Narratives of Hope: Imagination and Alternative Futures in Climate Change Literature

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Abstract: This paper discusses the modes and applicability of 'hope' in narratives on climate change, as found in five ecological pop-science texts written in the years between 2007 to 2021. It seeks to question and unearth the standard narratives about the climate crisis as dominant in Western spaces of science communication. Further, it unpacks the concept of hope and its role and capacity to contribute to a future imaginary that deviates from the standard narratives and finally seeks to uncover what alternative narratives could look like based on the analyzed texts. The analysis is based on narratology and affective theory which presents an 'experiential critique' of the subject on hope, of which the paper provides a thorough conceptual framework. The analysis finds that hope is a concept that is intimately entangled with imaginations of the future; however, hope does not have a universal understanding. Thus, 'hope' can on the one hand be "what we need if we are to put it right" (Pattison 2016), and on the other hand, a principle pandering to structures and demands of 'modernity' which has been complicit in advancing the climate crisis. I propose a concept of ecological hope, which emerges out of an affective experience of loss and crisis. In a first step, the research will dive into background on climate change narratives, the context in which they emerge and their relationship with hope and crisis. It will also look at the importance of imagination and the necessity of cultivating it. It finally analyzes the aforementioned texts on their different imaginings of the future, what narratives matter to this future, their outlining of hope and their suggestions for transformation.

Introduction

The climate crisis cannot be solved. In fact, the climate crisis, as a geophysical and cultural fact, has already forever become part of the global future imaginary. This produces a unique challenge to modernist conceptions of eternal progress and goodness on the horizon. Thus, the climate crisis radically re-writes the future of humanity and therefore alters the relationship humans have with the future. This reveals the fundamental need to engage with hope as a tool to perceive the future of civilization. Humankind has always engaged in navigating the future through means ranging from burial traditions to science, technology, and economics, all of which act as "tools through which this reigning in of the uncontrollable was accomplished" (Adam 2004, 1); however, through the collective stumble into the Anthropocene, it has become clear that "the power to affect the future turned out to be far greater than the capacity to imagine and know it" (Adam 2004, 3). This is the time we live in now. The Anthropocene is, like no other time, engaged in a re-scripting of the future and dips it into the kind of uncertainty humanity cannot solve through measurement or rationality. To a traditional Western mindset, this throws up a paradigm crisis for it seems that there are no other ways to control the future except the means the past provided which logically would reproduce the same structures from which the crisis emerged. Responses to this paradox

are expressed in extremes: either giving up or looking to solve, or undo, the crisis, which Mike Hulme calls 'solutionism.' The paralyzing oscillation between denial and solutionism reveals the present moment as actually defined by an imaginary crisis for beyond all the geophysical events and their causes is a story that belies its desired outcome.

I argue that climate change is as much a cultural web of narratives as it is a body of scientifically measurable changes in the atmosphere. Only in uncovering and changing the core narratives that justify building financial and social structures in ways that ultimately annex their future, can we conceive of a future. Importantly, I contend that climate change exists in a double-bind, in which the problems arising from the geo-physical issues first need to filter in a Luhman-esque style through the social landscape to find proper resonance; environmental problems are revealed to be social problems first. Furthermore, I argue that having hope for what lies beyond the story that has cocooned us in a belief that progress comes at expense of the ecosystem is the kind of hope that cultivates the very thing it hopes for. The complexity of hope in narratives around climate change is surely an ongoing project; however, I seek to reveal hope as a necessary component in facing, moving through and ultimately being transformed by the climate crisis.

Hope as we shall see is intimately tied to imaginations of the future which reveals the massive responsibility that besets collective imagination. More than anything climate change and its effects are an issue of the imagination that—even while the geo-physical facts stay the same—are fluid. Still, it is here where true change needs to happen and where the impossibility of the task seems insurmountable. The process to cultivate a "healthy ecosystem of social imagination" (Mulgan 2020, 22) will need to look catastrophe and crisis squarely in the eye. Since imagination and hope are two sides of the same coin, imaginative futures require the same "realism" expressed in sorrow towards the present crisis as hope does for an alternative future. Discovering the potential of imagination and hope in ecological narratives as well as the reach they have within global society is a project beyond my individual capacity. Within this paper I am presenting my findings extracted from diligently following the question, how is the role of hope in narratives of the future in climate change literature projected, envisioned, imagined, and analyzed?

Methodology

I used the structure of Reflexive Thematic analysis, based on the research method developed by Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, with a focus on the deductive type. This method fits particularly well since I am analyzing non-scientific books without the claim to objectivity either on the part of the literature or on my own.

The type of reflexive thematic analysis that I followed is the deductive orientation, which creates a process in which "coding and theme development are directed by existing concepts or ideas" (Braun & Clarke). Thus, I developed the following questions as strategies for theme identification:

- How is climate change described?
- How is guilt for the crisis assessed or explained?
- How is man's relationship to other-than-man entities exhibited?
- What kind of relationship is described between Global South and Global North?
- What roles are given to technology, politics, and academics?
- How is the environment connected to the social?
- Is the narrative strategy linked or based on hegemonic perspectives of environment? If yes, how does the narrative depart or stay within these structures?

- What affects are mentioned?
- What future is imagined?
- What role is given imagination? - What narratives are mentioned, outlined, or analyzed?
- How is hope outlined? What qualities and conditions are given for hope?
These questions were informed by and developed through engaging with my theorical framework and conceptual framework on hope.

Criteria for Data Collection

I chose to investigate secondary sources to gain an overview of thematic patterns within literature on climate change. I'm interested in pop-science literature for two reasons: Firstly, because it is written for the lay person which places this literature within the category of science communication. Secondly, literature and its authors, even though it does not reach every tier of society, still represents a broad range of views, and therefore may demonstrate a number of different approaches to the topic.

I used three different criteria for data corpus selection: 1) I chose non-fiction literature that represented an intentional focus on reframing of narratives around climate change; 2) I tried to find literature from a diverse background, be it country or author background 3) I chose literature written within the last 15 years coinciding with literature exclusively written after the 'official' enactment of the Kyoto Protocol in 2005. I selected the following five texts:

Unbowed, by Wangari Maathai (2008), Kenya
The Future Earth, by Eric Holthaus (2020), United States
Geography of Hope, by Chris Turner (2007), Canada
The Great Derangement, by Amitav Ghosh (2016), India
Climate—A New Story, by Charles Eisenstein (2018), United States

Shortened Note on Terminology

The central theme of this research begets a term which contains almost its own universe in approaches and definitions: Hope. Naturally, this thesis is engaged in finding deeper and more substantial meanings of hope and how it can be accurately used within the present context. As a working definition I looked to Ernst Bloch, whose extensive writing in *The Principle of Hope* is as complex and illuminating today as it was during the time of publication. Bloch embeds hope as a mental state *and* an emotion (affect) that exists in a constant state of not-yet. For Bloch, hope was as much political as it was ontological and religious. Most of all, hope characterizes the manner in which we can "venture beyond" into the "vacuum of an In-Front-of-Us" and "grasp the new as something that is mediated in what exists and is in motion, although to be revealed the new demands the most extreme effort of will" (Bloch 1996, 4). To Bloch, hope is almost a critical practice, a work to be engaged in fully and through repeated practice and adjustment:

> It is a question of learning hope. Its work does not renounce, it is in love with success rather than failure. Hope, superior to fear, is neither passive like the latter, nor locked into nothingness. The emotion of hope goes out of itself, makes people broad instead of confining them, cannot know nearly enough of what it is that makes them inwardly aimed, of what may be allied to them outwardly. The work of this emotion requires people who throw themselves actively into what is becoming, to which they themselves belong. (1996, 3)

Finally, a critical aspect of learning hope is to see it—as Adorno views it—"wrested from reality by negating it" (Adorno 1974, 98) which means, that in setting hope to be a principle, it is a principle of conscious thinking that actively affirms what has not yet become by denying fullness of truth to what is now.

Background

Communication of Climate Change

Communicating the severity and intricate nature of global warming is a complex undertaking which has largely failed in producing favorable outcomes. Connecting macro statistics, such as climate change scenarios, to the intimate lives of people without sliding into ecological fatalism requires an inter- and transdisciplinary approach. One issue is that, "while scenarios may be acknowledged as learning or mediating tools to communicate vulnerabilities, perceptions of risk or possible consequences, they often inadvertently become taken as statements *of the future*, thereby acquiring a solidity and authority that is unmerited" (Yusoff and Gabrys 2011, 518).

Additionally, climate change has been widely perceived to be a scientific problem. This general assumption leads to the premise that only scientists and those that understand and practice the scientific line of thought can understand or solve the problem of climate change. The majority of people who are not scientists, "rely on mediators to translate scientific models and data" into models that they can comprehend, which makes climate change a "problem of communication and hence an intrinsically social problem" (Kluwick 2014, 502). The way social narratives are shaped publicly comes down to power structures. The question is who holds the power to conceive, create and maintain the socio-climatic imaginaries that matter to our collective vision of a post-climate world. Milkoreit (2017) observes that globally, scientific organizations shape the scientific understanding about climate change; however, power for influence falls into two categories: structural and ideational power. Structural power refers to the "system-enabled" influence emanating from wealthy and/or popular personalities. Ideational power refers to the "control over the process of meaning-making" (2017, 10) and includes activists, social networks, communities as well as authors and artists. Circling around the concept of power, we find that it is essential to any discussion on the imagery because it exists and thrives or wilts within a political and social structure which are shaped and maintained through power.

What is important to note here is that, even though international institutions devoted to the science of climate change are the essential source of information and knowledge, the narrative and *feeling* of what the information means for the individual or for politics exists outside of the laboratory.

Standard Narrative and Rhetoric

As the narrative is shaped, so is the hope for the solution, so in analyzing a narrative, we mine for the foundational mythology it is based on as well as its suggestion for solution or lack thereof. When investigating modern narratives around climate change and why these are so complex (often also contradictory), numerous studies have looked at the politicization of climate change in recent years as well as its coverage in the press (see Anderson 2009; Luke 2008; Vu 2019; Bailey et al 2011). These studies very often combine a critique and analysis of capitalism with a survey of political inertia; however, they don't veer into the arena of personal affects. Many studies pick apart what narratives exist and how they relate to the modern condition, but they fail to suggest

alternatives or recognize that there could be such.

One narrative component is particularly persistent in public messaging which I will call the "wake-up" rhetoric. It is marked by two qualities: Firstly, its employment of shock (often paired with emotionally sensitive imagery) and fear, and secondly, its conjuring of consequentialism, an ethical reasoning that "measures the moral worth of an act by a calculation of its consequences in the future" (K Moore 2016), among the populace. Roelvink and Zolkos (2014) highlight that the wake-up rhetoric in climate change narratives often employs a distinct separation of future and present. The most common usage of this temporal outline is the conjunctural phrasing of a causal outcome: XYZ will happen unless we act now. In this manner, the "discourse of climate change is displacing experiences of environmental degradation into the future" (44) and centers humankind as the only agent for change. The most common affective juxtaposition within this causal relationship is of despair and optimism. Essentially, the unavoidable future catastrophe is outlined as inevitable and then being recalled through a final strike of optimistic promise that this future after all is alterable. In essence, many contemporary ecological narratives attempt to outline, explain, and insist on a future catastrophe which they simultaneously try to unsee.

Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses

Conceptual Framework: Topography of Hope

The following is a sliver of existing academic and background treatises of hope and its entangled conceptual landscape. The main goal here will be to gain a clear understanding of the pre-existent literature as well as to lay foundational ideas and to cover some contradictory perspectives.

To start out, we need more definitional clarity. Darren Webb (2007) makes the important distinction between the question of what hope is and what hoping *for* means. Concerning the former, he unfolds the complexity of hope's nature:

> [H]ope is variously designated an emotion, a cognitive process, an existential stance, a state of being, a disposition, a state of mind, an emotion which resembles a state of mind, an instinct, impulse or intuition, a subliminal 'sense', a formed habit, a 'sociohormone', some complex, multifaceted affective-cognitive-behavioural phenomenon, or, quite simply, a mystery. (Webb 2007, 67).

Most fields agree that hope is unique to the human condition, even if its function and usage is not fully understood. Some academics believe it to be a universal value (Mandel 2002; Schumacher 2003), while others rather see it as a socially constructed behavior (Snyder 2002). In his attempt to evade definitional exclusion and contradiction, Webb (2007) instead funnels a wide variety of conceptions into "a framework comprising five *modes* of hoping: patient, critical, estimative, resolute and utopian." His suggestion of *modes* instead of specified characteristics aids in recognizing hope as "a human universal that can be *experienced* in different mode" (Webb 2007, 65 emphasis added). Inspired by Webb's integrative approach, I chose to focus on four aspects of hope, that stood out to me, relating to our world condition and more specifically to narrativity: 1) hope as transcendence, 2) hope as an activator, 3) hope a detractor, and 4) hope as pivot.

Hope as Transcendence

At the foundation of hope as a sentiment and value lies a theological context. Political theologists argue that the core of the Christian experience is located on a temporal axis in which the present

experience is lived through the eyes of future salvation. Because of that, "eschatological hope relates to the future [...] but its "proof" is not that it can predict the day or the hour: it is that it empowers personal and shared transformation in the present" (Pattison 2016, 202). In this way the present suffering is transcendent through the faith-inspired hope of salvation. Hope as transcendence is not only present in theological narratives but present in other definitions and stories, most notably in my research, in the narration of the last Crow chief Plenty Coups (Pattison 2016, Daniel 2016, Lear 2006, Kretz 2013, Thompson 2020) who starkly recognizes the almost certain collapse of the crow nation in the face of re-settlement and decides on a leadership style thoroughly founded on "radical hope and theological commitment to the transcendent goodness of the world as including new forms for collapsed cultures" (Daniel 2016, 158). As the Crow—or Apsáalooke—are resettled, their cultural habitus is effectively broken. Plenty Coups, recognizing this imminent cultural collapse shifts, to embody "a form of courage in the face of despair, through commitment to the idea that the good life will re-emerge in a form that is presently unimaginable" (Thompson 2020).

Hope as transcendence involves two unique qualities, firstly, the vision or even an active living from the future, and secondly, entrusting the future with a goodness that is, as of now, unknown. This faith in an unknown, but good, future relates to the other transcendental aspect of hope, namely utopian imagination. Ultimately, when it comes to the transcendental, utopian experience of hope, we find a "sense of possibility grounded in a profound confidence in the capacity of human beings to construct, both imaginatively and materially, new ways of organizing life" (Webb 2007, 81).

Hope as Activator

German philosopher Ernst Bloch defended hope to be "the only honest attribute of all men" and defining it, in part, as "The Not-Yet-Conscious, Not-Yet-Become" and "the still unclosed determinateness of existence, superior to any res finite" (Bloch 1996, 5-6). Referring to Bloch, Dinerstein and Deneulin (2012) concretize that hope can be understood as "another reality not yet materialized but which can be already experienced" (585), even though this does not necessarily have to be in an eschatological sense. Different researchers, specifically in Queer- and Feminist research, have found that hope can be the activating concept that unravels the present in a manner in which the hoped for, the "not-yet-become" state, is to emerge; in other words, hope can act as an activator or condition which brings about the imagined outcome.

We find concepts such as Joanna Macy's "Active Hope," as the key to change (Macy and Johnstone 2012). Feminist researchers Coleman and Ferreday, in their anthology on hope and feminist theory, ultimately consider hope to be a present possibility. They lean their definition of hope on Zournazi's concept which is "not simply the desire for things to come, or the betterment of life. It is the drive or energy that embeds us in the world — in the ecology of life, ethics and politics" (Zournazi 2002, 15). In this manner, hope becomes an activist tool that does not interrogate whether hope is good but rather engages with "a consideration of what hope *does*" (Coleman and Ferreday 2010, 315). In its doing, it must be noted that "hope is infectious" (Kretz 2013, 938) and that "high hope often assures people of success in reaching their goals" (Snyder 1995, 358). However, without agency hope is only wishful thinking (Kretz 2013, 939). Once agency is felt, and a justifiable hope found, Kretz concludes that hoping is a decision that creates its own outcome, therefore showing that "states of the world are causally dependent on one's choice of whether to hope or not to hope" (941).

Hope as Detractor

Hope is not always seen as an inherently positive concept. In fact, some academics see it as a modernist and therefore imperial concept. As soon as context and object change, we can see the abuse of hope as a tool of power maintenance. The immediate context here would be within politics that use narratives of hope in proposing a dazzling view of the future, albeit "offered selectively" to those that truly have "no more than hope to begin with – those affected by poverty, climate change or marginalization, or possibly all three." Ultimately, "the logic here is that, with hope, one can endure dispossession today in anticipation of a reward tomorrow" and through this practice, "a politics of hope is able to maintain the status quo; where it succeeds in instilling hope, it succeeds in endlessly postponing the materialization of promises" (Lindroth and Sinevaara-Niskanen 2019, 645-6). Here hope is viewed through it's context, for "the ways in which hope encourages, mobilizes *or traps* hinge on the future horizons it creates" (Lindroth and Sinevaara-Niskanen 2019, 645 emphasis added). In other words, the validity or sustainability of hope is determined by its outlook. The entrapment of hope becomes specifically apparent when looking at it in the context of how political agendas seek to appropriate hope, particularly within the possibilities of hope in the Anthropocene. Here, hope is intricately perceived as being tied to progress, especially the universalizing claim to progress set forth in the modernist project. Ultimately, it is argued that hope is rather a modernist privilege that "is part of the problem not part of the solution" (Chandler 2019, 704). Detracting hope seeks out an alternative reality, denies the catastrophe, hopes for an alternative to the Anthropocene instead of enduring the present.

Hope as Pivot aka Ecological Hope

The concept of hope as pivot (here referred to as ecological hope) is the kind of hope this research seeks out and attempts to define. Along with "ecological imagination," ecological hope scales the pinnacle of what hope can do, especially as it relates to ecological collapse foretelling cultural collapse. Several authors have found crisis, especially ecological crises, to be a determinant of hope. Gayatri Spivak understands crisis to be, "an un-anticipatable moment which makes something inherited perhaps jump into something other, and fix onto something that is opposed," which leads to crisis not being "the leap of faith because it brings faith into crisis, but rather it is the leap of hope" (Spivak 2002, 173). Spivak opens the possibility of crisis as a turning point.

Instead of producing hopelessness, some authors have in fact proposed a symbiotic relationship between crisis and the birth of hope. In the writings of several aforementioned authors, crisis and hope take on a transformative and almost transcendental role within ecological cataclysm. In fact, Roelvink and Zolkos outline specifically that it is a type of apocalyptic air within catastrophe that leads to the discovery of new knowledge. Apocalypsism is a "term that points both to horrendous destruction and to a "revelation" of new knowledge" (2014, 54). Being tied to unearthing of newness, Alphonse Lingis argues, hope actually "arises in a break with the past" (2002, 23). This is important to note: The pre-condition for (ecological) hope seems to be catastrophe or rupture, while optimism and fear cling to the unbroken but threatened structures of ontological meaning-making. Ecological hope is what emerges as false modernist hopes of social structures rupture through crisis.

Lingis illuminates that hope "doesn't come out of what went before, it comes in spite of what went before [...] There is a kind of discontinuity in time, there is a break and something starts out of nowhere" (2002, 23). Ecological hope may be the faith in the liminal space between the

rupture of catastrophe and the birth of the world beyond rupture.

Roelvink and Zolkos (2011) unearth the importance of understanding the delicate variance in terminology between sorrow, despair, and fear as well as optimism and hope. Fear and optimism are conceptualized as anthropocentric affects "at work in contemporary environmental discourses," (47) a result of the 'liberal humanist perspective'—today's major paradigm. This paradigm defines the relationships between human and other-than-human subjects. Fear within politics typically takes the shape of outlining measures of protection from that which is feared, aka the ecological catastrophe.

Additionally to fear, they see optimism as an "affective force that produces temporal disjunction" which also "folds into humanist ideas of progress–and its 'continuing grip [...] on contemporary consciousness'" (48). Dinerstein refers to this as a sliding into a "science of imaginary solutions" (2016, 4). In contrast, sorrow and hope reveal and move towards personal and deep engagement. Ronald Pies disentangles the complexity of these affects in highlighting that "sorrow has the capacity to contain joy within it, or at least to find solace within its own essence. Sorrow, in this sense, is dialectical: it generates an inward 'conversation' between hopeful possibility and foreclosure of hope'" (Pies quoted in Roelvink and Zolkos 2011, 52). Through different examples in history as well as the latter definition, the dramatic juxtaposition of despair and hope stands out. Roelvink and Zolkos perceive hope as the essential ecological affect. Kretz chimes in perfectly in proposing a philosophically informed understanding of hope, one that is "substantive, is psychologically informed, induces positive action, enhances agency, is responsive, is socially supported and is proactively pursued" (2013, 929). Still, she contends that hope includes an element of justification or possibility for the outcome imagined even though "confident expectation" is not necessary and would exclude the necessity for hope. Since, Kretz views hope and hopelessness both as self-fulfilling prophecies, we may well deduce that, by looking at the objects of the actions at present, hopelessness, in fact, has been an underlying goal.

Framework Conclusion

Overall, this paper will further excavate the potentials of ecological hope, especially in seeking a fuller definition of what hope can do, opposed to what hope exactly is. The question whether hope can be found in the midst of ecological despair will have to be answered individually. As a preferred definitional range, I will focus on the concept of hope that can *only* be birthed within catastrophe and darkness, which I understand to be ecological hope. Ecological hope cannot only be an intellectual exercise, it must also be affectively lived and experienced. Because hope deals with 'what is not yet', it maintains a bond with questions of temporality and imagination. Overall, the kind of hope I seek to uncover is a resurrected hope, one that must first be extinguished by the catastrophic realization of the Anthropocene upon us and then rise from the ashes into an interdependent paradigm.

Results

The analysis as part of reflexive Thematic Analysis is a different process than in other pattern-identifying qualitative research methods. Braun and Clarke make clear that their approach enables the researcher to engage in analytical processes that are "about telling 'stories', about interpreting, and creating, not discovering and finding the 'truth' that is either 'out there' and findable from, or buried deep within, the data" (2019). The final analysis then "tends to provide less a rich description of the data overall, and more a detailed analysis of some aspect of the data,"

(Braun and Clarke 2006, 84) which in this case is a focus on narratives, hope, and imagination.

Thus, the following analysis is thematically organized to provide the pattern—or scaffolding—of what I will call the ecology of hope as derived by deep analysis of the chosen data corpus.

Climate Change, the Product of the 'Story of Separation'

The key question in this research pertains to the view of what climate change truly is about, what its origin is and how we may conceptualize of it narratively. When it comes to climate change, global warming, or the Age of the Anthropocene, all the read authors are finding alternative ways to describe, assess and place this crisis historically, socially and ecologically. Many of the authors reframe the term climate change in order to more accurately describe what this crisis actually is about. A common pattern emerges as the authors find that climate change really is not about a changing climate, but rather a symptom of the misaligned logic of civilization, or in Holthaus' words, "climate change isn't the problem—it's a symptom of the problem" (2020, 55). Climate change is described as a threshold to explore the underlying structures of civilization. This theme alone is a marker of distinction for it deviates from the medial presentation that climate change is defined solely by the ppm of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and its ecological tipping points. In framing climate change as the cumulative effect of thousands of years of human activity, thinking and storytelling, it becomes increasingly intimate. All authors acknowledge a close, personal relationship with climate change and how it intertwines with their personal lives; this is opposed to the standard Western narrative that often situates global warming in far-away places happening to people and animals they might never encounter. So, truly it is in the intimacy and personal closeness to climate change that most of the authors see the increased level of engagement and possibility emerge.

The current moment of 'ecocide' could be viewed as the evidence of a long-awaited unraveling of the myth of the separateness of Nature and man, expressed in the Cartesian Divide, failing. For most of the authors, climate change exposes this "story." So, what are the components of this story that is climate change?

Eisenstein calls the root narrative the "story of separation" which he traces in many predominant climate change and environmentalist narratives of today. He explains, "our system moves according to a deeper current still; namely, our civilizational mythology: the stories, meanings, perceptions, and agreements that constitute what we think to be reality" (Eisenstein 2018, Which side am I on?). He illustrates how even well-meaning views seeking to alleviate the effects of climate change are not capable to assuage the effects of ecological disintegration at large, because they still inhabit the story that created it in the first place.

There are several aspects related to this misleading logic of the standard narrative: Ghosh, Eisenstein and Holthaus point out that public communication about climate change has frequently been infused with war-narratives which frame climate change as an emergent security issue: humans vs. non-humans, well-adapted communities vs. climate refugees, as well as environmentalists vs. the establishment.

It is likely that environmental activists have engaged in the reductive narration of war within climate change, to "inspire the fervor and commitment that people display in wartime. Following the rhetorical template of war, we invoke an existential threat" (Eisenstein 2018, The Fight). Their framing has made CO2 emitting agencies, political institutions, industry, and specific (wealthy)

people the enemy. The reductionist logic of war narratives are followed by a reductionist logic of solution-making; thus, we can deduce how narrative, including its usage of metaphor and myth, significantly influence real-life political decision-making. According to Eisenstein, this reductionism is also visible in the common activist assertion that no effort is worthy of our time and energy besides the effort to reduce CO2 emissions, which he calls fundamentalism: Unless climate change is halted, none of the other causes worthy of our attention, will matter anyways. This mechanistic view demands all efforts to align with scientific measurability to reduce CO2 emissions and discards all efforts that cannot be measured in this manner. Thus, following this logic, working to alleviate poverty, or committing oneself to saving a specific whale species would be deemed unnecessary, even distracting. Ghosh goes further in identifying an underlying hope that is transferred upon catastrophe in politics where it seems to be "the card that is expected to trump all others" (2016, 149) in international climate negotiations. All authors warn in their individual ways of the danger of looking at environmental calamity through a reductionist lens, which leads to the following sub-theme in the literature.

Climate Change as a Singular Descriptor is Misleading

Climate change is not the crisis we are experiencing. The current crisis is rather the accumulation of crises in almost all aspects of human life which have been heightened and made visible through a changing climate which we mostly experience through a change in temperature, weather occurrences, and so forth. To respond to all these crises (social justice-, economic-, mental health, migratory-crises, etc.) by focusing on only reducing CO2 emissions cripples the necessary perception of the breadth of the crisis by applying a mechanistic view of the world, Nature, and history. Scientifically speaking, meeting the 1.5°C threshold is highly improbable; however, the messaging around this target has created a barrier to other possibilities of interpretation and imagination. It has allowed for a cut-off line for hope and basically assumes the future is only worth fighting for if kept under 1.5°C. Jesse Jenkins emphasizes that round numbers coming forth from institutional reports, such as the IPCC and their reverberation in social messaging, are fully political in nature and should not reflect how we understand the reality of climate change, because "'the reality is that every 10th of a degree matters.' There is no threshold after which it is not worth fighting" (Marris 2021).

It is this conflation of political numbers with individual states of conscious hope and fear that lead Eisenstein to question the role that science has been given in the discourse on climate change and its sovereignty to delineate reality. This is so, because in part "our 'science- based' opinion depends on what we include in our measurements" (Eisenstein 2018, The Perverse Consequences). Eisenstein shows how assessing the reality of the crisis solely through a metrics-based mentality firstly requires any solution to adhere to the same metrics that outline the problem, and secondly, because "what is typically measured is that which serves the economic and political interests, and unconscious biases, of those who commission the measurements (Eisenstein 2018, The Perverse Consequences). Eisenstein is not skeptical of science as a tool; however, he is skeptical of the unchecked historical and social process through which scientific consensus is reached, as well as its incapacity to gather support unanimously.

Holthaus may present exactly the kind of climate activist whom Eisenstein sees as ineffective for society because Holthaus' whole foundation from which to imagine an alternative future is intimately tied to unquestionable faith in climate science. The crisis to be courageously faced comes, in Holthaus' view, once climate science is fully discerned and understood which sets in motion a mourning process. About Greta Thunberg, he writes "what makes her special is that

she has read and understood climate science and is living her life as if the facts matter" (Holthaus 2020, 40). From Eisenstein's perspective, Holthaus may present the picture of an environmental activist that is institutionally tied and perceptively left leaning. In this way, his imagination of an alternative future may not be as inclusive as he sets it out to be. Still, Holthaus is fundamentally committed to the re-scription of the present system and writes this into being by imagining alternative economic systems, a future without fossil fuels, a new global ethic of solidarity and love and an altered political system. Even though he questions the economic and political system that produces the oppression he observes, the way climate science has been produced is left unquestioned for him. To Holthaus, extensive education to understand climate science and live accordingly is required. This assumption does create problems in widespread application because it requires extensive resources and political will.

Pitfalls of the Standard Narrative

Ghosh, Eisenstein and Holthaus inform us that many environmentalists, in their desire to increase a sense of urgency, have framed climate change as an issue of the individual moral conscience. This not only has frustrated the movement's efforts to expand but it has also made the individual mind the "battleground of choice for a conflict that is self-evidently a problem of the global commons" (Ghosh 2016, 132). One outcome of this moral framework has been the catapulting of people into decision fatigue, for decisions need to be considered in a consequentialist manner, meaning by their effects alone instead of their inherent ethical foundation. Relegating all fault to a moral failure either in the personal or in politics, "is a dangerous error that diverts attention away from systemic and ideological causes. It disguises a problem that we don't know how to solve as a problem that we do" (Eisenstein 2018, A Crisis of Being). In essence, looking for the fault in the wrong places leads even the converted to denial. Denial in this case lies in the assertion that "we" know how to solve climate change. Climate change should not be narrated as an issue of the individual consciousness without denigrating the effect of the individual mentality that takes ownership over consequences in their lives and the world, which Maathai pinnacles as the "the spirit of self-reliance" (2010,12). This is echoed in Audre Lorde's sobering recognition "I am not responsible for my oppression, but I am responsible for my liberation."

Another component of the "standard narrative" is the myth of eternal progress, which, if not questioned, is simply transplanted into ideas of solution-making. A visceral example of the mental colonization of this myth is Maathai's description of the changing landscape in Kenya after the missionaries arrived. She writes about the agricultural methods of the colonizers that created a new reality in which "hallowed landscapes lost their sacredness and were exploited as the local people became insensitive to the destruction, *accepting it as a sign of progress*" (2008, 6 emphasis added). Here we witness how the power of narrative can (temporarily) defy our lived experience by superimposition of a different reality. This split experience exemplifies Lauren Berlant's Cruel Optimism. We can see how the myth of progress not only permeates the historical lineage of imperialism, but also conceals itself in narratives of solution-making. The narrative of progress is a distinctly anthropocentric belief which is capable of justifying deeply unprogressive acts. It might even seem as if climate change is a conscious agent which deliberately fractures this veneer of progress in order for a new narrative to be revealed.

The Failure of Environmentalism to Cultivate Hope and Imagine an Alternative

In spite of the modern logic of linear progress and its attached imperative of solution- orientation, many Western contemporary non-fiction books on climate change are proportionately made up of chapters analyzing the crisis in detail. Often the final chapter is dedicated to either hope, solutions, or individualist ideas of "what you can do." The proportion of analysis and time spend on the crisis instead of solutions reveals two things: firstly, imagining alternative futures and engaging with and cultivating hope are not priorities within the dominant narrative on climate change, potentially because secondly, it reveals the lack of training in imaginative praxis since the imaginary is focused on foretelling apocalypse instead of outlining alternative futures. The belief seems to assert that "the best way to imagine a better world [...] [is] to first memorize every detail of its present ruin" (Turner 2007, Rebirth of Hope). A focus on cataclysm is a common environmental trope. Buell observes that

> apocalypse is the single most powerful master metaphor that the contemporary environmental imagination has at its disposal. Of no other dimension of contemporary environmentalism, furthermore, can it be so unequivocally said that the role of the imagination is central to the project; for the rhetoric of apocalypticism implies that the fate of the world hinges on the arousal of the imagination to a sense of crisis (1995, 285).

An unbalanced focus on crisis produces a new reductive paradigm which spells out that shock, fear, disaster narratives are tools in bringing about their opposites. This is what Susan Sontag calls, the "aesthetics of disaster" (1977). The "aesthetic of disaster" reveals the belief that positive effects could come from a negative method. This is echoed in Buell's recognition that a general belief persists that society will only truly act or understand the urgency of the ecological crisis when a "Great Ecological Spasm" takes place, waking us collectively to the immanent cataclysm (Buell 1995, 285).

Turner notes that obsession with disaster, as a commonly used tool within the environmental movement, is in fact complicit in the failure to activate society globally. A common response to denialism or ignorance of the crisis has been "to amp up the fear." Eisenstein argues that "a frontal assault on denial (whether the psychological denial of the average citizen, or the ideological position of climate skeptics) is unnecessary and has not worked. In fact, the more hyperbolic the headlines, the less effective they are" (Eisenstein 2018, The Causes of Passivity).

Turner notes that "fear, for the most part, inspires conservative reactions" meaning that "the more you scare people about global warming, the more they want to buy SUVS to protect themselves" (2007, The Rebirth of Hope). In fact, he observes that environmentalism "has become a sort of mythology of death—passionate, lyrical, righteous and hopeless—with a seemingly inexhaustible store of awful endings and not nearly enough to say about new beginnings" (2008, Rebirth of Hope). He ultimately finds that environmentalism "has failed as a common language of hope or a ritual of rebirth. It has failed as myth" (2008, Rebirth of Hope) which echoes Ghosh's recognition that at the heart of the climate crisis lies "a failure of imagination." Likewise, Holthaus sees the focus of "the dominant narrative of our climate future [...] on the inevitability of apocalypse," making the apocalypse more likely to occur. Instead, he demands a shift of focus on "the inevitability of a better world" (2020, 51). This confirms Kretz's assertion that hope and hopelessness both are self-fulfilling prophecies (2013).

Mythology has an ephemeral and untouchable nature, which makes it so fitting in containing recipes for the future that people from different walks of life may relate to. Ultimately, it seems that in its spectral nature it is indeed very grounding because, as Turner outlines,

> the point of a belief system or faith or useful mythology, whatever name you give it and whether or not you think of it as divine: it allows you to abide the routine stuff of life with grace, clarity, even joy. To see how it's all connected, how it all matters—and to see, now, why the routine must change if we intend to carry on. (2007, The Dalai Lama and the Dude)

Turner hopes that sustainability could become the next core mythology of civilization, in the same manner democracy has been. Turner sees no backing out of the climate emergency, and yet he is convinced that imagining a world based on principles of sustainability is the most effective use of our time. All authors take an affirmative stance in their approach to imagining a world that is radically different to the one we are living in now, in contrast to popular environmentalist narration which has historically held a negating stance. Here, we may be reminded of Dinerstein's distinction between 'positive' thinking—conforming to the status-quo—and 'affirmative' thinking which somewhat refutes reality and "embraces hope as a search for alternative forms of life" (Dinerstein 2016, 6).

Tending such an equilibrium within communication and imagination seems to be one of the unanswered questions of our time, for communication about climate change has not been generated with the audience in mind, mostly presenting "a tale told by activists and scientists in a bewildering stream of obscure technical terms and decontextualized statistics, timelines that dwarf human understanding and weather forecasts so minutely tweaked as to seem inconsequential" (Turner 2007, The Non-Partisan Environmentalist). In its lack of a middle ground, environmentalist messaging often runs in extremes of fear/catastrophism or an unrefined demand to produce hope. Both seem to be responses to the loss of control. Interestingly, the authors all link possibility for hope with courage and honesty in the face of the crisis, establishing the ground upon which they see hope flourish. Thus, we find that totally discarding narratives that alert to the severity of the crisis is also of sorts a reductive method; however, the so-called "doomsday narrative" is not a widespread recommendation either. In its essence, the doomsday narrative equals giving up agency for it writes the ending to a story with the hubris of knowledge of what the ending shall be.

Overall, even the chapter make-up of the analyzed books largely veer away from the aforementioned proportion of foci within environmentalist literature: they don't analyze the climate crisis and explain its origin for the majority of their books, nor do they dwell on individualist notions of solution-making. While Turner stays closest to the conventional paradigm in seeking hope in what is already there and learning to rebrand environmentalism, Eisenstein, Maathai, Holthaus and Ghosh seem to be in favor of questioning the paradigm out of which the crisis has emerged.

The Future is Cultural

Arjun Appadurai's (1990) concept of culture includes the interrelated and constantly flowing interaction of different dimensions which in their undiscoverable fullness create 'imagined worlds' which are the "multiple worlds which are constituted by the historically situated imaginations of persons and groups spread around the globe" (296-7). Even though Appadurai speaks here of global flows of goods and ideas, the concept of a web of pillars that create culture locally and globally is useful in its adaptation for the current context. Not only can we expand this concept by looking at Harper's *Natureculture* framework which breaks down the separation between the

two in linguistics and practice, but we can clearly see the paradox that looking for a climate fix in spheres proclaiming to be purely environmental will always lead to a desire to find a solution in technical, political, or financial spheres. Even the concept of "the environmental" is a product of a paradigm that measures, scales and understands the world "out there" based on the belief that it is a separated space to be changed through the extension of force. Asserting that Nature and culture influence each other in such entangled ways that we could consider them as a single unit not only upends a historical process but also helps put into perspective why the vision for alternatives, the outline of the future, and potentially the response to climate change, must lie in the cultural.

Appadurai has noted that the future is "a cultural fact" which is shaped through "imagination, anticipation, and aspiration." He notes the importance of acknowledging that imagination is not only "a social fact," but "a practice and a form of work" which must be centered in cultural entanglements (2013, 286). Culture may refer to the "learned and shared behavior of a community of interacting human beings" (Useem et al. 1963) exposing the learned thought patterns and behaviors of societies with the non-human. The analysis found that culture is seen as the dominant factor in ecological healing, reflecting the fact that "all ecological problems are social problems" (Bookchin 1984, 24). This *is* already a paradigm shift away from the manner in which global flows of knowledge, goods, and ideas function. To that end, Ghosh tells us that "culture generates desires" (Ghosh 2016, 10) which Turner echoes in several treatises on how iconography and desire intertwine, how stories and cultural symbols guide our behavior and preferences. Imagination—Turner, Ghosh and Holthaus aver—is what re-constitutes cultural mythology and therefore redirects desire. We might deduce that commitment and imagination may be liberated in proportion to their alignment with cultural grounding.

The New Narrative

Spirituality is perceived as key ingredient to ecological healing and transformation. Cultivating a new mythology around ecology and sustainability springs forth from establishing not man as sacred, but the earth in its wholeness as sacred — with a capacity to elicit awe. Ultimately, it is assumed that the human/other- than-human relationship can best be repaired by means of relocating meaning within the spiritual—especially through a reframing of all things alive as sacred. We could argue that imagination is the path to retool a mechanistic, individualist perspective to one of holism. Imagination can be understood as that which allows us to "see actual conditions in light of what is possible" (Fesmire 2010, p.187). When speaking of spirituality, feminist scholar bell hook's definition is a good starting point to place this concept. She explains spirituality as the "idea that there is an animating principle in the self—a life force [...] that when nurtured enhances our capacity to be more fully self-actualized and able to engage in communion with the world around us" (hooks 2000, 13). Spirituality then is a deeply personal experience that also enables alteration to the boundaries to our perceived environments.

Another access point to narratives of spirituality mentioned frequently is an intentional reconnection with indigenous knowledges. Holthaus, Maathai, Ghosh and Eisenstein all remind us of the importance of foregrounding indigenous knowledge in a way in which it is not seen as a separate epistemology but rather assumes a leading role in future imaginaries. Eisenstein contends that the only way to re-connect with indigenous knowledge is through humility requiring us "to truly receive them, and not merely insert them into some comfortable silo called 'indigenous wisdom,' as if they were a museum piece or a spiritual acquisition." (Eisenstein 2018, If We Knew She Could Feel). To the authors that mention the necessity to reconnect to indigenous wisdom,

it is intricately tied to narratives of interdependence, a sentiment of awe and a proactive manner in which the spiritual informs the everyday experience. Mentioning a spiritual dimension as necessary for the new narrative by no means dilutes the seriousness of the climate crisis. In fact, it rather points to the incapacity of the status-quo to provide answers or pave roads towards a future that works for the next generations. With the entrance of spirituality into narratives of hope, we also discover the possibility that narratives on climate change, that seek to outline hope, may need to be dressed in a more intimate character. The intimacy of any narrative would logically be characterized by its nearness to the person and thus be located in the present moment; however, the fact that spiritual symbols and stories often have a timeless nature, extends these narratives beyond the present moment, as spirituality doubtlessly seeks to do.

Affect Lies at the Heart of Transformation

An often-overlooked consequence of the standard narrative has been the disparaging of affects in their role to bring about social change. Research on emotions and climate change has found a turn in academics and public life in recent years, not at last seen in the development of neologisms, such as solastalgia, pre-traumatic stress syndrome, or ecoanxiety; thus, it is no surprise to also discover the ways in which different affects are mentioned and weighed in their perception as agents of transformation. The mentioning of affects and their many outcomes was the most expansive segment during the coding process, but due to the limits of this research paper, I will focus on two specific findings: feeling the crisis and finding a love ethic.

Feeling the Crisis

If the data set authors were in conversation, this point they would all unanimously agree upon: unless the crisis is acknowledged as such, it is not possible to develop proper responses to it. The greater nuance to the acknowledgement of the crisis is that this acknowledgement is not only intellectual but must be also be affectual and personal.

Feeling the crisis involves the emotions of loss, grief, and mourning. Rosemary Randall, Director at the Cambridge Carbon Footprint, states that "when loss remains unspoken, neither grieved nor worked through, then change and adjustment cannot follow." She finds that diving into loss "might allow it to be brought back into public discourse; to inform our personal communication about climate change; and to suggest alternative support structures that would facilitate both personal and political work" (2009, 119). But how is grief and mourning to be approached within the context of such existential loss? The Kubler-Ross five-stage model of grief clarifies the emotional work to be done inindividuals. The process moves through shock, denial, bargaining, depression, and finally acceptance. It is unclear whether this model is capable to speaking for collective processes as well. Holthaus recognizes this in stating that, "individually, each of us will have to go through a grieving process" and collectively we can only "help mourn and accept this loss" (2020, 21). These two processes that need to happen side by side in order to undo the convenience of disregard the grievance we are asked to confront. Randall further outlines the costs of ignoring loss and mourning, especially by adopting narratives of climate change that transport apocalypse into the future. She explains that

> the splitting, which projects all loss into the future making it catastrophic and unmanageable, denies the losses that have to be faced now and prevents us from dealing with them. As each task of mourning in turn is rejected and its negative is embraced we become more deeply mired, both personally and socially, in blind alleys, false hopes, and magical solutions (2009, 127).

We can discover the tendency to expel loss from the present in dominant climate narratives that overemphasize a future apocalypse and simultaneously produce a false comfort in the "unaffected" present. They tend to produce the "bland, unchallenging, nature of the dominant solution narratives" (Randall 2009, 119) such as the technical quick-fixes, trust in green consumerism or the belief that the individual carbon reduction can shield us from what is to come.

The data set authors all give extensive accounts of their experiences of personal loss which is heightened if the writer is also a parent. The reverence and personal experiences of beauty propel grief once the loss of what is revered is experienced. The grief associated with climate change, however, comes with an additional layer: loss is foreboded. With an astute knowledge of what kind of ecological damage is already underway, we are asked to handle "anticipatory grieving" (Randall 2009, 125). Holthaus describes it as the necessity "to go through a grieving process for the loss of a world we believed in our bones would always be there" (2020, 21). He envisions that "collectively, to help mourn and *accept* this loss, we will have to share with one another alternative visions of a shared future, stories about how climate doom is not inevitable" (Holthaus 2020, 21 emphasis added).

The word acceptance is crucial, for it chimes in the final stage of grieving (according to Kubler-Ross) which enables the "grasping of possibilities that might emerge" (Randall 2009, 127). The lack of facing up to present loss in governments and public discourse may also be due to fear, but Ghosh opens another possibility. He sees a source of denial in the fact that it would require a vast overhaul of how wealth is produced and maintained as well as the narratives that undergird what civilization is made up of. Thus, we can see that moving collectively through grief not only entails an acceptance of loss now and in the future but also the certain demise of the economic system as we know it today, along with its power structures and embedded modes of wealth production and oppression. Importantly, if hope should be infused into a process that did not include the facing of loss prior to the fact, it becomes a neoliberal tool of maintaining the status quo instead of creating a new one.

Overall, crisis is perceived as a liminal space. It is exactly the liminality of the moment that provides the ideal foundation for hope to emerge; however, hope is not described as the emotion that guides through the liminal space but rather what arises at the exit, or even as the exit itself. In order to face the space of liminality, Holthaus speaks of courage, Eisenstein of humility, Maathai of persistence, Turner of commitment. We are ushered into the conclusion that there seems to be an affectual ladder which may lead up to hope but it may not begin with it, even though hope integrates them ultimately if we are to follow Bloch's ontological perception of hope in which "danger and faith are the truth of hope, in such a way that both are gathered in it" (Bloch 1996, 112).

Care Ethic

Feeling the crisis may sound reasonable on a theoretical basis, but in reality, it seems that one needs an anchor in order to do so, as well as a legit perspective post-crisis. The authors find the answers in a new ethic—one centered around love, an umbrella for emotions surrounding deep (often unconditional) care and cherishing of a specific object.

Because a new narrative negates separation in favor of interdependence, an ethic of love is the principle upon which interbeing and interdependence is built. This contrasts the dominant narrative of instrumental utilitarianism, which for instance works to protect a local forest because

it sequesters CO2 instead of because one genuinely cares about it. The love ethic Eisenstein envisions is powerful in a theoretical way because it provides an internal driver to re-aligning the actions of humanity with ecological wholeness without artificially outlining what these actions should look like. To Eisenstein, love becomes the categorical imperative to small and big decision-makings. Turner, without ever mentioning an "ethic of love," still consistently speaks on the importance of cultivating community, which he quotes Rebecca Solnit on, is "a work of love" which is what he imagines a mythology of sustainability should *feel* like. Holthaus describes this as building "a movement focused on love and repair [...] toward a future in which everyone matters" (Holthaus 2020, 23). Maathai reasons that when humanity takes care of the earth, the earth will in turn take care of humanity. This assumption of reciprocity reveals the ethic upon which her movement is built.

Ultimately, we love what is near to us, thus we also are aggrieved by the loss of what is near to us. Both, walking through crisis and developing a new ethic of love, are intimately tied to our experience of what is local, personal, familiar, and close. In contrast to that, geographies that predominantly produce CO2 also have managed to create landscapes of distance and anonymity which urgently need to be overcome and transformed.

Instability of Hope

This final theme is potentially also the most interesting to excavate. Overall, I found that hope has no solid universal understanding. On the one hand, it is described in a neoliberal sense, laced with the fear of losing control which equals the hope solely in pursuit of solutions. Even though, with Bloch's reminder "the edifice of hope, occupied by thought of improvement, will totally collapse" (Bloch 1995, 619), it is still widely seen as a sentiment which occupies the realm of solution-making and in that manner, it is easily misunderstood.

Furthermore, it is often optimism, masked by what is generally understood to be hope, since it essentially hopes things are not the way they are, making it a form of denial. This kind of hope can be seen in the raking up of evidence that shows that things are not as bad as they seem, in climate denial, or in ignoring the crisis altogether, mired in the illusion that the crisis will neither demand change nor honesty. Both types of 'hopes' are most often found in conservative media communication, politics, and business. Both are masks of hope that ultimately prolong or deepen the predicament at hand because they are based on the belief that the future can only be good if nothing is lost, nothing is changed, and nothing is demanded.

The meanings with which hope is imbued can at times be fuzzy in the texts of the authors, ranging from hope as the key to possibility, hope in lieu of expectation, to hope as an activator, and even as a form of denial, but one aspect unifies their visions: none of the authors describe something to hope for within the status quo, or the system as it is, their visions all unite in an imaginary of a new narrative, a different future which valorizes hope and in turn activates their actions in the present moment. This temporal stretch is well described in Maathai describing hope as a tree with "roots in the soil [which] yet reaches to the sky. It tells us that in order to aspire we need to be grounded, and that no matter how high we go it is from our roots that we draw sustenance". To Maathai, bringing about the future is a collective, tedious job that requires, above all, persistence. In her work, she does not look for hope in circumstances or conditions but rather expresses her imaginative hope through her actions towards the future that portrays most freedom. In such a way she circumscribes the future through her hope and not a desolate picture

at hand.

Furthermore, Holthaus, Turner, Maathai and Eisenstein infuse their understanding and urgency of the need to find hope with their love for their children. It is their children that provide them with hope, fear, and urgency and that activate a sense of persistence and that, we might argue, stretches their consciousness of the present farther into the future. To Turner and Holthaus, their hope imaginary is related to "what is possible" in a concrete way, meaning their sense of hope is tied to specific changes in policy, government, collective action, technology, or invention. Holthaus also finds a different kind of hope, a courageous working towards the future in the face of almost certain collapse. He finds this in the work of different activists, especially from the Global South. He gives an example of this, what Lear would call "radical hope," from an activist from Tonga: "In 10 years we drown...Until then we work" (2020, 83). The latter statement comes in conjunction with several incidents Holthaus describes from Micronesian activists and delegates at the COP conferences in which Micronesia is often overlooked in their demands because Micronesia's fate is framed as "the first nation-causalities of climate change." (Holthaus 2020, 81). What comes together in the experience of these activists is a notion that hope really is not optional but absolutely necessary. The non-negotiable part about hope to these activists is that they are already experiencing devastating consequences of climate change. Here it becomes abundantly clear that a personal experience of loss does not necessarily produce hopelessness and despair but can lead to persistent hope and courage. This also hints at the fact that hope seems to be optional in Western-dominated narratives.

In her essay *Home is always worth it*, Heglar writes about this type of chosen hopelessness which she finds particularly prevalent in White men, whom she also calls 'doomer dudes.' She writes, "I've come across a good many doomer dudes. They have books. They host panels. They are prolific tweeters. They are legion. And they're almost always White men, because only White men can afford to be lazy enough to quit. on themselves" (Heglar 2021, 280). Heglar interestingly drives at the fact that giving up or succumbing to hopelessness is in fact a derivative of privilege. She describes that, "they've not only accepted that our fate is sealed, they've found comfort in it-so certain are they that they know how this unwritten story ends" (Heglar 2021, 280). The three ingredients to hopelessness then seem to be: firstly, a reductive perspective on the ecological crisis, and secondly, the hubris of consummate knowledge and thirdly, the relative shielding from beginning effects of a changing climate today. All of these are particularly likely to be found in privileged spaces. Opposed to nihilistic hopelessness would be the recognition that hope is work, the "hard work of fashioning a culture of radical, unrepentant, courageous hope" as Holthaus frames it (2020, 30). Of course, this type of hope is unquestionably entangled with imaginative practice. It would not be possible for hope to be conjured, were it not for the imagination of what alternatives could be and must be when honestly looking at the fate of one's home. Dinerstein reminds us that "the question of 'how do we find hope in the black night?' [...] is not 'utopian', or 'wishful thinking'" but much rather "the concrete act of resistance that becomes the vehicle for radical change as it offers the possibility for imagining and anticipate alternatives within the reality of this (capitalist) world" (2012, 533). Overall, it remains to be seen how hope may be appropriated, used, or activated in the near future, in particular through greater engagement with ecological imagination. As of now, concepts such as courage, persistence, commitment seem to have a more stable connotation which is less likely to be misapprehended.

Conclusion

Diving into the complexity of meanings and uses of the sentiment-concept hope has provided for a rich but split outcome. I had several questions in mind when disentangling narratives from my data corpus. These pertained to how hope is projected, envisioned, imagined, and analyzed. Here, I shall swiftly summarize the findings on each of those research demands. Firstly, the research found that hope is projected out of spaces of crisis and into futures without crisis. These visions range from elongating methods of the past to solve the crisis at hand, which I found ultimately prolongs the structures that enable it, to visions of alternative futures that emerge from an honest processing of grief and loss. This loss must come from an acknowledgement that the climate crisis cannot be solved which leads to discarding the 'old' ways of attempting to find solution. At the core of most predominant narratives about climate change today is the belief that the crisis can be solved. This core belief, I have found, is a false hope that extends the liminal space in which humanity is grasping for a new way of living until the fact that climate change cannot be solved is fully accepted. In no way does this suggests succumbing to hopelessness or despair but it advocates for engaging in a necessary pivot on how we have learned to make sense and produce meaning of crises and uncertainties. Furthermore, despite the fact that hope is a somewhat ephemeral sentiment in its capacity to transform, it is linked with affective experiences that are near and personal. Narratives of hope as well as experiences of beauty and loss must be near and close in order to produce a sense of 'stickiness' and fidelity to an alternative future envisioned.

Secondly, hope envisioned in negating the Anthropocene and its paragon, the climate crisis, has often been narrated with respect to 'crisis epistemological' rhetoric, meaning it emphasizes immanence, urgency, and prolongs the 'presentist' paradigm (Whyte 2020). Hope is then outlined through a lens of securitization, risk-aversion, and put into techno-fixes, political decision-making, and can be seen in narration and rhetoric in international agreements on climate change and public communication. Hope is also envisioned as a tool that results from courage and persistence or enables them. Hope in this way becomes a strong political sentiment that engages in counter-cultural imaginations. This kind of hope necessitates an engagement with crisis. Hoping for the Anthropocene to be undone is not an option.

Thirdly, hope is a complex and ambiguously interpreted sentiment. Having the potential to misguide through its promise of a golden horizon and thus increase the gravitational fall of despair, as in the morale of Pandora's box whose contents of the worst evils included hope. It is yet unclear how we are to interpret the story of Pandora: either hope is the remaining answer to all the evils in the world or the worst evil of them all. This is what I have called the instability of hope. Nevertheless, hope has stayed the single factor panacea for many authors, as the only sentiment that enables an activating tale of what has not yet become and therefore is energizing to the possibilities of the present. These possibilities come down to the socio- climatic imaginary—a result of collectively held imaginations.

We find that communicating a socio-climatic imaginary or varying concepts of hope through literature, politics, and social institutions are all subject to the relativizing bottleneck of affects. Ultimately, this means that there is no one coherent message that will work uniformly for the web of individual cultures, and unique histories reveal the necessity for diversity and sensitivity in narrative communication. Clearly, this also relativizes the message of hope and fear, courage and despair, because their mental implications will arrive in people's lives during different phases and through varied understandings or feeling-states towards climate change. Their own past and mental models, as well as their affective belonging to groups of similar thinking, will change the

way messages are perceived. Therefore, messaging must aim to simply maintain the largest common denominator in its strategy of communication, as well as maintain a balance in emotional bridging. This research has shown that even though fear has been sought to be the most effective communicator, in fact hope may be much more so, despite its complexity.

Furthermore, hope is analyzed through the lens of mythology which is understood as the cultural stories that water the roots of our beliefs and everyday actions. In their attempt to activate and enforce transformation, these mythologies have often veered into the apocalyptic instead of the hopeful. This is particularly revealing when looking at the difference in social movements around climate change and sustainability. While the sustainability movement focused on holistic, rather ecological approaches to a host of problems, the climate change movement, in focusing on the science around climate alone, got stuck in the so-called doomsday narrative that zooms in on specific measurable problems (such as ppm of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere or political decisions) and therefore specific techno-political solutions. The climate movement has had a greater proclivity toward eco-anxiety, frustration, and despair, firstly because their hope is goal-directed and secondly, because there is no refuge in a holistic approach.

Lastly, hope in ecological narratives has often not been analyzed through a lens of the humanities. Especially, since climate change is *de facto* a social problem, it needs to be looked at through sociological methods combined with scientific methods. It has become more commonly understood that "all ecological problems are social problems" (Bookchin 1986, 24) which leads into the recognition that environmental disasters affect the cultural and social make-up of humanity and vice versa. In clearly understanding the artifice of the Nature-culture divide, we can also come to see that environmental degradation is not a "recent event but something that has always already taken place: human beings have always transformed the world they encounter, and they transform it in encountering it" (Vogel quoted in Thompson 2020).

Overall, to reflect on the research process, I feel that there is a word on rhetoric due. Most authors have liberally used 'we' as a descriptor to explain general truths (as did I). The way modern science has historically been produced (and in its seeking of 'universal' truths) throws up a difficulty in description and analysis that is hard to escape. Still, to use "we" in the descriptions surrounding how climate change has been produced implies much that is not true. It hides the ignorance of intent, the inaccessibility of consistent, truthful information for many, the powerlessness of most of the world population to participate in decision-making around a problem they glided into through previous generations and global inequalities, but most of all: it hides the fact that there are many that are working to find solutions to design "systems of permanency." One of the most brightening outcomes of this research has been the realization that across the globe, there is a strong tendency to shift narratives, honestly face the derangement, and to engage in envisioning alternative systems. The research has shown that perspective acts as a shining light, enlarging and expanding the object upon which it looks. Doubtlessly, climate change is threatening the existence of humanity as a species; however, countless authors I have read not only confirm the small and big projects that are popping up around the globe to create a counter-wave, but the very essence of hope is the fact that it emerges in the face of despair. Possibly this is what Bloch meant in stating that "through a combination of courage and knowledge, the future does not come over man as fate, but man overcomes the future and enters it with what is his" (Bloch1996, 198).

From the standard perspective, informed by positivism, rationality, century-old colonial power structures, market-centric logic, risk aversion, nationalism and patriarchy, the aforementioned

values may be discarded as weak, inefficient, and unprofessional. Yet what has actually turned out to be *ineffective* is the standard narrative. Therefore, it seems reasonable to believe that the true solutions to the "great derangement" lie in a deep revision of the organization of the world. As a final note, hope in the face of the climate facts has always conjured up the question, "How can we have hope, if everything looks so dire?" And yet, I keep returning to the perspective that hope may not be the result of the right assembly of facts, but a mental action that ultimately has the power to change the assembly of facts.

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Notes

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