoliberal techniques for managing cultural anxieties around over-consumption, clutter and the family. Drawing from critical discussions of consumer culture and waste, as well as feminist scholarship on compulsory happiness and women's labor in the home, it argues that Marie Kondo's "joyful" approach to "tidying up" presents pared-down, curated consumption as a lifestyle choice that depends on women's work, even as it promises to mitigate the stresses of daily life and facilitate greater well-being.

Keywords: Marie Kondo, happiness, clutter, over-consumption, neoliberalism, post-feminism, housework, *danshari*

Ouellette, Laurie: "Spark Joy? Compulory Happiness and the Feminist Politics of Decluttering", *Culture Unbound*, Volume 11, issue 3–4, 2019: 534–550. Published by Linköping University Electronic Press: http://www.cultureunbound.ep.liu.se

"The ideal of happiness has always taken material form in the house . . ."
--Simone de Beauvoir

In the debut episode of the Netflix series *Tidying Up With Marie Kondo*, we meet the Friend family in their suburban, one-story bungalow on the outskirts of Los Angeles. Kevin is a sales manager for a restaurant supply company who works 50-60 hours per week and "then some on the weekends." Rachel works part-time from home three days a week, while also caring for their two toddlers, Jaxon and Ryan, who is still nursing. The parents confess to fighting constantly about money and housework. Rachel is overwhelmed by the "chaos" of everyday life: With small children to watch over as well as waged labor to perform, dishes go unwashed, toys overflow the playroom, and dirty clothes pile up. Kevin resents the chronic mess, and is upset because Rachel has hired someone to help with the laundry—an expense he feels they could avoid. While economic instability, overwork and an uneven division of labor in the home are on full display, the premise of the program—which is billed as a home makeover—prompts the Friends to attribute their malaise to an overabundance of household goods. Rachel is shocked when prompted to place every item of clothing she owns in a giant pile and is confronted with the scale of her wardrobe; "I want to appreciate what I have instead of needing more things," she tells decluttering expert Marie Kondo, who advises her to keep only those items that "spark joy" for her and to discard the rest. Kevin, who has fewer belongings, blames Rachel for the chronic mess, complaining about the children's overstuffed closets and protesting the excessive number of decorative pillows on the couple's bed.

Setting the template for future episodes, Rachel and Kevin, who are thirty-something and white, are coached for six weeks on the trademarked KonMari method of "tidying up." This requires a massive purge of household possessions, followed by instruction on techniques for discarding, organizing and storing remaining household items on a daily basis. The method is based on the notion that every material object one possesses should "spark joy"— a sense of delight that is simultaneously physical and emotional--and the promise that curating the home in such a way will bring "life-changing magic" to its inhabitants. "Through tidying up, you can rethink the way you live, think about your work or your interpersonal relationships, and consider how you want to live from this point on," Kondo explains in the publicity for her blockbuster advice book *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up: The Japanese Art of Decluttering and Organizing* (2014). Kondo enlists the Friends in a five-step process for sorting and discarding clothes, books, paper, general household items, and personal mementos. She also offers televised lessons (accentuated with graphics and close-ups) on folding and storing clothes, organizing kitchen drawers and other tidying activities. In between Kondo's visits to the bungalow, the Friends record themselves on cell phone cameras, capturing amateur footage of themselves as they figure out what possessions spark joy, fill dozens of oversized trash bags with throwaway items, and try to implement Kondo's methods on their own. This unpolished self-documentation is presented as an "authentic" window into the process of tidying up, and is interspersed with professionally-filmed scenes in every episode.

Given the melodramatic conventions of reality television, it is not surprising that tensions flare. Shortly into the episode, Rachel confronts Kevin, telling him that it is unrealistic to expect her to keep the house tidy. She melts down emotionally after Kondo assigns her the kitchen—the messiest room in the house—to declutter and organize. In a frustrating moment captured on her cell phone, Rachel admits—with more than a hint of sarcasm—that the KonMari method of folding laundry does not spark joy for her. By the time of the reveal, however, these resentments have been largely smoothed over. On Kondo's final visit, the Friends display their pared down closets and storage spaces, and declare a renewed sense of harmony and happiness. Rachel is exhausted, but also relieved to have confronted her consumption habits, and pleased that Kevin finds decluttering sexy and has "been more romantic lately." Both parents report that the KonMari method has reduced their bickering and allowed them to enjoy themselves more as a family. However, Rachel alone accepts responsibility for keeping up the momentum, vowing to do what it takes to "keep the good feeling going."

This essay analyzes *Tidying Up with Marie Kondo* as a set of techniques for managing anxieties around over-consumption, clutter and the family. Drawing from critical discussions of consumer culture and waste, as well as feminist scholarship on compulsory happiness and women's labor in the home, I argue that Kondo's "joyful" approach to downsizing household possessions does little to challenge the priorities or consequences (fast consumption, environmental damage, labor exploitation, socio-economic inequality) of free market capitalism. On the contrary, the Kondo brand, as mediated in particular by the Netflix series, presents pared-down, curated consumption as a lifestyle choice that depends on women's work, even as it promises to mitigate the stresses of daily life and generate personal well-being. As shown in the debut episode, social problems and tensions are folded into the problematization of clutter, and women in particular are called upon to solve these issues by implementing the Kondo regimen in the service of families. In sync with neoliberal and postfeminist mantras (Gill 2007, Rottenberg 2018) emphasizing choice, personal responsibility and self-empowerment over collective action and social change, the structural problems that women and families face (lack of affordable daycare, a dismantled safety net, the persistent sexual division of labor, overwork and precarity) are displaced onto the mounting "problem" of the cluttered family home. This is a problem to be solved mainly by women, to whom Kondo offers "not merely rules on how to sort, organize and put things away," but also a step-by-step guide to acquiring a new, more positive mindset. "Once you have experienced what it's like to have a truly ordered house, you'll feel your whole world brighten . . . This is what I call the magic of tidying up. Not only will you never be messy again, but you'll also get a new start on life" (Kondo 2014: 5-7).

Just as consumption has been feminized historically, women have increasingly been called upon to solve the "unbearable heaviness" of household clutter (Luchessi 2019), which has intensified since the 1990s as a concern for researchers, psychologists, lifestyle gurus, the burgeoning decluttering industry and reality television. Targeting women as the assumed caretakers of the cluttered family home, *Tidying Up with Marie Kondo* presents an Eastern-inflected twist on quasi-minimalist lifestyles by linking the labor of discarding household possessions to spiritual rituals, bodily sensations, and promises of happiness. The Netflix series glosses over the gender and class politics of consumption and housework (Strasser 1999, Federici 2012), but it does propose the compelling possibility that women can work domestic and emotional "magic" by embracing Kondo's techniques for minimizing, decluttering and "tidying up." This possibility is thwarted by the conventions of reality television, which demand authenticity and melodrama signified by interpersonal conflict, trauma and emotional discord (Dubrofsky 2009). Despite Kondo's cheerleading (Toomer 2019), the packaging of her regimen as a way to transform the "chaotic lives of people at a crossroads" brings it squarely into reality television's storytelling orbit (Rose 2018). By turning the KonMari method into televised stories about real people, *Tidying Up* simultaneously lends entertainment value to the problematization of clutter and carries the potential to kill joy, in the sense of questioning assumptions and norms about family, gender, consumption, and happiness (Ahmed 2010). Mobilizing women's domestic labor in the service of what Sara Ahmed calls "happy objects," the Netflix series connects neoliberal and postfeminist sensibilities to her clutter-free lifestyle template, and voices (however partially) female complaints (Berlant 2008) about societal messes that decluttering cannot fix.

Marie Kondo and the Problematization of Clutter

Marie Kondo was a twentysomething, Tokyo-based professional organizer with a backlog of clients when *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up* was first published in Japanese in 2011. An instant sensation in Japan, the book was translated into multiple languages and published in more than 30 countries; it was a bestseller in Europe prior to its 2014 publication in the United States, where it has enjoyed 144 weeks (to date) on the *New York Times* best seller list. This global commercial success begat the companion manual *Spark Joy: An Illustrated Class on the Art of Organizing and Tidying Up* (2016), as well as a manga version of *Tidying Up* and a customizable KonMari workbook. Together, these books have sold 11 million copies worldwide and counting (Archer 2019). Kondo has become a celebrity around the world, appearing regularly in women's magazines, in a Ted Talk on YouTube, at the 2019 Academy Awards Oscars ceremony, and on television programs including *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert*, where she taught the comedic host how to fold a fitted sheet.

By adapting Kondo's books into a reality-based home makeover program for its international streaming platform, the Netflix original series infused televised decluttering with significantly more currency and prestige than is usually attributed to domestic how-to programming on broadcast and cable channels. Timed to coincide with the adoption of New Year resolutions, Netflix released all eight episodes of *Tidying Up with Marie Kondo* simultaneously on January 1, 2019. Netflix subscribers were encouraged to binge-watch the episodes, a concentrated form of viewing that bears a strong temporal resemblance to the KonMari method of tidying up, which is kick-started by a concentrated and time-consuming initial household purge. With the exception of subtitling, references to Japanese culture and an emphasis on magic and joy, *Tidying Up With Marie Kondo* is aesthetically and conceptually similar to most lifestyle and home makeovers. Yet, to the extent that both streaming platforms and binge-watching are associated with so-called quality programming, the Netflix drop signaled the show's presumed distinction from denigrated women's media culture (Levine 2015) and the distracted mode of television reception ascribed to housewives historically (Spigel 1992). Two Emmy award nominations further cemented the "quality" and importance of the series. The cultural legitimation of *Tidying Up*, and the extraordinary attention it has received, are partly due to Kondo's strategic partnership with Netflix, which uses its algorithms to promote the series to viewers who might not otherwise watch reality entertainment or domestic advice (especially in real-time), and distributes it to 160 countries (Trillby 2019). Unlike formatted reality programs that are customized to accommodate local tastes and cultures (Kraidy 2005), *Tidying Up* folds Japanese and Western (particularly US) cultural references into a generic makeover template that is presumed to be globally accessible. This approach serves Netflix's quest for international expansion (Lobato 2019) and Kondo's ambition to expand her growing global lifestyle brand: "My mission is to organize the world and spark joy in people's lives . . . through this partnership with Netflix, I am excited to spread the KonMari method to as many people as possible," she told the trade press (Park 2018). As noted in the *Hollywood Reporter*, Kondo's quest to build a "global community" for the KonMari method complements, and is facilitated, by the ongoing globalization of Netflix, which launched the series to 117 million subscribers worldwide simultaneously (Rose 2018).

In the United States, the January 1st release of *Tidying Up* generated a rapid flood of reviews, commentaries, interviews and blog posts, as well as an explosion of discussion on Twitter, Instagram, Reddit and Facebook, where female fans formed groups to describe and visually document their purging and decluttering efforts. According to news outlets, a massive national purge of household possessions triggered by the drop of the Netflix series overburdened trash collectors in the United States, while many thrift stores saw their donations quadruple—a trend that was not always appreciated as many of the items donated were deemed unsalable (Panette and Hoyle, 2019). The series further boosted sales of Kondo's books, and, capitalizing on her growing notoriety, Kondo launched a "certified training program" for KonMari consultants in the United States and expanded her lifestyle brand to dispense advice across multiple social media platforms and sell proprietary decluttering merchandise, including a 6-piece storage box set, available for $89 on KonMari.com. In this respect, the Netflix series is just one (highly visible) aspect of a broader Kondo phenomenon that clearly resonates at this juncture of the 21st century.

Beyond her partnership with Netflix, Kondo's high profile as a celebrity decluttering expert can be attributed to a confluence of factors, from her fusion of homemaking and Eastern spiritual traditions, to the trending of minimalist and downsized lifestyles, to discourses on the problem of clutter and its impact on families. While Kondo's approach appears novel in the US and elsewhere, she is not particularly unique in the Japanese context, where anxieties about over-consumption and material excess have a long history, and where other experts introduced many of her ideas and techniques. In *Waste: Consuming Postwar Japan*, Eiko Maruko Siniawer (2018) chronicles the historical tension between the desire for middle class consumer lifestyles and the promotion of "waste consciousness" as a national civic duty in postwar Japan, often through "advice doled out in newspapers, magazines and mass market books" (6). While consumer excess was initially problematized in moral and environmental terms, this way of thinking shifted in the 2000s, as neoliberal subjectivities rooted in care of the self and personal well-being became dominant. In 2009, professional organizer Yamashita Hideko coined the term *danshari*, defined as a "new technique for tidying up" that associated reduced consumption and decluttering with the pursuit of serenity, freedom and psychological and spiritual well-being (Siniawer 2018: 266).

Building on books like Nagisa Tatsumi's *The Art of Discarding: How to Get Rid of Clutter and Find Joy* (2005), which Kondo acknowledges as an inspiration, the term *danshari* signaled a new approach to throwing things away in Japan. Whereas earlier discourses on waste consciousness were framed by "organizations that served the communal interest" (such as government agencies and environmental groups), the new literature was more individualistic, promoted by "personalities whose advice for finding happiness centered on . . . self-fulfillment in the present" (Siniawer 2018: 267). *Danshari* offered "antidote to the trauma and discord of a lifestyle overflowing with stuff," a problem that was attributed not to advertising or consumer capitalism, but to "one's own decisions" (268). According to Siniawer, this new wave of decluttering advice, of which the KonMari method has become the best-known example, is unconcerned with the exploitative labor practices underpinning the overconsumption of cheap goods or the environmental impact of this mode of production. It dismisses class differences by treating consumption habits as a choice and by assuming that discarded possessions can be replaced with more satisfying ones, and it mimics consumer logic by emphasizing the pleasure associated with consumer goods over their utility and functionality. In contrast to earlier concerns about waste, danshari encourages people to throw things away without guilt or concern for recycling or reuse, as these ethical responsibilities can be "obstacles in the quest to discard." Siniawer could easily be describing a scene from any episode of Kondo's Netflix series when she notes that the "amount of garbage produced through decluttering" is taken as "evidence of the success of both the person . . . and the technique itself" (Siniawer 2018: 269).

The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up drew from and adapted the *danshari* phenomenon in Japan, but its message resonates with discourses about consumption and waste in the United States. As Susan Strasser (1999) has shown, waste is largely a 20th-century problematization—in early America, nearly everything was reused. With the rise of mass production and advertising, goods became fashionable and disposable; corporate strategies like planned obsolescence, fast production and niche marketing intensified the cycle. This has generated vast quantities of trash unimaginable in earlier decades, as well as anxieties about how to deal with unwanted goods. Unlike Japan, in the United States, aside for short-lived anti-waste and rationing campaigns in the 1920s and 1940s, the problem of over-consumption has always been individualized. As Strasser astutely notes, only the wealthy and the comfortably middle class can afford to be wasteful, and discarding things can be a "way of demonstrating power." Throwing away items that still have use value creates and legitimates "social differences based on economic status" (Strasser 1999: 9). Regardless of intentions, donating to charities or thrift stores assumes perpetually needy populations (in and outside the U.S., where donations are often shipped) distinct from consumers who browse secondhand shops for fun or are thrifty by choice (Strasser 1999: 9, Lezotte 2017). *Tidying Up With Marie Kondo* perpetuates these class hierarchies, but the series also works on an aspirational level, presenting Kondo's method of discarding surplus goods as a means to a quasi-minimalist lifestyle based on volition, not necessity. Translating *danshari* for a Western audience, the series promotes sorting and discarding as a path to individual well-being and does not encourage secondhand reuse. This allows privileged consumers to adopt a throwaway ethic with no concern for the societal impact. Because this message is out of sync with middle class culture of garage sales, thrift stores, recycling and ethical consumerism, many U.S. viewers have nonetheless flooded donation centers with so much waste that a term was coined—“the Kondo effect”—to describe the show’s impact on charities used as dumping grounds for unwanted consumer goods.

The Netflix series narrativizes the sorting and discarding process, and infuses it with drama and surprise. In every episode, the vast quantity of clothing, shoes, housewares, toys, papers, and mementos discarded by the families is marveled upon, visually emphasized through camerawork, and praised by Kondo. Shots of overstuffed trash bags filled with unwanted goods are prolific in all the episodes, but discussions of where this material goes after the decluttering process are nonexistent. The fetishization of waste in quantified terms can take on a competitive element in fan-based Facebook groups, where Kondo followers chronicle their purges for others, post photographs, and reveal the quantity of garbage bags filled. What is particularly novel about the KonMari method for Western audiences, is its engagement with Eastern spiritual traditions including the Shinto religion and animism. According to Sokyo Ono, Shinto is an indigenous Japanese faith that revolves around the “celebration of events of daily life, great and small” (2004: 90). Shinto shrines are communal sites of everyday life, and are believed to generate a “tingle of excitement, a thrill of joy” in those who encounter them. Shinto also involves kami, objects of worship that are revered and respected (Ono 2004: 90-91). Kondo, who served in a Shinto temple as a teenager, draws from these traditions in her approach to inanimate objects and emphasis on sparking joy. She attributes a mystical essence to things, which must be physically touched to determine whether they spark joy, and which must be thanked for their service if they end up in the discard pile. In each episode of *Tidying Up*, Kondo kneels on the floor to greet the home as a type of shrine, while the inhabitants observe (and sometimes take part in) the ritual. While this incorporation of indigenous Eastern spiritual traditions lends some credence to Kondo’s characterization of tidying up as a type of magic, the rituals are never explained or even contextualized. By incorporating bits and pieces of ancient Japanese culture into the reality television home makeover, *Tidying Up* allows participants and viewers alike to appropriate the “other” (hooks 1984, Valdivia 2017) for their own pleasure and purposes. Kondo, who speaks some English but communicates primarily in Japanese, is translated and subtitled on the series—an unusual practice for American viewers, given the highly US-centric nature of broadcast and cable television. But this opening up of linguistic diversity is undermined to the extent that her selective engagement with Eastern spiritual traditions is deracialized, secularized and shorn of history.

Kondo translates *danshari* for Western (especially US) consumers caught in the tensions and contradictions of postfeminism and late capitalism, offering novel and exoticized techniques for navigating relations between people and objects.

While Kondo's books link decluttering to a range of happy outcomes, from weight loss to career success, the Netflix series is focused almost entirely on family well-being. The program courts a universal appeal to frazzled and unhappy families and couples, especially women and mothers. In the opening vignettes, scenes of household clutter and domestic chaos are overlaid by a cacophony of voices complaining about chronic stress and proclaiming "we have too much stuff." Kondo appears as an off-screen announcer to declare a "war on clutter," after which she cheerfully declares, "I love mess." It soon becomes clear that what she actually enjoys is disseminating her methods, as footage from her Ted Talk and photographs of her advice books flash across the screen. Kondo introduces her branded method of tidying up from a sparse and exceptionally tidy living room; this calm and serene scene is juxtaposed with footage of an agitated woman—a participant on one of the episodes--engulfed by mounds of household goods. She is crying. When a happier, much more composed female participant from a different episode appears on screen, the viewer is assured that a transformation is about to take place. Going into the episode, we hear her assurance, "Marie brought a whole lot of joy upon our home."

It is not surprising that women figure so prominently in the opening credits. As Siniawer points out, the deeply gendered orientation of *danshari* bridges global differences, to the extent that "historically and to this day, women everywhere are disproportionately called upon to take on the role of consuming as well as discarding consumption's detritus" (2018: 297). This is certainly the case in the United States, where clutter and its impact on American families has become an increasingly pressing concern for social scientists and popular media culture alike. The discourse problematizing the "war on clutter" is exemplified by prominent research study of 32 dual-income, middle class families with school-aged children in the greater Los Angeles area. Anthropologists at the Center on Everyday Lives of Families at the University of California, Los Angeles carefully observed the families, tracked their activities, and took hundreds of photographs of their homes and possessions, which were eventually collected as a book. They interviewed the subjects extensively and tested their saliva to measure cortisone levels. Not unlike a reality television show, the study claimed to reveal the "realities" behind the closed doors of the home in the 21st century, with a particular emphasis on family consumption and material culture. Accentuating the connection to reality television, they captured their findings in a video that now appears on YouTube. To their dismay, but not surprise, the researchers claim to have found over-stressed households "overflowing" with material possessions (Arnold et al 2012). According to their report, three out of four garages were too full of household goods to hold cars, stockpiles of convenience food were observed, and quality family time was scarce. These findings are unsurprising to anyone navigating the demands of work and parenting. But instead of placing the shared experience of the families within a broader social, political and economic context, the researchers isolated household clutter as the problem--and gendered both the cause and the solution. A passage quoted in numerous news stories exemplified the magnitude of the issue by describing the consumer excess of a teenage girl's bedroom, where "165 Beanie Babies, 36 figurines, 22 Barbies, and 20 other dolls" were found (Siniawer, 2018: 302). According to researchers, "managing the volume of possessions" had become such "such a crushing problem in many homes that it elevated levels of stress hormones for mothers"—a claim that was not situated within the gender politics of domestic labor (Arnold et al 2012, Feuer 2012) or the rise of post-feminism, which insists on female choice and empowerment but offers no solution to lingering gender inequalities. As news spread that families in the United States were becoming "prisoners of their own clutter," popular media perpetuated this tendency to simultaneously highlight and obscure the role of gender (Teitell 2012, 2018). As long as women are held disproportionately responsible for the care and well-being of families despite the realities of the dual-income workforce (Hochschild 1989/2003, Brown 1993), managing the "excesses" of household consumption, as with other forms of housework and care work, can be characterized as a female problem.

Since the 1990s in the United States, a growing industry has responded to, and perpetuated, the gendering of clutter, promising women the knowledge, motivation, merchandise and skills to manage the chaos of domestic life through the sorting and organization of household objects. Books, magazine articles, websites, blogs, apps and YouTube videos devoted to clutter have proliferated, and a new occupation—the decluttering expert—has emerged. Reality television has also intervened, with lifestyle and home makeover programs like *Clean House, Clean Sweep* and *Mission: Organization*—as well as tie-in books and merchandise—advising mothers to consume less, simplify, declutter and organize domestic space. The Kondo phenomenon took hold in the United States in a cultural climate in which clutter was already feminized and problematized as a looming threat to the functionality and happiness of the family. Unlike much of this earlier advice, Kondo does not scold or shame mothers, nor does she offer time-saving, multi-tasking techniques (Nathanson 2013) to make women's work more efficient. Instead, *Tidying Up* proposes that minimalist decluttering will bring pleasure and well-being to women and families.

Happiness and the Re-Valorization of Housework

Six of the eight episodes of *Tidying Up with Marie Kondo* focus on heterosexual families in states of crisis (the other two episodes feature young queer couples who declutter as a means of achieving adulthood and solidifying their newly-formed family unit). The impetus for Kondo's intervention is not just household mess, but also encompasses problems ranging from marital tensions, to the need to make space for a new baby, to the trauma of downsizing from a home to an apartment. While it would have been possible to target cosmopolitan singles or childless couples looking to minimize and self-renew as the ideal subjects of Kondo's method, the Netflix series does not take this approach. Indeed, the episodes have little concern for aesthetics or style; the reveal of an organized closet or silverware drawer lacks the visual pleasure as well as the aspirational consumer desire circulated by most lifestyle porn. The homes Kondo visits are ordinary, and sometimes drab, filled with unremarkable furniture, mass-produced decorations, and of course, piles of papers, boxes and bins. Kondo tailors her method to the families struggling behind the walls of these homes, telling participants (and by extension, viewers) that "couples can deepen their ties through tidying," gushing over crabby babies and children, tailoring the KonMari method to specific family situations, and empathizing with mothers in particular (Kondo has two small children). However, the magic of tidying up, as a means to greater ends, does not happen on its own. Across the episodes, mothers and wives disproportionately shoulder the physical and emotional labor of the KonMari method and the project of family happiness within which it is situated.

Feminists have long contested the sexual division of labor normalized by *Tidying Up* and other lifestyle and reality television programs. While the labor of cleaning, cooking and child-rearing is unwaged, feminists contend that it is foundational to the social reproduction of capitalism and its subjects (Spigel 1992). The refusal to perform this labor, and to demand wages for housework, was a crucial though largely unrealized element of the global 1970s women's movement (Federici 2012). Even as a post-feminist sensibility that assumes that women are now empowered has taken hold (Gill 2007, McRobbie 2008), the persistent gendering of household chores remains a sore spot. Sociologists point out that even as most women have entered the paid workforce and held "equally accountable" to the historically male breadwinner ethic (Fraser and Gordon 1997), they are still disproportionately responsible for a "second shift" of labor in the home (Hochschild, 1989/2003). This labor is not limited to housework, but also includes the emotional and care work (what Federici calls reproductive labor) performed by women within family relationships. Women's work also encompasses the labor of consumption. As Celia Lury argues, women are not only the primary shoppers for families, they are also expected to "go to work" on goods that are bought—in this sense, women are the "producers of goods and services" of which husbands and children are the final users (1988: 121). This expectation fits neatly with the gendering of minimalist discarding and decluttering on *Tidying Up With Marie Kondo*.

The multi-faceted labor that women perform in the service of families has become even more crucial in neoliberal societies where safety nets and social service provisions have dwindled and individuals are expected to facilitate their own well-being. Within the current stage of capitalism, families are expected to buffer the shocks of the free market, absorbing the risk of illness and financial insecurity, providing the care no longer conceived as a collective right, and nurturing the human capital of self-enterprising workers and citizens (Ouellette & Wilson 2011, Wilson and Chivers 2017). In the wake of privatization and growing precarity, women's work is needed to nurture and stabilize family units; the family remains normative (and becomes more inclusive) because it has become a private alternative to social welfare (Duggan 2003). While women bear the primary burden of this heightened emphasis on the family, the labor performed by women for families is complicated by the notion that it is also considered a "labor of love" (Lury 1988: 127). Decluttering the family home is not the same as working for wages in a factory or an office, which makes the feminist critique of the second shift all the more complex and urgent. As Silvia Federici argues, women's work is "where the contradictions inherent in alienated labor are most explosive, which is why it is the ground zero for revolutionary practice" (2012: 3).

As I have detailed elsewhere, a large swath of lifestyle and reality television revolves around advising, prodding and assisting mothers as they navigate the demands of the second shift and the shocks of neoliberalism (Ouellette 2016). In many respects, *Tidying Up* exemplifies and perpetuates this mode of late capitalist governmentality, exemplified by an episode revolving around the African-America Mersier family—Douglas and Katrina and their pre-teenagers Kayci and Nolan—who have downsized from a large suburban house to a small 2-bedroom city apartment. Every room in their new home is bursting with musical instruments, DVDs, clothing and other possessions; stress levels are high, and space is minimal. Only Katrina knows where to find what is needed amidst the chaos: "She bears a lot of the weight of keeping the house organized," Douglas says of his partner, who has initiated the KonMari makeover. While both parents work outside the home (Douglas is a musician, Katrina is a hair stylist), Katrina also does the cooking and cleaning. She also absorbs the trauma of downsizing, worrying constantly about its impact on the children. "I feel like I'm to blame, because I'm the mom," she tells the camera. "Mom is supposed to keep home. My responsibility is to do the laundry, go to the grocery store, create a home . . . with peace of mind." The Mersiers begin the purging process with Katrina firmly at the helm; she even does the children's KonMari "homework" for them. When Kondo teaches Katrina to fold sheets into small and precise rectangles, she suggests teaching the whole family to be responsible for their belongings, suggesting that "learning to tidy up" is important to the children's future. By the end of the episode, it is clear that Katrina's lesson has less to do with the technicalities of decluttering and organizing than with the affirmation of the importance of her labor and the socialization of her offspring—a feat she captures on her cell phone at the laundromat, where they are filmed folding their own clothes. Even Douglas, who has boasted about never cooking and barely setting foot in the overcrowded kitchen, is glimpsed washing dishes in a brief scene near the conclusion of the episode. While the apartment is still cramped—and we are led to assume that Katrina will still be needed to keep life for the Mersiers running smoothly—she feels the "joy and peace of her new home" for the first time. For Katrina, this is happiness.

Katrina's happiness speaks a paradox discussed by Wendy Brown. As Brown argues, women are contradictorily positioned within neoliberal capitalist societies. The naturalization of families as the site of social reproduction means that women can never become the self-fulfilling individuals that men are imagined to be, for they have been positioned as selfless subjects who exist to care for others (Brown 1995: 148). *Tidying Up* pays lip service to this dilemma by asking men to take part in the televised portion of the KonMari method, but the episodes also make clear that discarding and decluttering, and the physical and emotional labor it represents, is women's work. What is compelling about Kondo is how she "valorizes," to use Federici's term, this labor, not through wages but by associating decluttering with pleasurable and affirmative affects. Because most women work for pay out of necessity in jobs that may not be pleasurable or rewarding, this affirmation carries a different resonance than the second-wave feminist critique of the illusory happy housewife (Ahmed 2010, Friedan 1963). At a juncture when happiness is promoted by governments, researchers, psychologists and marketers as a compulsory aspect of the ongoing project of the self (Davies 2015, Binkley 2014, Cedestrom 2018), Kondo's promise to bring joy to the laundry room, the kitchen, and the garage connects tidying up to idealized forms of neoliberal subjectivity that often exclude mothers. Kondo's claim that household objects can spark joy brings the quest to achieve happiness into the mundane spaces of everyday life. In her books, Kondo concedes that most people will need training to develop a sensitivity to joy as she understands it. In every episode, she demonstrates what it feels like when an object sparks joy by jumping in the air and making a "ching" sound—a bodily performance of jouissance in the Barthian sense (Barthes 1973). The small pleasures of television reception associated with the housewife's routinized chores have given way to binge-watched makeover programs that connect pleasure to women's work in different ways.

Of course, as feminist scholars like Sara Ahmed argue, feelings like happiness are ultimately socially constituted. The capacity of objects to spark orgasmic-like pleasure is contingent on the circulation of ideology and affect. If we "think of instrumental goods as objects of happiness, important consequences follow. Things become good, or acquire their value as goods, insofar as they point toward happiness. Objects become happiness means," Ahmed contends (2010: 26). Happiness is not inherently good, in other words, but is often a means of "encouraging us to line up with things in the right way" (2010: 37). Because *Tidying Up* does not address the broader politics of consumer capitalism or gender inequality, heightened sensitivity to joy (experienced through objects) can easily be aligned with the imperative to replace functional but unjoyful consumer goods with newer, shiner, more pleasurable possessions—which in turn prompts the need for decluttering as women's work. Ahmed raises another point about the family that is applicable here. While the concept of the happy family is preloaded with positive connotations, the happy family is "also an object (something that affects us, something we are directed toward) and something that circulates through objects." The family becomes a "happy object through the work that must be done to keep it together" (2010: 46). We see this work at play in an episode featuring Wendy and Ron Akiyama, a fifty-something, Japanese-American couple whose adult children are no longer living at home. While spacious, their house is bursting with Christmas decorations, clothing, baseball cards and memorabilia. Kondo predictably teaches them to sort through the mess, determine what possessions spark joy, and discard everything else. Wendy takes enormous pleasure in her huge collection of holiday ornaments; the joy they spark for her is connected to a fond memory of her mother, from whom she learned to stage elaborate holiday celebrations for her children.

Wendy also enjoys a large clothing collection, much of it unworn, which fills an entire spare bedroom. These items do not spark joy in the same way. Wendy likes her wardrobe, but admits to using retail therapy to destress after fighting with Ron, and as a way to "hit him in the pocketbook." She tells Kondo that she hopes that "tackling something together" will bring them closer as a couple, but Ron is less enthused. In fact, he admits that participating in the program was "not his idea" and that he's not 100 percent in it. Indeed, Ron is so hesitant that his grown son arrives on the scene, in the hopes his parents can use the TV production as a way to "get to know each other in a new way." The family as a happy object is mediated by the sorting and purging of goods according to the KonMari method, some of which spark joy, others which have become burdensome and disordered. The family must be worked on, stabilized, and ultimately renewed by Wendy's diligent decluttering. Wendy's commitment to tidying up despite Ron's less-than-positive attitude glosses over but cannot entirely erase her prior attempts to sabotage the happy object, or even kill joy (Ahmed 2010), by overspending as a gendered form of revenge. Wendy's orientation to the KonMari method directs the happiness sparked by treasures found among decades of accumulation to the preservation of the family unit. Dozens of trash bags are successfully removed from the home; where the discarded contents end up is not a concern of the series or the Akiyamas. Per the narrative arc of reality television, Ron eventually agrees to sort through his collection of baseball cards and becomes happy; when Kondo arrives for her final inspection, they are beaming. But as is often the case with "real life" entertainment, we are left wondering about the requisite happy ending—whether it will stick, whether it was worth the purge.

Untidy: A Coda

For the past year, I have been trying to declutter my own home, without much success. Over-stuffed closets, bins of outgrown toys and children's schoolwork, towering bookshelves, and scattered and disorganized photographs loom large as unfinished projects and obstacles to my own self-project of family and motherhood. For this reason, I am attracted to Marie Kondo's advice, even as I critique its maneuvers and affective ruse. The past few months I have been drawn to the multiplying Facebook groups inspired by the KonMari method, to see how others (almost exclusively women) engage with Kondo's advice. These stories, and the before and after narratives and images that accompany them, chronicle a reality far messier than the Netflix series. While fans take pride in the small achievements of tidying up and often validate each other's labor, shared anxieties about mounting clutter are never resolved, and women's work is never done. "I spent six months of my maternity leave KonMari-ing. Went from clothes to sentimental but didn't get a chance to do the garage or the computer. I still feel like my house is a mess. What did I do wrong? Feeling kinda defeated," wrote a female member of the KonMari Method Support Group. Given my own failure to tidy up, I've come to enjoy such confessions of ambivalence and failure, and the solidarity of the shared experience these admissions constitute. Untidiness signified by a chaotic surplus of household goods is not a personal choice, but a manifestation of late capitalism, including women's unrelenting double shift. Kondo's affective promises are highly compelling, but they cannot cure (or fully obscure) this mess. Indeed, in the absence of societal solutions to problems of overconsumption, precarity and overwork currently displaced onto the family unit, the KonMari method may ultimately kill joy, as much as it sparks women's desire to conform.

Laurie Ouellette is Professor at the University of Minnesota, where she teaches media and cultural studies. She writes about neoliberal cultural formations, media and governmentality, and precarity, and is the author or editor of several books, including most recently *Lifestyle TV* (2016) and *Keywords for Media Studies* (2017, with Jonathan Gray). E-mail: ouell031@umn.edu

References

Ahmed, Sara (2010): *The Promise of Happiness*, Durham and London: Duke University Press.
Archer, Sarah (2019): "Tidying Up with Marie Kondo Isn't Really a Makeover Show," *The Atlantic*, 4 January 2019: https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2019/01/tidying-up-with-marie-kondo-netflix-show-kon-mari-review/579400/, (accessed 1/8/2019).
Arnold, Jeanne E., Anthony P. Graesch, Enzo Ragazzini, and Elinor Ochs (2012): *Life at Home in the Twenty-First Century*, Los Angeles: Cotsen Institute of Archaeology Press.
Barthes, Roland (1975): *The Pleasure of the Text*, New York: Hill and Wang.
Berlant, Lauren (2008): *The Female Complaint: The Unfinished Business of Sentimentality in American Culture*, Durham: Duke University Press.
Binkley, Sam (2014): Happiness as Enterprise: An Essay on Neoliberal Life, Albany: SUNY Press.
Bresford, Trillby (2019) "Netflix Phenomenon 'Tidying Up with Marie Kondo' was Nearly a Scripted Series," *The Hollywood Reporter*, 17 January, 2019: https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/live-feed/tidying-up-marie-kondo-was-a-scripted-tv-series-1176727, (accessed 2/15/2019).
Brown, Wendy (1995): *States of Injury*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
Cedestrom, Carl (2018): *The Happiness Fantasy*, London, Polity 2018.
Chayka, Kyle (2019) "The Exhausting Minimalism of Tidying Up," *The New Republic*, 11 January, 2019: https://newrepublic.com/article/152878/exhausting-minimalism-tidying-up-netflix-marie-kondo, (accessed 2/8/19).
Davies, William (2015), *The Happiness Industry: How the Government and Big Business Sold Us Well-Being*, London: Verso.
Dubrofsky, Rachel E. (2009): "Fallen Women in Reality TV," *Feminist Media Studies*, 9.3, 353-368.
Duggan, Lisa (2004): *The Twilight of Inequality? Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics and the Attack on Democracy*, Boston: Beacon.
Federici, Silvia (2012): *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction and Feminist Struggle*, Oakland, CA: PM Press.
Feuer, Jack (2012): "The Clutter Culture." *UCLA Magazine*. 1 July, 2012: http://magazine.ucla.edu/features/the-clutter-culture/, (accessed 4/2/19).
Fraser, Nancy & Linda Gordon (1997): "A Genealogy of Dependency: Tracing a Keyword of the U.S. Welfare State." Nancy Fraser (ed), *Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflections on the Postsocialist Condition*, New York: Routledge, 121-150.
Friedan, Betty (1963): *The Feminine Mystique*, New York: W. W. Norton and Company.
Gill, Rosalind (2007): "Postfeminist Media Culture: Elements of a Sensibility", *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 10.2, 147-166.
hooks, bell (1992): *Black Looks: Race and Representation*, Boston: South End Press.
Hochschild, Arlie (1989/2003): *The Second Shift*, New York: Penguin.
Kondo, Marie (2014): *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up: The Japanese Art of Decluttering and Organizing*, New York: Ten Speed Press.
Kondo, Marie (2016): *Spark Joy: An Illustrated Master Class on the Art of Organizing and Tidying Up*, New York: Ten Speed Press.

Kraidy, Marwan (2005): *Hybridity: The Cultural Logic of Globalization*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
Levine, Elana (ed.) (2015): *Cupcakes, Pinterest and Ladyporn: Feminized Popular Culture in the Early Twenty-First Century*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
Lezotte, Jennifer (2017): *From Goodwill to Grunge: A History of Secondhand Styles and Alternative Economies*, Durham: University of North Carolina Press.
Lobato, Ramon (2019): *Netflix Nations: The Geography of Digital Distribution*, New York: NYU Press.
Luchessi, Emilie Le Beau (2019): "The Unbearable Heaviness of Clutter," *New York Times*, 3 January 2019: https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/03/well/mind/clutter-stress-procrastination-psychology.html, (accessed 2/8/2019).
Lury, Cecilia (1988): *Consumer Culture*, London: Polity.
McRobbie, Angela (2008): *The Aftermath of Feminism: Gender, Culture and Social Change*, Thousand Oaks and London: Sage.
Nathanson, Elizabeth (2013): *Television and Postfeminist Housekeeping: No Time for Mother*, New York and London: Routledge.
Ono, Sokyo (2004): *Shinto: The Kami Way*, Clarenton, VT: Tuttle Publishers.
Ouellette, Laurie (2016): *Lifestyle TV*, New York and London: Routledge.
Ouellette, Laurie & Julie Wilson (2011): "Women's Work: Affective Labor and Convergence Culture," *Cultural Studies*, 25.4-5), p. 548-565.
Pannett, Rachel & Rhiannon Hoyle (2019): "Marie Kondo Isn't Sparking Joy for Thrift Stores," *Wall Street Journal*, 6 March 2019: https://www.wsj.com/articles/marie-kondo-persuaded-you-to-jettison-your-junk-thrift-stores-sayenough-11551889124, (accessed 3/14/2019)
Rottenberg, Catherine (2018): *The Rise of Neoliberal Feminism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Rose, Lacey (2018): "Netflix Orders Reality Show from Organization Guru Marie Kondo," *The Hollywood Reporter*, 14 February, 2018: https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/live-feed/netflix-orders-reality-show-organization-guru-marie-kondo-1084167, (accessed 2/22/2019).
Spigel, Lynn (1992): *Make Room for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Siniawer, Eiko Maruko (2018): *Waste: Consuming Postwar Japan*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.
Strasser, Susan (1999): *Waste and Want: A Social History of Trash*. New York, Metropolitan Books.
Tatsumi, Nagisa (2005): *The Art of Discarding: How to Get Rid of Clutter and Find Joy*, New York: Hatchett Books.
Teitell, Beth (2018): "40 Years into the War on Clutter, and We're Still Overwhelmed by Stuff," *Boston Globe*, 27 March, 2018: https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2018/03/27/years-into-war-clutter-and-still-overwhelmed-stuff-what-going/R9jktrIH2ySut5cMCHOSoM/story.html, (accessed 5/02/2019).
Teitell, Beth (2012): "Today's Families Are Prisoners of their own Clutter," *Boston Globe*, July 09, 2012: https://www.boston.com/culture/relationships/2012/07/10/todays-families-are-prisoners-of-their-own-clutter, (accessed 5/02/2019).
Toomer, Jessica (2019): "Tidying Up is the Latest Push for Reality TV's Positivity," *The Hollywood Reporter*, 14 January 2019: https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/live-feed/tidying-up-is-latest-example-reality-tvs-push-positivity-1175932, (accessed 2/08/2019).
Valdivia, Angharad N (2017). "Othering." Laurie Ouellette & Jonathan Gray (eds): *Keywords for Media Studies*, New York: NYU Press: 133-135.
Wilson, Julie & Emily Chivers Yochim (2017): *Mothering through Precarity: Women's Work and Digital Media*, Durham: Duke University Press.