Ecology as pre-text? The paradoxical presence of ecological thematics in contemporary Scandinavian quality TV

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ABSTRACT
The Scandinavian middle classes have been trained in feeling guilty and shameful about their social and economical privileges as well as these privileges in combinations with gender and/or ethnicity. But “eco-guilt” or “eco-shame” has hardly been represented properly in cinema and TV series to this day. In this article, I want to offer a kind of prediction, rather than a description, of what may be an upcoming major theme in Scandinavian visual narratives: eco-guilt and eco-shame. I see signs of this in the recent TV series Jordskott from Sweden, the Norwegian Okkupert and the Danish Bedrag, but my point will be that the ecological issues here are used as a useful background or a dramaturgical starting point rather than as a major theme: as pretexts, in the double sense of the word. The use of ecology as pretext in Scandinavian TV series will be the subject of this article where I intend to focus on the way that the question of eco-guilt seems to be an alluring and tempting as well as repressed thematic, a fact that can be read out of the three series’ paradoxical opening sequences.

It is probably only a slight exaggeration and simplification to claim that Scandinavian psychologists, psychotherapists, educators and columnists of most observations have taught the Scandinavians for some time now that guilt and shame are bad feelings. Whether you are parents to young children, or you are a child to elderly parents, or if you feel privileged and rich in comparison to less affluent people in Scandinavia or poor populations around the world—generally you are not supposed to feel ashamed or guilty.1

Guilt and shame often slip into each other, but they are conventionally defined as distinct in terms of relating to respectively actions (guilt) and being (shame). The main argument for avoiding feelings of guilt and shame, appears to be that they are crippling, non-productive feelings, that have negative effects on many levels of your life. Furthermore, guilt and shame are often founded in crippling social or religious commitments and rules.2

In the following essay, which is a pilot study meant to prepare for further ecocritical investigations in this direction, I would like to suggest that in some cases Scandinavians could actually need a certain dose of guilt and shame in order to change attitudes and behaviour in relation to one, specific question. I am not suggesting, of course, that Scandinavians have inherited the Original Sin, nor that Scandinavians should atone for the historical and partly ongoing colonial injustices committed against others, nor for some of the other possible reasons mentioned already. But I would argue that in some cases visual narratives could help us feel guilty and ashamed, at least momentarily, in order for us to try to act upon these emotions. I am suggesting, in other words, that visual narratives might have a productive didactic potential.3

The question I am interested in here is the Scandinavians knowledge of climate change specifically, or what one could call a more epochal understanding of the Anthropocene in general terms. My basic interest is to understand why this combination of climate related guilt and shame so seldom, and only in contradictory forms (which my analysis will demonstrate) has been taken up in contemporary Scandinavian visual narratives. It would definitely be productive, in a more ambitious investigation than this specific article allows, to make a distinction between guilt related to actions that have either already contributed to or will in the future accelerate climate change (“eco-guilt”) as opposed to the feeling of shame related to the mere existence as a rich Scandinavian citizen with huge ecological footprints, being at least partly responsible for climate change and the Anthropocene condition (“eco-shame”). But since the distinction is not crucial in the more limited context of this article, both terms are used more or less interchangeably in the following.

I will start by presenting the notion of the Anthropocene as well as briefly describing the demands and the possibilities that the idea of the Anthropocene poses for cultural studies and cultural theory. I shall then mention what I call the “Anthropocene presence” of cultural texts. After this background, I shall present my chosen examples—three recent Scandinavian TV-
series which are part of the so-called quality-TV trend in order to discuss the peculiar Anthropocene presence and thus their production—or not—of feelings of eco-guilt. In doing so, I will first briefly reflect upon why eco-guilt and shame is so hard to find in the series, and second, and more importantly, describe and discuss the fact that the combination of ecology and guilt, when it is found, seems to produce such strange visual narrative results. I will discuss the function of the opening sequences that turns out to be a privileged, concentrated space for conflictual ideological issues in the visual narratives. The opening sequences are pre-texts for the series in a double sense of the word: they open the individual instalments in the respective series—and they pose a difficult question and quickly closes it again, thus using ecology almost as a ploy before repeating much more familiar and popular forms and themes.

The Anthropocene as a new ephoal condition: brief definitions

The Scandinavians, and many other people around the world, are extremely worried about, and often have guilty feelings about, the complex of interrelated problems and dystopic diagnoses related to the now relatively current label of the Anthropocene.

The concept of the Anthropocene was originally coined by atmospheric chemist Paul Crutzen to define the epoch in planetary history where the earth system is dominated by human influence (thus the “anthro”-prefix of the epochal notion). According to this theory, the Anthropocene is replacing a period of ca 12,000 years of relatively stable climate on the planet (the Holocene period). The term has become widespread in recent years across almost all academic fields from geology over anthropology to social sciences and the humanities, at the same time leading to several heated discussions concerning both the scope, the ideological connotations of the term as well as the periodization itself.5

The most well-known menace of the Anthropocene is the environmental effects, and in particular the climate changes resulting in global warming. Major scientists and historians (Bonnieul, Christophe, Fressoz et al. 2016, 20–24; see for a slightly differing definition Waters et al. 2016) describes the following internally related elements of the Anthropocene condition as fundamental: Climate change; the extinction of species and general limitations of biodiversity; the rarefication of natural resources as a result of consumption and growth in population, and finally the massive pollution and change of life conditions of all living creatures on the planet.

Among these Anthropocene effects, climate change or global warming has received most attention in recent years, to the point where “the Anthropocene” and “climate change” have become more or less interchangeable in most public discourses and in many ideological discussions in the humanities and social sciences. In the following I shall maintain the distinction between climate change as a specific phenomenon and the Anthropocene as a more abstract and general condition.

Humankind as a whole has thus arrived at a historically precarious situation, which is the result of the actions of only a certain fraction of the planet’s population. It is important to mention that there are still political debates (despite the fact that the scientific community, globally and across disciplines, has agreed on this for quite a while) concerning whether historical climate change is an effect of human influences and consequently whether we are entering a new geological epoch: the scepticism is often supported by systematic attempts to blur the results of the scientific communities (see the current attack from the Trump administration on the very term “climate change”: https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/aug/08/trump-administration-climate-change-ban-usda). But it is also worth noting, that currently it is not only left wing commentators, environmentalists and activists but also former US admirals, UN advisors, and many other internally highly heterogeneous voices who raise warnings about the current quandary (Scranton 2015, 14–15). Here I want to investigate the ways in which a broad notion of the Anthropocene but in particular climate change plays peculiar roles in selected examples of contemporary Scandinavian TV fiction.

Looking for eco-guilt in Scandinavian visual narratives

When starting to think about representations of the Anthropocene in Scandinavian visual narratives (here delimited to film and TV-series) I expected to find plenty of significant examples dealing with guilt and shame in a direct personal form, or in a more general, public or communal form concerning the effects of mankind on nature and the environment. I assumed this because of the relatively high presence of the theme for instance in Anglophone literatures and film for at least 15 years, where examples abound.6 However, in contemporary Scandinavian cinema or TV fiction I did not find any feature films discussing or seriously representing the notion of the Anthropocene or climate change. It is, of course, possible to read Lars von Trier’s Melancholia (2011) and Ruben Östlund’s Force Majeure (2014) as well as Roar Uthaug’s Bolgen (2015) and André Øvredal’s Trolljegeren (2010) as cinematic statements on human responses to catastrophic events, but in none of these films is climate change or the Anthropocene present in any clear, discernable form, and neither is, consequently, the even more specific theme of eco-guilt.

The absence of direct traits of a certain thematic constellation is of course a classic methodological issue in cultural criticism, and as critics we have been trained
in finding isolated signs or entire messages in cultural products (sometimes called symptomatic reading) that are “about” one thing on the surface but that, on a deeper level, “are about” something entirely else, for instance gender, ethnicity, or class. Consequently, we should, as suggested by Trexler in his recent overview of Anglophone literary responses to climate change (Trexler 2015), acknowledge that despite the lack of direct representations of ecological challenges in contemporary Scandinavian visual narratives, there is nevertheless a huge material with potential eco-critical waiting to be detected, analysed and discussed. The current moment is therefore comparable to earlier phases in cultural criticism when scholars started analysing texts in terms of class, or in terms of gender criticism and feminism, and later concerning questions of colonialism and ethnicity. In Timothy Morton’s words: “Even if a Shakespeare sonnet does not appear explicitly to be ‘about’ gender, nowadays we still want to ask what it might have to do with gender. The time should come when we ask of any text, ‘What does this say about the environment?’” (Morton 2007, 5; a similar point is made in Mirzoeff 2014). So this is simply what I refer to with “Anthropocene presence” in the following: the direct or indirect, intentional or unintentional presence and function of aspects of the Anthropocene in cultural texts.

After some inquiries into contemporary Scandinavian TV fiction and cinema, I did find three TV-series produced in Denmark, Sweden and Norway, respectively, that in different ways thematise aspects of the Anthropocene. But as will become clear in my readings below, the series represent the notion of ecological awareness in highly peculiar ways. In terms of structure, all three series follow the now conventional format of a season of ten episodes, little less than one hour-long instalments.

The Danish series Bedrag (literally, “fraud” or “deception”, translated internationally as “Follow the Money”) was broadcasted in Denmark the spring of 2016, with Per Fly as main director and Jeppe Gjervig Gram as main scriptwriter. Inspired (according to the creators) by the economic crimes disclosed in relation to the international financial crisis of 2008, the series describes an upcoming research company in Denmark, “Energreen”, producing, or claiming to produce, path-breaking new windmill technologies, and as such it definitely seems to be part of the current ecological debates relating to climate change. The story unfolds by way of two human interest stories: the classical, somewhat rough detective with a problematic relation to his family on the one hand, and a young, female lawyer and single mother working in the windmill corporation on the other. Step by step we learn that the eponymous fraud or deception of the title is in fact the basic governing principle of the company, as opposed to the idealistic newspeak of its charismatic CEO. Marketed as an øko-

thriller (eco-thriller), where øko presumably stands for economy (“økonomi”) and not ecology (“økologi”), the series’ production value is high, and the plot demonstrates the consequences of the economic fraud on a number of societal levels, from immigrant workers to wealthy bank investors.

The Swedish series with the untranslatable (and for most Swedes unknown) title Jordskott, conceived by main writer and director Henrik Björn, combines horror elements with a more subdued economic plot. When a woman, working as a police officer, returns to her small hometown in rural Sweden upon the death of her father, a dramatic and violent story expands, which includes her search for her daughter abducted ten years earlier: this daughter mysteriously returns but only to be left to the mythologized Nature in the final scene of the series. The main plot engine in Jordskott is economic, too. We learn that the police officer’s father, the owner of the all-dominant forestation company in the small town, violated the age-old mythical laws of the nature in the area in order to pursue economic interests and killed and got rid of “people of the woods”, an act which has turned into a fatal curse for the entire community. Filmed in an aesthetically effective style and with good acting, and with several competent horror scenes, the series ends on a note of cosmic atonement; the protagonist sacrifices her daughter to the woods thus saving the small community of further harassment.

The Norwegian Økkupert, based on an idea by crime writer Jo Nesbø and directed by Erik Skjoldbjærg, is a political thriller series about a Norwegian Green Party government who, in a near future under the directly spell of both energy supply crisis and climate changes, decides to cut off all fossil fuel production. As a result of the machinations of EU leaders, Norway is occupied by Russian troops and the consequences of this occupation is represented by way of a few human focal points in the plot. The political plot is held up by focusing on the stressed out prime minister and a political reporter, and the series ends with the prime minister being abducted by a Norwegian underground liberation army where he has to make clear his patriotic position. “Are you ready to fight for Norway”, is the final cliffhanger of the series, opening toward a second season. Being the most expensive TV-show in Norwegian history, the series was well received and has been sold to broadcasting and Netflix-screening in several countries around the world.

The three series share a few basic traits: they are all prestigious productions based in the national broadcasting environments, where they are initially distributed as prominent national broadcasting events, involving significant economical investments, and partly as a result of these investments they have all been successful in the international tv-market. They are, thus, typical products in the success story of Scandinavian quality TV (Rustad 2015). But also, and more interestingly, on the level of
plot and narrative interest, all three series—despite their different generic narrative genres—include issues related to the Anthropocene or climate change. What is interesting is how the three series via their relatively conventional visual narrative forms (political thriller, action, horror/mystery), never the less engage with the problem of the Anthropocene and in particular the question of climate change. This I want to investigate by briefly discussing the three series’ opening sequences which turn out to be absolutely crucial, and particularly significant, in what could be called the “Anthropocene presence” in these three series’ openings.

**The opening sequence as pretext**

The opening sequence, also called “opener” or title sequence or television title sequence (Bednarek) occupies an important if often also overlooked place in cinema and TV studies. It may be defined as “a brief audiovisual form (ranging from a few seconds to two minutes in length), which, placed at the beginning of a film and TV programme (either before its start or a few minutes into it), lists production, cast and crew credits and the distributor’s trademark logo.” (Picarelli 2013, 2) Furthermore it “documents the production of the film, it addresses the spectator, leads the way into the diegesis and thematises the screening situation”. (Böhnhke, Hüser, and Stanitzek 2006). And besides providing information it also “marks the beginning, the general mood (Einstimmung), informs on the conducted work”, and all in all often works as a “film in the film” (Böhnhke, Hüser, and Stanitzek 2006).

In recent years the opening sequence’s “commitment to detail, self-reflexive status, high-production values and use of advanced animation technology in fact conflate in a rich audiovisual experience and the object of mounting audience interest.” (Picarelli 2013, 4) This aesthetic, standalone perspective is important but it is at least as important to understand the opening sequence as “a tool of branding and differentiation for premium cable channels” (Picarelli 2013, 7) or in my examples, for national public service networks. Speaking in more formal terms, Stanitzek remarks on a tendency of avant-gardistic opening sequences to ride piggy back on the thematic qualities function as a way of branding the series as well as the national broadcasting companies that produced them.

**Three opening sequences**

The three opening sequences all last between 30 and 60 seconds, and of course they, as has become standard in contemporary quality TV, are much more than a mere presentation of the protagonists/actors or of production credits. Instead they provide entrances into the larger visual narrative while also providing a kind of supplementary material, and using the terminology from above we might say that their “standalone” aesthetic qualities function as a way of branding the series as well as the national broadcasting companies that produced them.

The 40 seconds opening sequence of Swedish *Jordskott* is to a certain extent the most conventional one, and the one that has the least to do with my notion of a pretext opening sequence. The sequence is a computer animated mix consisting of photos, images of old maps, as well as a newspaper clip (stating that the lumber company cuts down thousand-year old woods) side by side with a photo poster with a missing child and a few ominous-looking x-ray images. The final framed photo represents a cut down forest area. In a regular pattern, the images, which almost constantly move slowly towards the left (which, according to conventional visual communication rules, may signify an “unnatural” movement, perhaps signifying a movement back in time), are flooded by a dark, organic matter, indicating
biological, but destructively unhinged, growth. A rhythmic musical theme with choir voices offers medieval associations which combines with a “creaky” sound of growth or perhaps the sound of burning, that adds to the over-all disturbing feeling of the opener.

The environmental aspect seems much in line with the scope of the entire series; the opening sequence suggests, roughly speaking, that the shameful actions of the lumber company have dire consequences for the society of today, causing diseases (suggested by the x-ray photos of lungs infected with a plant-like spread) and even disappearances or abductions (the photo of the missing child). The old maps and drawings and writings add to the impression of a conflict between ancient nature and forms and a modern, industrial reality, the consequences of which the protagonists of the show struggle with. The contemporary environmental problems are turned into a mythology of pre-modern nature religions, and recycling the confusing “eco”-prefix mentioned above we can say that the results of economy has destructive effects on the level of ecology in the small Swedish society, even though in the rest of the show the conventional economical crime plot greatly overshadows the ecological aspects that are clearly pointed to in the opening sequence.

The opening sequence of the Danish Bedrag, lasting just under one minute, is more confusing in terms of its relation to the series’ overall Anthropocene presence. It is very traditional in its presentation of the protagonists in their milieu (office, car workshop, manager’s office), but what is unusual, and interesting for our analytical purposes, is the general conditions of all the persons’ surroundings. Instead of the slow, leftward (often connotating “backward”) movement of the animated mixed image and word constellations of the Jordskott-opening, the general motion in the Bedrag opening sequence is upwards, since the dominant theme is flooding and thus the upward moves of water bubbles, and papers, and the motions in (children’s) hair. The upward movement creates a “sinking” effect, when non-liquid objects are being flooded, suggesting a threatening or dangerous mood. The verbal language in this opener is limited to the credits, and the musical score is a quirky, slow melody, nicely fitting the disturbing visual theme of the sequence. All in all, it is a dreamlike, highly stylized opening sequence, beautifully produced and with a slight surprise or even shock effect connected to the threatening, rising presence of water.

The flooding imagery can be interpreted in two, distinct directions. On the one hand, and in very general terms, the omnipresent water may represent the overall, symbolic crisis: everybody is under water, meaning: unable to escape the ruling conditions. Connecting to the plot of the series (to which opening sequences often relates in a mise-en-abyme relation), Bedrag’s opening sequence suggest that only the figures that master the global finance sectors are the only ones able to “keep their heads above water”. This is represented by the fact that the two major felons in the show, the Swedish contract killer and the powerful head of the board of Energreen, are the only major figures not represented in the flooded scenario. On the other hand, the visual theme of the flooding clearly relates to a major ecological theme in the first season of Bedrag. The fraudulent company, Energreen, is intimately related to global climate change because the technology developed in the company is meant to solve global energy problems and thus effectively end or at least slow down the process that may cause severe rises of water levels all over the world, in particular in low-lying, flat countries like Denmark. However, reading the opening sequence as a kind of forewarning of a future climate disaster following the logic and the plot of the series, will also be influenced by the major outcome of the economic crime story, namely that the ecological firm is a bluff and a fraud. The question is if this larger narrative context possibly effects the viewers’ broader understandings of the notion of a future climate change too? Is it an exaggeration to see in this structure a suggestion that climate change, like the companies concerned with it, is perhaps a hoax?

In other words, Bedrag’s opening sequence initiates a perspective on the consequences of future climate change—the flooding—and it might have induced some kind of guilt or shame in the viewers which could lead to self-critical reflections on contemporary life in Scandinavia. But instead of continuing this thematic tendency the series withdraws the threat by way of the major plotline of the series, where the ecological perspective is rather quickly forgotten. And in the end the ambiguous “eco”/“øko”-aspect has definitely changed from an ecological reminder or even inducer of guilt or shame to a rather conventional economical thriller. A possible feeling of eco-guilt and eco-shame is first proposed and then effectively withdrawn.

In Okkupert’s opener, the up-tempo rock soundtrack as well as the quick editing clearly announces the action and suspense intentions of the entire series. The opening sequence begins with dramatic, documentary footage of typical effects of climate change; ice melting, heavy storms, floods, rescue actions, after which the documentary images gives way to the more conventional presentation of the cast and the complimentary textual information. In the pilot episode, which also includes brief but important references to both the influential Norwegian oil industry as well as Norwegian patriotism or nationalism (in shots from the 17th May celebrations) we are told that a catastrophic hurricane, obviously understood as a sign of climate change, was the main reason behind the political popularity of the Green Party.
The opening sequence as well as the major plot of the series (the occupation by Russian troops as a result of a dramatic change in energy politics) make Okkupert by far the most explicitly outspoken series in terms of climate change and its effects. In the series, the Norwegian Green Party is, we could say, turning eco-guilt into eco-responsibility which results in direct activist decisions: the administration opts to end all fossil fuel production. But once again, and the pattern is of course becoming obvious in my chosen examples, despite the fact that the dramatic effects of climate change are definitely faced and explicitly addressed and represented, most emblematically in the rather unambiguous opening sequence, the major outcome of the series is quite different. The complex and disturbing climate thematic becomes more and more invisible throughout the series and towards the end it has almost entirely disappeared in favour of the much more spectacular and to a certain extent non-disquieting questions of how an occupation by Russian troops in Norway might play off.

The remarkable thing about the three series’ opening sequences is, to sum up, their peculiar, even paradoxical Anthropocene presences. They set out to tap into, or perhaps produce in the spectators, eco-scientific notion of climate change and the Anthropocene—the rather unambiguous opening sequence, the rather unambiguous opening sequence, the more or less conscious idea that even the scientific notion of climate change and the Anthropocene is a hoax. In Norwegian Okkupert the opening sequence’s very clear statements concerning not only the existence, but also the threatening effects, of climate change are, via the plot development, turned into a simple vehicle for the international political thriller plot, thus demonstrating that eco-guilt or shame is the smaller threat as compared to the machinations of cynical international politics. Environmental politics is soft politics as compared to real, Machiavellian politics.

Concluding remarks

The examples are tapping into both a nostalgic representation of a lost nature (Jordskott) and a near future of new energy political situations that may produce dangerous conflicts and dystopian if not exactly traumatic feelings (Bedrag and Okkupert) that may hit the spectators as what has been called “pre-traumatic stress”, that is a feeling of trauma already before traumatic events have taken place. (Kaplan 2015) But what we can probably presume to be average consumers of these three series, will not feel obliged to or forced to experience guilt or shame about his or her lifestyle, about the general situation of the world or about the general political passivity towards climate change. On the contrary, I estimate that most viewers will feel the well-known and longed for relief after the final suspense-driven instalments of the shows: it almost went wrong, but now things are ok (only slightly different in Okkupert’s radical cliff-hanger ending). Or to put it differently, the three series with the initially touched upon climate theme in this sense actually share a position concerning the climate change that may more or less be characterized as climate change denial.

There is, however, a more optimistic way of interpreting the three series’ way of using ecological issues as mere dramaturgic start engines in the opening sequences, as pre-texts in the double sense of the word. From a less pessimistic point of view it can be argued that despite the hesitant or reluctant way of including ecological aspects, the vague presence nevertheless signifies a recognition of the Anthropocene condition. Seen in this way, the presence actually demonstrates a certain, perhaps almost subconscious will to try and induce some measure of (mild?) guilt and shame in the spectators. Seen from this optimistic perspective, the reason why an ecological consciousness does not occupy a more prominent position in the plots is institutional rather than ideological or epistemological: in the capital-intensive TV-producing organisations, storylines including “depressing” and hard-to-solve issues are unusual and difficult to combine with well-known and effective (and thus profitable) narrative strategies. Also, still from an optimistic point of view, it is possible to interpret the Anthropocene presence, downplayed as it may be, simply as a growing consciousness that this is indeed a rising field of interest and even urgency, and that we will therefore see more of this, in more elaborated forms, in future productions.

Signs in other branches of Scandinavian visual popular culture may actually indicate that something is happening. The Swedish show “Zero impact” (running in the Spring of 2017 on Swedish national broadcast), for instance, asks so-called normal families to first estimate their ecological footprints (measured in tons of carbon dioxide per year) and later to cut it down as they best can. A first feeling of surprise and then guilt and
shame is directly transformed into new consumption and behavioural patterns—even if these may not be particularly long lasting. Another example is the Norwegian fictionalised documentary “Skyldig, jeg?” [Guilty, me?] (2016), where a young Norwegian man “living the good life” in “one of the richest countries in the world” (in his own words) makes a journey similar to that of the Swedish families. He researches his personal ecological footprints and this investigation produces strong feelings in him; not only does he understand his actions (climate-guilt) as being disastrous in relation to his ecological footprints, he also feels eco-shame in that even his most basic existence, simply “being-Norwegian”, is per definition leading to unacceptable ecological effects. This, in turn, results in his attempt to establish new habits and a new “good life”, difficult as it is, now with the aim of not only changing individually but also collective by trying to be part of some of the positive climate-friendly trends that he investigates in the programme. The two TV shows both have a critisisable tendency to place most of the guilt on individual people’s shoulders, but admirably they directly face the climate crisis we are living, and thus they may induce productive negative feelings while at the same time work as educational programming.

Should we conclude by saying that in Scandinavia today it is the non-fictional branches of popular culture that dare pose the uncomfortable questions of climate change and the Anthropocene and that fictional visual narratives abstain from both representing and also inducing feelings of guilt and shame that may be necessary if we are to change our behaviour and consumption?

Further investigations needs to be done, obviously, but this negative conclusion does seem to fit the fields of Scandinavian visual narratives. In Scandinavian poetry and prose, however, the question of the Anthropocene and climate change for a while already has been actively and resolutely faced, setting several important agendas and thus rejecting ecology as mere pretexts.8—Hopefully the cinematic and TV narratives are on their way, following the lead of at least some of the rather radical opening sequences I have briefly discussed above.

Notes

1. The exception possibly regarding our relation to food, interior design, and the body: numerous magazines and popular TV-shows teach readers or viewers to feel ashamed if one’s food is not deliciously healthy and look beautiful, if one’s home is not charming, clean and functional—or if one happens to be overweight or perhaps even fat.
2. For a much more elaborated and thoughtful background for some of these opening remarks, see Oxfeldt (2016).
3. This is not so unusual as it may sound at first: to mention one example, the charity campaigns in media and TV, indeed a visual narrative genre in itself, are built on the basic premise that images and film clips integrated into larger popular commercial narratives may create guilt that leads to generosity (measured in donations). For a sophisticated analysis of the ethical and affective aspects of such humanitarian efforts, exemplified by the Danish TV fundraiser “Danmarksindsamlingen 2012”, see Sharma (2013).
4. For a short, useful overview and discussion of this notion, see Rusted (2015).
5. For a short discussion of the term’s appeal and use across disciplines, see Clark 2015. Some of the (numerous) critiques of the concept of the Anthropocene can be found in Malm and Hornborg (2014), Manemann (2014), Malm (2016) and Haraway (2016).
6. From novels (Ian McEwan’s, Solar, for instance) over widely disseminated documentaries (An Inconvenient Truth or Chasing Ice) and to blockbuster movies (Christopher Nolan, Interstellar, to mention one among many). For an overview of the Anglophone literary examples, see Trexler (2015). For a thoughtful critique of why the ecological absence in literature, see Amitav Ghosh’s recent book The great derangement: Climate change and the unthinkable (Ghosh 2016).
7. Climate change is addressed explicitly in the pilot episode by way of a direct verbal description. Two text slides give the following introductory information: Near future The US is self-sufficient in energy Civil wars halted oil production on the Arabian Peninsula Europe is on the verge of an energy crisis … Norway stops all oil and gas production Due to the effects of climate change.
8. Poets like Johannes Helden, Jonas Gren, Theis Ørntoft and Ursula Andkjær Olsen or the novelist Charlotte Weitze comes to mind, as well as the graphic novelist Kristian Hammerstad.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes on contributor

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