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The Intimate Presence of the Future: A thesis on the effects of the imagined future on young climate activists in the Netherlands

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THE INTIMATE PRESENCE OF THE FUTURE
A thesis on the effects of the imagined future on
young climate activists in the Netherlands

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Abstract

Within anthropological studies about climate activists (Cassegård & Thörn, 2018; Haugestad et al., 2021; Knops, 2023; Spyrou et al., 2022; Weij, 2022, i.a.), the way they imagine the future is often overlooked (Haugestad et al., 2021), even though this imagined future could be seen as the incentive for their actions. Taking this into account, the main objective of this article is to explore the imagined future of young climate activists in the Netherlands and the effect that the imagined future had on their lives in the present. The article is based on ethnographic fieldwork in the Netherlands among climate activists connected to the Extinction Rebellion movement. Through visual ethnography, in-depth interviews, experimental ethnography, participant observation and a reflective group video elicitation interview, I researched the present-day experiences of the activists from a future-focused approach. In doing so I answered my main research question: *How does the imagined future of young climate activists affect their lives in the present?* My main finding is that to the activists, the imagined future is intimately present in their lives, intertwined with their present experiences regarding their worldview, their affect, and the way they organize and devote their lives. With this research I hope to create more understanding of the experiences and motives of climate activists.

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Introduction

In his room, where every inch of the wall is covered with an activism-related poster, Sebastiaan shares with me and the camera why he dreaded doing this interview. The first interview, a few weeks before, was tough on him, talking about the future was heavier than he expected. Still, Sebastiaan went ahead with the second interview, arguing that it was important to share his and his generation's story.

“I think it's good for me to articulate these feelings and to share it with others. To share what I as an activist am concerned with, and with me many others of my generation. The worries that live in the back of our head, but that we can't share because society doesn't listen to us. The general idea is, that it's going to be all right. But it's not, it's not going to be all right.” - Sebastiaan, February 7, 2023.

Problem definition, motivation, societal relevance

In this article, I research a group of young climate activists in the Netherlands and their image of the future regarding the climate crisis. Using ethnography, I explore young climate activists' present-day experience from a future-focused approach. The imagined future is more than just a dystopian view of the future that concerned them. To the activists, the imagined future is intimately present in their lives, intertwined with their present experiences regarding their worldview, their affect, and the way they organize and devote their lives.

In this research, I focus on the climate movement in the Netherlands. This is a societally relevant topic, since in Western countries, there has been a rise in climate activism in the last decade. More people from the Global North are concerned with climate change and see the world that we live in as a state of crisis. It has been argued that we currently live in a state of crisis, while at the same time the global climate policy is insufficient to tackle this crisis¹. This has been an incentive for climate movements to rise, with more and more people joining because of their concerns for the future.

It is especially relevant to research the imagined future of young climate activists in the Global North. This group has seen climate disasters happening around the world throughout their childhood and they will experience climate disasters in their future life. Through this research I show that young climate activists are concerned about their future and the future of their world. Still, as my interlocutor argued, there is little room for the concerns of this group, which makes researching the imagined future of young climate activists more relevant.

¹ The world we live in is in a state of emergency (UNEP, n.d.), and for millions of people this climate crisis is already a reality in everyday life, with “ninety percent of refugees under UNHCR's mandate (...) come from countries on the front lines of the climate emergency.” (UNHCR, 2021). At the same time, the Paris Agreement “the most significant global climate agreement to date”, does not help enough to prevent global warming of 1.5 degrees Celsius (Maizland, 2022). If we reach this global temperature, “the world will suffer devastating consequences, such as heat waves and floods.” (ibid.).

Climate activism in the Global North has existed since the 1970s (Jamison, 2010, p. 881) and still, global agreements like the Paris Agreement of 2015, do not help to prevent global warming to exceed 1.5 degrees (Maizland, 2022). With this research I hope to create more understanding on the experiences of climate activists and the deeper motives behind climate activism. Understanding the emotional and personal reasoning behind climate action might help to reinforce the actions, whereby I contribute to the climate movement.

I found an interest in the imagined future of climate activists through my own concerns with the future regarding climate change. My own imagined future affected me emotionally and became an incentive for making new life-choices and engaging in climate activism. At the beginning of my research, I intended to focus more on the emotional effects of the imagined future on the climate activists, whereby I wanted to use the concept Solastalgia (Albrecht, 2005), but it turned out that this concept did not comprise the experiences I found in the field, so I did not include this concept in this article. I did find that, to the activists, the way their worldview changed was important to them. This is why I dedicated a chapter to the way their worldview changed and how this related to ‘catastrophism’ and living in an ‘undesired world’.

Research framework, conceptual model, academic relevance

With this article, I contribute to the existing knowledge on imagined futures, ‘catastrophism’ and climate activism and take part in the academic discussion of the anthropology of the future. The anthropology of the future is a future-focused approach to ethnography (Pink & Salazar, 2020). By analyzing the way people see the future, one can make arguments about the experiences of their present (Pels, 2015). I analyze the activists’ life-worlds through the time-scape of the future. I explore the imagined futures and how this affects the activists, how they cope with this, and how the imagined future affects the way they organize and devote their lives. This will generate knowledge about the life-worlds of climate activists.

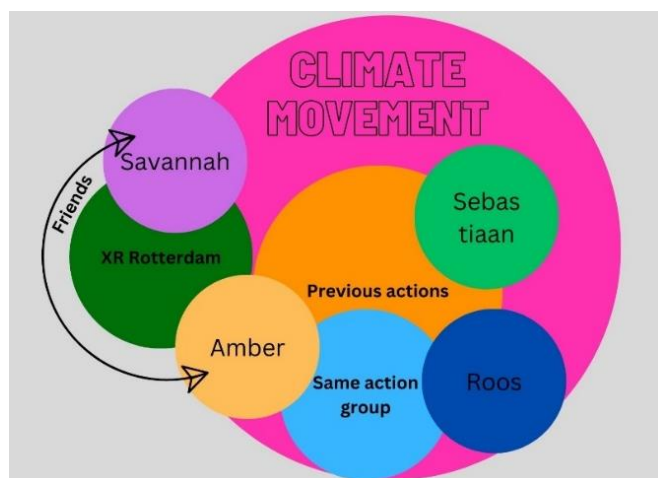
Within anthropological studies about climate activists (Cassegård & Thörn, 2018; Haugestad et al., 2021; Knops, 2023; Spyrou et al., 2022; Weij, 2022, i.a.), the way that they imagine the future is often overlooked (Haugestad et al., 2021, p. 6), even though this imagined future could be seen as the incentive for their actions. This makes the main objective of my research, exploring the imagined future of climate activists in the Netherlands, academically relevant. I analyzed the effect this imagined future had on their lives in the present, whereby I emphasized the importance of using temporality when analyzing activism. I analyzed the imagined futures of the activists by using the concept catastrophism and argued that their imagined futures are dystopian (Krøijer, 2020; Asayama, 2015). I analyzed the meaning of climate activism to the activists and argued that climate change was an incentive to create societal change (Pearse et al., 2010, p. 76).

Research area, population, sample

The research area of my article is the climate movement in the Netherlands, specifically the Extinction Rebellion movement. Extinction Rebellion (XR) is an international climate movement that rose in the Netherlands the last few years after its first bigger actions in Utrecht and Groningen on 7 March 2019 in the form of a ‘die-in’ (Zoelen, 2019). XR is an environmentalist movement that strives to get the government and big companies to take measurements against climate change and to protect citizens².

The sample of people I researched were young adults (18 to 25) who have been active in the climate movement for several years. I focused on this group because of their interesting position in life. People in this age group are often at a point where they make life choices about the rest of their lives, while they also have their whole life in front of them.

After talking to several people in the movement, and researching the movement through social media, I choose four central interlocutors that represented diverse experiences within the climate movement. These four interlocutors are Amber, Roos, Savannah and Sebastiaan. Amber (they/them) is 24, is from Rotterdam and has been active with XR since they were 18. Amber is an experienced climate activists and has a unique position because of their involvement. They have a negative perspective on the future, self-described as “not so hopeful”. Their insights are a relevant contribution to my research. Roos (she/her) is 22, lives in Amsterdam and has been active within XR for a year and has been active with the Fridays for Future movement since she was 17. Through her connection to the youth climate movement Fridays for Future, and her experiences from a youth-focused perspective, her insights are relevant to my research. Savannah (she/her) is 21, lives in Rotterdam and has been active with XR for over two years. She internalized her role as a climate activist, whereby her experiences and imagined future were more unconscious, which give an interesting perspective for my research. Sebastiaan (he/they) is 22, lives in Amsterdam and has been active with XR since he was 19. He has a unique perspective in the sense that he expresses his experiences from both an emotional, as well as an academic perspective. The four interlocutors are connected by the climate movement, and know each other from previous actions, from subgroups and action groups.



² The Dutch branch of XR (XRNL) is organized independently from the international movement.

Research questions

Through an ethnographic analysis I unpack the imagined future of the activists and work towards an answer to my research question: *How does the imagined future of young climate activists affect their lives in the present?*

After a literature review where I set out related research and define the anthropology of the future and the concepts catastrophism and climate activism, I explain the methodology of my research. Hereafter I set out my ethnographic analysis through four sections; (1) imagined future, (2) undesired world, (3) effects of the imagined future and (4) turning despair into agency. With each section I answer a sub-question and each sub-question will lead to answering my main research question. In the first section I go into the imagined future of the activists and answer the question *What is the imagined future of the activists regarding the climate crisis and their own lives?* The imagined future was described as “unclear” and “insecure”, and the descriptions consisted of lists of ecological disasters and the consequences that humanity will experience. In the second section I focus on the changing worldview of the activists and answer the question: *How did the worldview of the activists change and how does this relate their imagined future and the experience of living in an undesired world?* The activists experienced a change in their worldview, and their worldview shifted permanently towards a negative outlook that is characterized by an experience of living in an undesired world. In the third section I analyze the effects of the imagined future on the activists, and the way they coped with this. I answer the question: *How does the imagined future affect the activists and how do they cope with this?* The emotional effects of the imagined future on the activists alternated between (consciously and unconsciously) distancing themselves from the imagined future and being overwhelmed with the emotional effect of the imagined future. They coped with the effects by distancing themselves from the facts and emotions around the imagined future, living in the present, and finding hope and strength in community and activism. In the last section I focus on climate activism and the way the activists devote and organize their lives and I answer the question: *How does the imagined future affect the way the activists organize and devote their lives in the present?* The activists found hope and optimism in climate actions, and they were intimately intertwined with imagined future in the way they organized their life around the imagined future and devoted their life to fighting the climate crisis. Lastly, I will summarize my arguments in the conclusion.

Multimodal synthesis

For my audiovisual output I created an ethnographic film about the four climate activists and their experiences with the imagined future and climate activism. The goal of this audiovisual thesis is to make the invisible experiences of the imagined future visible and show the effect that this imagined future has on the climate activists. I created the film for both an academic audience, as well as a broader, public, audience. I intend to submit it to film festivals and to the Dutch public broadcasting platform for

documentaries ‘2Doc’ by NPO2. I tried to make the film more accessible by bringing the argument of my film across through personal stories. I wanted to give a face to the climate activism movement, and I hope to create understanding for the movement.

The connection between audiovisual thesis and this article, is that they are about the same research, and formed by the same ethnographic material. The audiovisual thesis and this article are different in a sense that they have different claims. While this article conceptualized the experiences of the activists and argues that the imagined future is intimately present in their lives, intertwined with their present experiences, the audiovisual thesis works to visualize the imagined future and show the effects of this imagined future to the activists.

Literature review

Related research

While this article mostly relies on the ethnographic findings of my research, it is important to contextualize my arguments within the existing debates of the research. I researched the imagined future of climate activists and argue that the imagined future was intimately intertwined with their present-day experiences. Previous anthropological studies on climate activists have not dealt with the imagined future and its effects in the present. There is however a relatively small body of literature that is concerned with the imagined future and/or climate activists, which helped me form my argument.

Dutch young adults are motivated to join climate activism groups by the knowledge of climate change, personal values, and emotional experiences (Weij, 2022). Once they join the climate movement, their ideas about the world change. Apocalyptic images of future catastrophes dominate within the environmentalist discourse, but these ideas are challenged by the knowledge that in the Global South the catastrophe is already ongoing (Cassegård & Thörn, 2018). These young people are impacted by the climate crisis and the future of the crisis in a sense that they experience feelings of uncertainty regarding the future (Graj, 2020). To deal with this effect, this generation needs a clear, positive image of the future, otherwise they will experience despair and anxiety about the future (ibid.). Young climate activists struggled to manage the fear and despair by creating a collective sense of hope and work towards a more just and sustainable future (Spyrou et al., 2022). This is why focusing on affects and emotions is important in understanding the “political implications of the temporal landscapes drawn by climate activists” (Knops, 2023, p. 203-204). In this article, I elaborate on this body of literature and argue how the imagined future of young climate activists in the Netherlands affect their lives in the present.

Anthropology of the future & imagined future

The anthropology of the future entails a way of analyzing the interlocutor's experiences in the present by means of researching the way the interlocutor imagined the future. Pels (2015) and Pink & Salazar (2020) defined this idea of the anthropology of the future, and call for a future-focused approach, which is needed to understand the present. In this article I answer this call and contribute to anthropology of the future in a sense that I researched the present-day experiences of climate activists from a future-focused approach. I do so by researching the imagined futures of climate activists.

The 'imagined future' is inherently connected to the present (Spyrou et al., 2022, p. 734). Suckert (2022) defined imagined futures as the "...perceptions and representations of a future that is yet to come..." (p. 394) and argued that imagined futures help us understand societies in the present. In this article, I define the imagined future as an imagination of what the world will look like to the interlocutor. This image has a particular effect on the interlocutor, and thereby affects their experiences in the present. In this sense, the imagined future is a result of the experiences of the interlocutor, as well an actor, affecting the interlocutors' experiences.

The anthropology of the future comprises the effects of the future on the present (Pels, 2015, p. 789). The way people perceive and represent the future influences the way they exist and act in the present, through which looking at the future becomes a social action (Taddei, 2013, p. 244-245). In this sense, imagining the future becomes a way of experiencing the reality in the present (Ingold, 1993). Doing future-focused ethnography, entails both the anticipation to the future, as well as the experiences in the present (Pink, 2020, p. 147). This makes the imagined future relevant in researching climate change activism, since the imagined future of climate change can be informative about the present-day experiences of climate change.

Catastrophism & undesired world

The imagined futures of the activists were drawn by catastrophic imaginaries and experiences of living in an 'undesired world', the concept 'catastrophism' clarifies these experiences. Catastrophism can broadly be defined as the experiences and imaginations related to disasters and catastrophes.

Catastrophism is defined by Beck (2015) as the idea that modernization is not about human progress, but about the collapse of society in this age drawn by climate change. The idea that humans are the masters of the universe has collapsed due to climate change, and modernization is not seen as progress anymore, but as an apocalypse or catastrophe (p. 75). Catastrophism is not a new idea, Sweatman (2017) argues that the idea that our world will undergo severe catastrophes has existed since the beginning of human history (p. 1). The modern version of catastrophism evolved out of scientific revival after the renaissance and evolved in geology and evolutionary biology (p. 1-2).

According to Maelshagen (2015), there is little interdisciplinary consensus on the definitions of disaster and catastrophe (p. 172). They argue that it is problematic to define a disaster or catastrophe as natural, because it blocks out the human factor in causing the disaster (p. 177-178). A catastrophe can be seen as a turn downward, “a disruption of the present, the biological annihilation of both nature and humankind” (Horn, 2018, p. 227). In this sense, the imagined catastrophic future is both a medium self-reflection, as well as “an imperative for preventive action” (ibid.).

The discourse around climate change is predominantly determined by fear and the fear about the future climate (Asayama, 2015, p. 89). Among climate activists, “apocalyptic imagining” (ibid.) is prevalent in the sense that activists describe society as we know it today as a dystopia, which is a consumerist world with overexploitation of nature, leading to an environmental collapse (Krøijer, 2020). A dystopia is “an undesired or frightening society or place” (Krøijer, 2020, p. 48). In this sense, according to Krøijer, for climate activists the dystopia is not in the future, but in our current society, meaning that it is an ‘undesired world’ that must be repressed politically and that must be avoided (p. 49). This notion is relevant for my argumentation, since the interlocutors experienced living in an undesired world, and turned this experience into climate action, to repress the undesired world.

Climate activism & agency

Understanding climate activism and how it relates to agency will help me understand the effect the imagined future has on the interlocutors. Del Rio (2017) defines climate activism as a social movement that is formed around four principles, which are crisis mitigation, social change, collective organizing, and individual agency. Activist research gives the opportunity to combine cultural critique with political action for knowledge production (Speed, 2006). Climate activism can be used to explore how people are engaged with climate change, and how, through this, “imagined forms of social connection” are created for a sustainable society (Del Rio, 2017, p. 16).

Agency as a concept can be used to understand climate activism. Pearse et al. (2010) argue that “global warming poses very directly the question of human agency” (p. 76). Climate activism can be seen as a bridge between the daily troubles of society and a detached external perspective, which created an imagination to create change in society (ibid.). It is necessary for climate activism that one is emotionally involved in the subject, to gain social agency (Topolarova, 2017, p. 89). In the case of my research, the interlocutors turned the negative effects of the imagined future into climate action, therefore gaining social agency.

Methodology and research process

Research process

I conducted my research between the 3rd of January and the 11th of March 2023. During this period, I used a variety of research methods. In the first weeks I started with semi-structured interviews with the four interlocutors. These interviews were the base layers of my research on which I build the following interviews. After these interviews I conducted the in-depth interviews, and I explored their imagined future through an experimental method I called ‘visualizing and materializing’ (VM), where through collaboration and creative methods the interlocutor expressed their imagined future. The results of these two methods became the base of the argumentation of this article. I filmed these interviews and VM session to use for my analysis and to use in my audiovisual thesis. In-between these methods, I conducted participant observations on various occasions. I completed the research with a reflective group video-elicitation interview, where the different experiences were connected.

Semi-structured interviews

The semi-structured interviews were helpful in getting to know the interlocutors and to explore their different experiences surrounding the imagined future and climate activism. I conducted one semi-structured interview with each interlocutor that I only recorded the audio from and made notes of. I conducted the interview either in a cafe or at the interlocutor’s home.

The goal of semi-structured interviews is to reveal different cultural meanings of the interlocutors and to explore aspects of the perceived culture (Gobo, 2008, p. 3). During the interview, we were able to discuss their personal experiences. The interlocutors were keen to share their experiences and they trusted me enough to share their emotions around the imagined future. They explained their meaning of climate activism and shared the way they imagined the future and how they formed this imagined future. The interviews were longer and more in-depth than expected. These interviews led towards the in-depth interviews and VM sessions.

In-depth life story interviews

The in-depth interviews turned out to be the core of my research that generated the knowledge that I based most of the argumentation of my article on.

The aim of in-depth interviews is to gain knowledge on the “authentic insight” into the interlocutor’s experience (Silverman, 1993, p. 91). According to Crouch & McKenzie (2006), in-depth interviews focus on the perceptions and feelings of the interlocutor, instead of the social conditions around the experiences (p. 485). I used the in-depth interviews to gain knowledge on the authentic experiences of the interlocutors and to understand the perceptions and feelings of the interlocutors. I did so by tuning into the following topics during the interviews; their daily life, their first contact with climate activism,

their role within the XR movement, their meaning of climate activism, the influence of their youth and social environment on their worldview, comparing their imagined future before and after joining the climate movement, the moment when their worldview changed, the way they imagined future and how they formed this image, and the effects of this imagined future.

The in-depth interviews were long, and the interlocutors experienced them as intense. The duration of the interviews was around 1.5 and 2 hours. The interviews were valuable for my research, especially because the interlocutors were able to be open about personal and emotional experiences. I filmed the interview with both my handheld camera and a camera on a tripod.

Visualizing and materializing

I designed the visualizing and materializing sessions as an open method where through collaboration, the session was designed towards the experiences and needs of the interlocutor. I set out some possibilities to the interlocutors that were closely related to photo, video, drawing and music elicitation interviews and walk along interviews. This research method can best be categorized as ‘experimental ethnography’ which is defined as ‘allegorical discourse’, where the researcher can overcome the binary between the viewer and the viewed (Russell, 1999). I used experimental ethnography to research the imagined futures of the interlocutors and I used it in combination with collaboration to create agency for the interlocutors. The collaboration helped me to overcome the binary opposition between me as a researcher and the interlocutors.

I designed every VM together with the interlocutor in collaboration, so it suited them personally, and so it suited the way they expressed themselves emotionally. With Amber and Savannah, I asked them to bring something that reminded them of their imagined future, which I turned into an elicitation interview. With Amber, I did a music-elicitation interview, with Savannah I did a photo-elicitation interview with her own photo’s. Roos painted her future, which was an incentive to explain the imagined future. With Sebastiaan I did a walk-along interview in his favorite park, while we reflected on the effect of nature on him. I filmed these VM sessions to analyze in this article and to use it in my audiovisual thesis to form the argument. The VM sessions helped me to gain knowledge on the imagined future of the interlocutors and the effects and emotions that this imagined future elicited.

Participant observation

I conducted participant observation during my research period on both social events related to XR, as well as climate actions organized by XR. I attended a community weekend, a few social gatherings, joined one interlocutor while pasting political stickers, and attended two A12 blockades³. I filmed most

³ A series of actions by XR to stop fossil fuel subsidies by the government (Gençsü et al., 2017). During these actions, the A12 road that sits between de Dutch parliament and the Ministry of Climate and Economic Affairs is blocked by a group of XR activists.

of the events to use in my audiovisual thesis and for analysis in this article. During one of the two A12 blockades, I gave a bodycam to Amber and Roos to wear and film with during the action. I analyzed this footage, which gave me a unique insight into their experience during the action.

Participant observation is an important method of ethnography and requires the researcher to take part in a community while also observing and taking mental, written - or in the case of visual ethnography - audiovisual notes, to create theoretically informed observations (O'Reilly, 2009, p. 2). I took part in climate actions and community events and experienced the effects of these events myself. These personal experiences helped me in the analysis of my findings.

Reflective group video-elicitation interview

At the end of my research, I brought all four interlocutors together and conducted a group video elicitation interview. I showed a few clips I shot during the research process that would elicit information and reflection from the interlocutors. I gave them the opportunity to compare each other's experiences by showing the core arguments of the research.

For this method I used theories on photo-elicitation to support the method video-elicitation. Photo-elicitation interviews evoke specific emotions, knowledge and memories that are elicited by the form and representation of the photo (Harper, 2002, p. 13). Photo-elicitation interview produce new opportunities and different kinds of information and it can create experiences that touch a deeper consciousness (ibid.), which means that with photo or video elicitation, one can go beyond language to trigger emotions, memories, and experiences. Through video elicitation I created space for reflection that went beyond these barriers. The interlocutors gave meaning to their experiences and connected them to each other's experiences and even connected them to societal issues. It also created a moment of reflection on the research process.

Ethical dimensions

My research was sensitive because of the emotionally vulnerable aspects. My main objective regarding ethical dimensions, was to minimize harm to the interlocutors or the people around them. This is an important ethical dimension within Anthropology (Rasch et al., 2018, p 1.). The measures I took were: preparing the interlocutor, respecting their boundaries, proposing to have breaks during interviews and aftercare after the interviews. Still, the interlocutors experienced the interviews as heavy and draining, it affected them emotionally⁴. The interlocutors were able to give informed consent. I was transparent about my research and the methods towards the interlocutors, and I checked in regularly if they still gave consent in participating in the research. I managed my data securely and made sure no data was leaked.

⁴ I will elaborate on this in the ethnographic analysis.

After I created the rough cut, I shared a version of film with the interlocutors and gave them the opportunity to give feedback and suggestions for adjustments. Within the editing process I considered that my film suited both academic as well as broader audiences, hereby I hope to prevent decontextualization and wrong interpretations of my film. Through this, my research was according to Crowder and Marion's list of visual ethics (Marion & Crowder, 2013).

Positionality and influence of camera

Personally, I partake in the climate movement and in a way, I am a climate activist⁵. During the research process I distanced myself from the movement and took on a researcher's role.

I engaged with the interlocutors in a co-creative way, and I was open about the research process and the way the film could be interpreted. The interlocutors had a say in which direction the research went⁶, and I tried to be on an equal level with them.

My research affected the interlocutors, and the fact that I filmed the research with the intention of distributing the film to a broader audience, affected the way the interlocutors presented themselves. At times, the interlocutors anticipated that they said and the attitude they had on-camera, to the intended audience. They thought about how they came across to the intended audience and how this would affect the audience and the way they would position themselves towards the climate crisis⁷.

Ethnographic analysis

I argue that to the activists, the imagined future is intimately present in their lives, intertwined with their present experiences regarding their worldview, their affect, and the way they organize and devote their lives. To the activists, the imagined future is "unclear", "insecure" and drawn by ecological disasters and the consequences that humanity will experience from these disasters. The activists experienced a change in their worldview, and their worldview shifted permanently towards a negative outlook that was characterized by an experience of living in an undesired world. The emotional effects of the imagined future on the activists alternated between (consciously and unconsciously) distancing themselves from the imagined future and being overwhelmed with the emotional effect of the imagined future. They coped with the effects by distancing themselves from the facts and emotions around the imagined future, living in the present, and finding hope and strength in community and activism. The activists were intimately intertwined with imagined future in the way they organized their life around the imagined future and devoted their life to fighting the climate crisis.

⁵ Before this research, I took part in a few climate actions, I live according to what I believe will help the environment, and I socially engage in the climate movement.

⁶ One example is, that I let the interlocutors choose how they formed the VM session.

⁷ I will elaborate on this in the ethnographic analysis.

In this ethnographic analysis I set out my research results and work towards answering my research question within four sections. These sections are: 1) imagined future, 2) undesired world, 3) effects of the imagined future and 4) turning despair into agency.

1. Imagined future

I will explain how the interlocutors imagined the future, and how they formed this image. I analyzed the present experiences of the interlocutors from a future-focused perspective (Pels, 2015; Pink, 2020). The way the interlocutors imagined the future formed the way they exist and act in the present (Taddei, 2013).

During the interviews, I asked the interlocutors how they imagined the future, and I did so in an open way. This turned into different meanings of the imagined future from each interlocutor, that varied between their personal future, within their own lifetime, to the future of the world and all the people that live in this world, to imaginary dystopian futures, with a focus on future disasters. Each meaning was personal to the interlocutor and connected to their worldview.

The sub-question I will answer in this section is: *What is the imagined future of the activists regarding the climate crisis and their own lives?*

Imagining the future

The interlocutors had a reluctance to express the imagine future, and during the interviews they struggled to formulate the image verbally. Terms that came forth in explaining the future were “unclear” and “insecure”. Within the social environment of the interlocutors, the future was not often discussed. Some interlocutors explained I was the first person to ask them how they saw the future. The general description of the imagined future by the interlocutors was a frightening world of insecurity and suffering. The interlocutors nuanced their description by arguing that within their own lives, the impact will be limited, due to their privileged position in the Netherlands.

Savannah explained other reasons why she rarely thought about the future, which was (1) she found it too confronting to talk about it, and (2) she could not imagine what the future would look like. When she thought about the future, she could only think of the many possibilities. For Amber and Savannah, the insecurity within the imagined future was also about the timespan of how the future will turn out, which made it hard to “predict” the future. Savannah and Roos both imagined that in the future, things that are normal to them now, will not be normal anymore.

Within the interviews, it took some time for the interlocutor to come to a point where they could describe the future they did image, beyond the insecurity that came with it. All four interlocutors described the future by listing crises that they imagined would happen in the future. This list consisted of ecological disasters and their consequences for humanity. The list of ecological disasters consisted of more

“extremes”, droughts, heat waves, storms, failed harvests, floods, extinction of animal species and nature, and the extinction of humans. Within this, the interlocutors named the importance of ‘tipping points’⁸. The list of consequences on humanity consisted of water shortage, famines, people losing homes, food uncertainty, war, conflicts, pandemics, flows of refugees, instability overall and suffering overall. To Roos, life would look like “surviving”. Sebastiaan described how he imagined climate change would create societal change. He imagined that due to climate change, there will be so much stress on the world system, that it will collapse. He also described that he expected that there will be more polarization and that people will harden towards others.

Forming the imagined future

What experiences, knowledge and realizations formed their image of the future? During the interviews, the interlocutors explained the forming of this image as a personal story that formed who they are. They told this story without me initiating the topic, which is telling about the significance of this background story of the imagined future. The stories of how the interlocutors connected to the knowledge or realization of the climate crisis were different per interlocutor. Among all the interlocutors, they found it important to convince me that their image of the future was not created out of thin air, that they relayed on sources, and that their connection to this knowledge was personal.

Roos formed her image of the future by connecting to her West-Papuan heritage. In school she gave a presentation about her heritage, through which she realized that the indigenous way of life on West-Papua was “kinder” for the planet than the way of life she knew. She wished she could live more like this indigenous lifestyle. In 2019 she encountered Fridays for Future and Greta Thunberg and learned about the significance of the situation and about the climate change movement.

Amber connected to climate change knowledge when they became politically active. Climate change was an important topic in the political spheres back then and they wanted to be able to join the discussions. They read a book that changed their life: *How are we going to explain this?* by Jelmer Mommers. This book shocked them and changed their worldview. After this, they started reading and learning more about the climate crisis. Books and scientific information formed their imagined future. When they saw and read about the unfolding of the climate crisis in the present, they also saw how society reacted to this; “insufficiently”.

Savannah also formed her image of the future based on what she sees in the world in the present. She predicts that what is already happening in the Global South, will also happen in the Global North. What is already happening in the Global South will continue and worsen, according to Savannah. She

⁸ Tipping points: a point at which an ecological change cannot be changed and reinforces itself and other tipping points (e.g., melting of polar caps, Amazon rainforest diebacks).

encountered climate change knowledge mainly through people within her community and XR, and through her sister.

Sebastian also encountered climate change knowledge through XR. Here he learned from the ‘Heading for Extinction’ speech, an event by XR. This shocked him and he was quickly convinced and joined the movement. After a while he learned more about climate change through reading scientific articles. He expects that the reality of the future will be worse than climate science predicts. He learned from his own experience of being part of the ‘bad luck generation’⁹ that the outcome will be worse than the expectation.

2. Undesired world

In this section I will go into the worldview of the interlocutors, how their worldview changed and how they experience living in the world now. In doing so I use the concept ‘catastrophism’ to explain their experience of living in an undesired world. The interlocutors experienced a turn downward in their worldview when they compared their worldview from before to now. While before they saw a future full of opportunities, they now see the future as a dystopia; an undesired world (Krøijer, 2020). This disruption of their worldview became an incentive for climate action. This change in their worldview was experienced as something irreversible; after “knowing the truth” about climate change, this knowledge could not be undone, even though, as I will state in the next section, the interlocutors would like to distance themselves from this knowledge.

The sub-question I answer in this section is: *How did the worldview of the activists change and how does this relate their imagined future and the experience of living in an undesired world?*

Changing worldviews

During the interviews, the interlocutors described their worldview when they were younger, how this changed and what their worldview is now, compared to before. This change in their worldview could be declared by a change in awareness about the state of crisis in the world regarding climate change.

The interlocutors describes that their worldview before this change in awareness was drawn by carelessness and a sense of freedom. They believed that they could do everything they wanted with their lives. Roos described this experience by comparing it with the children’s books¹⁰ she read when she was younger, that showed her that she could determine her future. This belief faded after she learned about

⁹ ‘Bad luck generation, or ‘pechgeneratie’ is a Dutch term for a generation that is now between 20 and 28 that lived through a series of crises in the Netherlands (pandemic, energy crisis, economic crises, housing crises etc.) and who just missed out on opportunities provided by the government (student grants, housing benefit, energy crisis compensation etc.)

¹⁰ Roos named the books ‘Kinderen van moeder aarde’ by Thea Beckman and ‘Ronia, the Robber's Daughter’ by Astrid Lindgren.

the climate crisis. She now believes that polluting companies determine her future, which gives her feelings of powerlessness. Amber had similar experiences. When they were younger, they felt like their future existed independent from influencing factors. Now they believe that “outside factors” determine their future and the possibilities they have in their future life.

Sebastian experiences a loss in trust in “grownups” and authoritative figures. Before he became aware of the state of the world, he believed that the climate crisis was “not that bad”. He thought that if it was that bad, the “grownups” (meaning the government or authorities in the world) would do something about it. Over the years he saw that this did not happen, while he also started to see the truth of how bad the climate crisis was. This resulted in him losing trust in these authoritative figures, the government, and the idea that we are in an exponential growth of progression.

The interlocutors also used to believe that the world would only get better, which later changed into the idea that the world would only get worse. This corresponds to Beck’s (2015) idea of catastrophism, where modernization is seen as a catastrophe. Seeing the world and the future as a catastrophe, is something that affects the interlocutors permanently. This is also what Savannah described, she compared it to Pandora’s Box; once she knew about the true state of the world, she could not “unsee” it. This means that the change in her worldview was irreversible and affected her permanently.

Turning point in worldview

The interlocutors expressed that there were moments in their life where their worldview shifted. These determining moments changed their life experience to living in an undesired world. These were moments where they realized the urgency and seriousness of the climate crisis. These turning points affected the interlocutors permanently and were like thresholds, or paradigm shifts. These were the moments that shaped the imagined future of the interlocutors.

This shift in worldviews is experienced by many people of the interlocutors’ generation, as Sebastian argued. He described this as a moment where people’s equilibrium is broken and the realization floods over them. His theory about why this happens, is that people can’t grasp a process that has been going on for decades, which results in “moments of panic” (“paniekmomenten”).

Amber had such a moment of realization when they read the book by Jelmer Mommers. They were shocked by the information because the knowledge came all at once. Their worldview was drastically changed. They recollected this moment and described that after reading the book, they had to go back to university and felt estranged from the world around them. After this realization, they went through a grieving process about their previous imagined future, and the freedom that they experienced before the realization. Later into their activism career, Amber had another realization moment that changed their worldview. Before, they believed that doing a few actions would create awareness, after which change would come. When Amber realized that the activism had not such effect, they realized two things, which

they called “two switches” (“twee schakelingen”). The first one was, that Amber realized that the climate crisis is already here, it is not something of the future. The second one was, that not everyone wants to change the world to prevent the crisis from getting worse. These two switches changed their perspective on activism. They now believe that complete systemic change is needed to limit the effects of the climate crisis, which they see as an unreachable goal. This loss in hope in activism created a different goal of activism to Amber. Their main goal of activism now is seeing friends and experiencing hope through community, instead of radical change.

Living in an undesired world

The interlocutors expressed that after the realization of the urgency of the climate crisis, their worldview changed. They now see the world as ‘undesired’, something that must be changed to be content in it. The way the world is now, is not a world they can live in. It is a world of injustice and suffering, of crisis and catastrophe, and at the same time, many people in their direct surrounding do not see this. They experience a discrepancy between them seeing “the truth about the injustice and suffering” (Amber), while to their social surrounding this injustice and suffering is invisible. Amber reacts to this by surrounding themselves with people who do see the injustice and suffering, so they don’t feel the discrepancy. Savannah experienced something similar, she feels the need to surround herself with people who engage in climate activism, because it gives her feelings of hope, knowing that there are more people who have the same experience, the experience of an undesired world. Sebastiaan expressed that he and his generation are not taken seriously in their worries about the future. He argues that for him and his generation there is no possibility for a better world. He argues that there is no space for worries about the future in society, since the general narrative is, that the world will get better. Sebastiaan does not see the world this way, therefore he feels like there is no place for him in society. He feels like there are no prospects of a better life, of a career, of fulfilling wishes for him. This results in him experiencing a distance from society as he knew it, that promised a better future, and this to him feels like loneliness.

3. Effects of imagined future

During my research I saw the different effects that talking and thinking about the imagined future had on the interlocutors. My research and the fact that I filmed the research with the intention of showing the audiovisual product to a larger audience, influenced the interlocutors. There were different ways in which the interlocutor coped with the emotional effect of the imagined future.

The sub-question I answer in this section is: *How does the imagined future affect the activists and how do they cope with this?*

Emotional effect of the imagined future

Talking and thinking about the imagine future had emotional effects on the interlocutors. The effect alternated between distancing from the imagined future and being overwhelmed with emotions about

the imagined future. Distancing from the imagined future was both conscious and unconscious and which came hand in hand with avoiding the emotions about the imagined future. Being overwhelmed was experienced as too much to handle, which resulted in the interlocutor choosing to distance themselves from the imagined future and the emotion. This dynamic is well explained by Roos, who explained she felt despair when thinking about this future. She found that this despair “shuts her down”, it paralyzes her emotionally and it takes away her ability to look forward (“Dan wordt mijn zicht ontnomen.”). She describes it as a “big angry cloud” (“grote boze wolk”) that is always at the back of her head. If she gives too much attention to the despair (“big angry cloud”), it will overtake her. That is why she chooses to consciously distance herself from the despair, to not let it be her “whole world”. She knows that if she lets the “big angry cloud” overtake her, she will not be able to live. At the same time, the constant reminder of the despair is an incentive for her to fight for her future.

Savannah expressed that she barely thought about the future, and that my research was the first time she thoroughly thought about the future and her life within this future. My theory is that she unconsciously distanced herself from the imagined future, because later in our interview she expressed the anxiety that the future gave her. Amber argued that they consciously distance themselves from the imagined future. They expressed that they felt mixed emotions of anxiety, despair, anger, sadness and grief when thinking about the future. The emotional effect got stronger after negative events, like climate disasters in the world, or failed climate actions. Amber experienced the emotion in “gusts”, something they can’t overcome, and they fall into a “spiral of negative thoughts”. They try to give themselves room for this emotion, but also try to distance themselves from the emotion, to be able to live in their daily life. Sebastiaan argued he experienced two different situations with different emotional effects regarding the climate crisis. He divided it in indirect and direct experiences of the climate crisis. He experienced an indirect effect through reading or hearing other people’s stories of the climate crisis, through (news) articles or media. This resulted in sadness and grief. Direct experiences of climate change (e.g., warm winters, floods in Limburg) resulted in panic, with thoughts like “the crisis is here”.

Effect of my research on the interlocutors

My research and the fact that I filmed the research with the intent of distributing the film to a broader audience, affected the interlocutors and their imagined future. What I saw during the interviews and VM sessions, was that the interlocutors were hesitant to express hopelessness about the future. With Amber, Roos and Sebastiaan, I saw the tension between the relieve of expressing their hopelessness, and at the same time them being hesitant to express this. During the in-depth interview, Roos talked about her feelings of despair, but when she touched upon this, she directly switched to talking about hope and engaging in climate activism. She expressed she would rather not think about the despair because she found it did not help her. During the in-depth interview with Sebastiaan, I saw how he switched between vulnerable, true expressions of despair, and courageous and more rehearsed expressions of hope. Every

time he expressed despair, he counterpointed his own argument with an expression of hope. The expressions of despair were modest, and like a confession. The expressions of hope were about activism, and were a reminder to himself, to me and the intended audience of my film, that activism did make a difference. Amber was also hesitant to express their hopelessness, even though they admitted they have a negative outlook on the future. During the video-elicitation interview, they said they wanted to bring across that activism can have a positive effect, thereby contradicting themselves.

During and after the interview, the interlocutors told me they did not want to demotivate the viewer in taking action against the climate crisis. Sebastiaan also expressed this concern during the in-depth interview. He said he did not want to come across as depressed and hopeless, because otherwise others would become hopeless as well. In a way, the interlocutors were code-switching between the different contexts; the context of a film in the making that will reach broader audiences, and the context of sharing their intimate experiences with me.

Sebastiaan experienced talking about the future as impactful and heavy. He was reluctant to plan the VM session because the previous interviews were unpleasant and triggered negative emotions. He was even more reluctant because he found himself in a positive period in his life, moving to Amsterdam, starting a new job and graduation from university. He wanted to enjoy this, but at the same time my research project brought him back to feelings of despair.

For Savannah, my research was an incentive to start thinking about the future. She had never thoroughly thought about the future before she participated in my research. Over the course of my research, she formed a clearer image of the future. Before my research, she experienced the future as a fear for the unknown, she saw the future as unclear and uncertain, like a “big black hole” (“groot zwart gat”). She now faced the future, which made her less scared of the future.

Coping with the effects of the imagined future

The interlocutors coped with the effect of the imagined future in four different ways. All four interlocutors engaged in at least two of the four coping mechanisms. The first coping mechanism is distancing themselves from the facts and emotions around the imagined future. This was like ignorance out of self-protection. Savannah unconsciously distances herself from the imagined future, she has no clear image of her future, and she has feelings of uncertainty around the topic. In her interview, she talks about how her friend group within XR has the same experience, having no clear image of the future. Amber consciously distanced themselves from the imagined future, which was necessary to continue daily life. Roos chooses to believe there is hope, she focuses on liveliness instead of despair. She needs to hold onto that hope, otherwise she knows there will merely be despair, which is something she cannot live with. “If there is no hope, only despair is left... and I can’t live with despair.” (“Als er geen hoop is, is er wanhoop... en met wanhoop kan je niet leven”).

The second coping mechanism was living in the present and not planning their lives too far ahead. Amber did not form an image of themselves in the future on purpose, because they know the imagined future will disappoint them. Roos knows the future will be difficult, which is why she would rather focus on the present.

The third coping mechanism was finding hope and security in community and friendships. Having people around them with similar imagined futures helped them find peace, knowing that they are not alone in their worries. This was prevalent with Savannah, who found that she felt more certain about the future when engaging in community. Her friend group reminds her that she might not know what the future will hold, but she knows with whom she will be in the future.

The last coping mechanism was finding strength in activism, taking matters into their own hands, while at the same time finding community and friendships out of these actions. Roos expressed in the interview the importance of activism to her. She finds strength in activism; it gives her a sense of taking power into her own hands. For Sebastiaan, engaging in climate action is a way to get his focus off despair. “Just doing banal actions” like the A12 blockades helps him, it keeps him moving.

Sebastiaan experiences all these four coping mechanisms and called it a “double mentality”. This double mentality entails that on the one hand he takes the worst-case scenario (4-5 degrees global warming) into account, on the other hand he does not want to dwell too much on the thoughts and feelings of despair. Instead, he focuses on the present, planning only a few years ahead. Hereby he focuses mostly on activism and community in the future, which is something that gives him hope.

4. Turning despair into agency

In this section I will focus on the way the interlocutors organize their lives around the imagined future and how they, through climate activism, devote their lives to fighting the climate crisis. After explaining their meaning of climate activism, I set out the ethnographic findings from the participant observation during climate actions. Lastly, I dive into the way the imagined future affected the interlocutors’ purpose in life and the way they made climate activism their life devotion.

I use the concept climate activism in combination with agency to explain the way the imagined future affects the way the interlocutors organize and devote their lives in the present. Climate activism can be seen as a way of gaining agency over the climate crisis (Del Rio, 2017; Pearse et al., 2010). For the interlocutors, this means that climate activism helps them to turn the negative effects of the imagined future, like feelings of despair, into forms of personal and social agency.

The sub-question I answer in this section is: *How does the imagined future affect the way the activists organize and devote their lives in the present?*

The meaning of activism

The interlocutors all had different, personal meanings to climate activism. Amber is often mentally occupied with the climate crisis and feels guilt when they are occupied with something else. While activism first gave them hope, they now have less confidence in the efficiency of activism. This changed to them after they did the action “a rebellion of one”. During this action, they literally put themselves and their body at risk during a one-person “sit-in blockade” of a local road. After this vulnerable action, Amber moved away from the idea that activism will work towards a better future within a reasonable time. Now, activism has a different goal for Amber, they see actions as a place of community, time to spend with friends. Amber does join actions and is occupied in activism, but mentally does not fight anymore.

Roos is occupied a lot with activism, she gets energy out of it and when she talks about the things she achieved within her activism career, she sounds proud of herself. To her, activism is a way to take back power and to fight against her feelings of powerlessness. Roos experiences powerlessness because she feels like big polluting companies decide what her future will look like. She compared this feeling with a metaphor; it is like being in a car that is driven by someone else, but the driver tells her that she is driving the car. This powerlessness is an incentive to take back that power, which she does in the form of expressing her anger and engaging in activism.

Savannah argued that activism has become a part of who she is. Although at the beginning of her activism career, she consciously engaged in activism, she now does not think about it as much, activism has become unconscious to her. Although she believes activism will make a difference, she is nuanced in this. She believes in activism, but she does not believe it has as much effect as the action claims to have. She feels hope for the future when she sees small victories from actions.

For Sebastiaan, activism is a moral obligation. He feels a need to engage in climate activism and he believes more people should engage in activism. Sebastiaan finds beauty and fulfillment in activism, and being an activist is a purpose to him.

Hope and despair during participation observation at climate actions

During the two A12 blockades I attended and observed, the activists were optimistic and hopeful. They engaged with full commitment in the action, being active in exclaiming slogans, singing songs and being fully present in the moment. From my own observation and the observation of the bodycam footage of Amber and Roos, I saw how they engaged in loving social interactions, hugging and talking to friends, sharing how they felt. In their conversations with others and with me, they expressed their optimism about the action. In the conversations I had with the interlocutors during the actions, they expressed that they did not think about the future and that they felt hopeful at that moment.

This means that climate activism helped them to be positive and optimistic. The state I found the interlocutors in during the action was very different from the state I found them in during the interview. This is relevant and shows the impact that climate activism can have.

Live devotion and purpose

All the interlocutors were intimately intertwined with imagined future in the way they organized their life around the imagined future and devoted their life to fighting the climate crisis. The interlocutors found purpose in climate activism and activism created a place for them to exist in.

Amber organized their life around the imagined future, making choices based upon what they expect the future to look like. One example is their study choice, they wanted to study Medicine, partly because they found this interesting, and partly because they wanted to make themselves useful in the future. Another life-choice Amber made that was affected by the imagined future, was their consideration to not have children, despite their strong child-wish. They find it irresponsible to have children in the future they imagine and would not want their potential children to live within a world of crisis.

Roos feels a strong will to fight for a better future. She dreams of a world where she can simply live and expressed this strongly in the interviews, repeating “I want to live” (“Ik wil leven”). She dreams of being a nurse and helping people, she dreams of being happy. But she does not see this happening if she does not fight for her future. This is why she chooses to devote her life to activism, so she can live.

Savannah decided that she wants to devote her life and her work as a photographer to climate activism. Contrary to a few years ago, when activism was more like a hobby, activism is now everything to her. To her, now everything in her life is about activism, most of her time goes into activist-related activities, and many life-choices, like her studies or her diet, is based upon activism. It is the way she lives, activism to her is internalized.

During the first interview and in-depth interview, Sebastiaan told the story about the moment he decided to devote his life to fighting the climate crisis. In January 2020, he was dancing in a techno club when suddenly the image of the bushfires in Australia came to his mind. He saw a world on fire, he saw the Amazonian rainforest being cut down, the polar ice caps melting, he saw the permafrost in Siberia melting. This visual image touched him emotionally, and the fact that so many people did nothing to stop this made him angry. He started stamping his feet on the rhythm of the techno music. This was the moment he decided to devote his life to fighting the climate crisis. To him this deep, emotional realization, became an incentive to devote his life to climate activism. Knowing that the next decades will be drawn by climate change and collapse of social system, is a reason for him to devote his life to fighting the crisis. At the same time, he feels like this means there is no place for him in society. He will not take part in the “rat race”, he will not have a career. This to him feels like a self-sacrifice for the planet.

Conclusion

In this article I researched the imagined future of young climate activists in the Netherlands and the effect that the imagined future had on their lives in the present. Through an ethnographic analysis I explored the imagined future and answered my main research question: *How does the imagined future of young climate activists affect their lives in the present?* My main finding was that to the activists, the imagined future is intimately present in their lives, intertwined with their present experiences regarding their worldview, their affect, and the way they organize and devote their lives.

In the first section I explored the imagined future of the activists regarding the climate crisis and their own lives. The interlocutors described their imagined future as “unclear” and “insecure”, and their description consisted of a list of ecological disasters (droughts, heat waves, storms, failed harvests, floods, extinction of many animals, extinction of humans) and the consequences that humanity will experience (water shortage, famines, people losing homes, food uncertainty, war, conflicts, pandemics, flows of refugees, instability overall and suffering overall). These images were based upon their personal histories, the literature they read, and what they saw happening in the present.

In the second section I explored the worldview of the activists, how this changed over time and the way the imagined future affected this change in their worldview. The interlocutors’ worldview was characterized by an experience of living in an undesired world. The interlocutors experienced a turn downward in their worldview when they compared their worldview from before to the present. While before they saw a future that was filled with opportunities, they now see the future as an undesired world. To the interlocutors, this change was irreversible, their worldview could not go back to how it was before. This change in their worldview was explained by a new awareness of the state of crisis in the world regarding climate change. The undesired world was described as a world of injustice and suffering, of crisis and catastrophe, as something that must be changed. The interlocutors experienced a discrepancy between their own experience of the undesired world, and their social surrounding that did not see the world in the same way.

In the third section I explored the effect of the imagined future of the interlocutors, and the way they coped with this. I explored both the effect of thinking and talking about the imagined future on an emotional level, and the effect of my audiovisual research on the interlocutors. The emotional effects of the imagined future on the interlocutors alternated between (consciously and unconsciously) distancing themselves from the imagined future and being overwhelmed with the emotional effect of the imagined future. With regards to the effect of the imagined future, the interlocutors were hesitant to express hopelessness about the future, because they did not want to demotivate the viewer in taking action against the climate crisis. There were mechanisms in coping with the imagined future. These were (1) distancing themselves from the facts and emotions around the imagined future, (2) living in the present and not planning their lives too far ahead, (3) finding hope and security in community and friendships

and (4) finding strength in activism, taking matters into their own hands, while at the same time finding community and friendships through these actions.

In the last section I explored the effect of the imagined future on the way the interlocutors organized and devoted their lives in the present through climate activism. The meaning of climate activism to the interlocutors varied between a place of community, taking matters into their own hands, it being part of their identity, a moral obligation, and a life fulfillment. The interlocutors found hope in activism, this optimism came back during the actions, but to them, activism was not a solution to end the climate crisis or to prevent their imagined future. The interlocutors were intimately intertwined with imagined future in the way they organized their life around the imagined future and devoted their life to fighting the climate crisis. The interlocutors found purpose in climate activism and activism created a place for them to exist.

So, how does the imagined future of young climate activists in the Netherlands affect their lives in the present? The imagined future is intimately present in their lives, intertwined with their present experiences. This explains the relevance of the imagined future within research on climate activists. Hereby I contribute to the anthropology of the future. With this research I hope to create more understanding on the experiences of climate activists and the deeper motives behind climate activism.

More ethnographic research on the imagined future of groups of climate activists is needed in order to understand these imagined futures and to contribute to the anthropology of the future. In doing so, we could create a better understanding of the way future generations will anticipate to the climate crisis.

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