



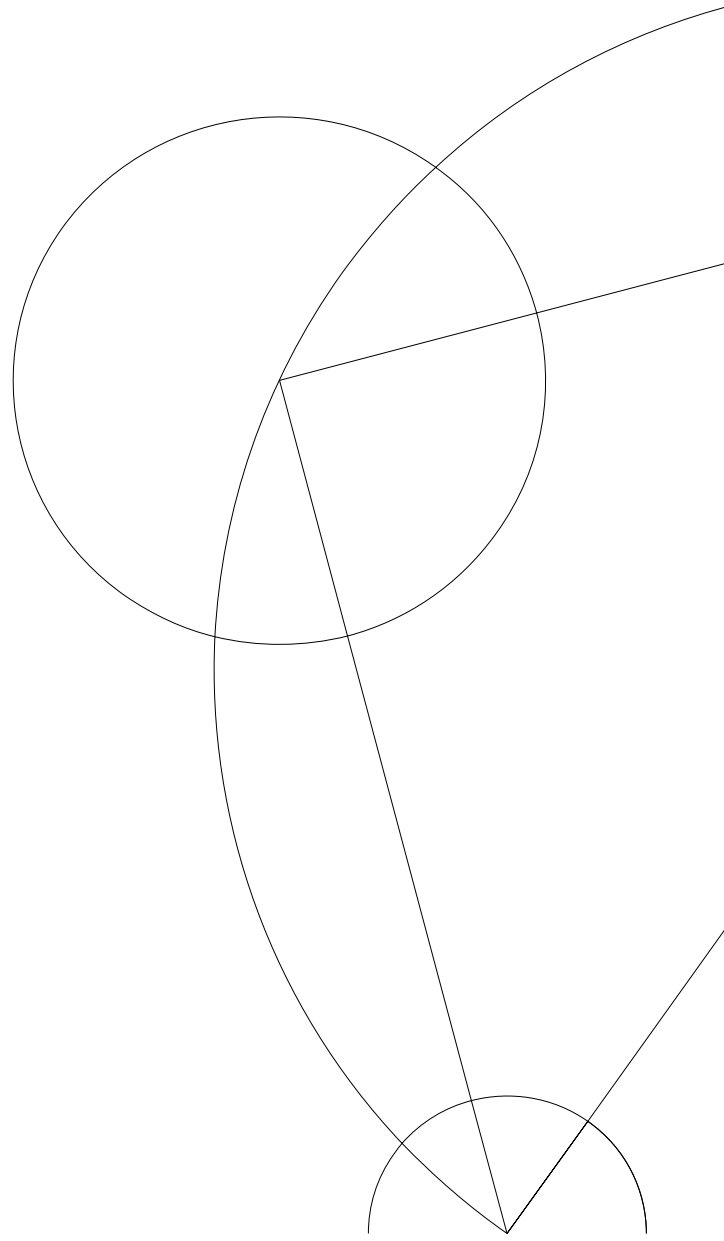
'KLIMA HISTORIER' The Art Of Imagining A Green Future

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Master – Climate Change

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'KLIMA

HISTORIER'

**THE ART OF IMAGINING
A GREEN FUTURE**

MASTER THESIS

JULIE SLOTH BJERRUM (dqs195)

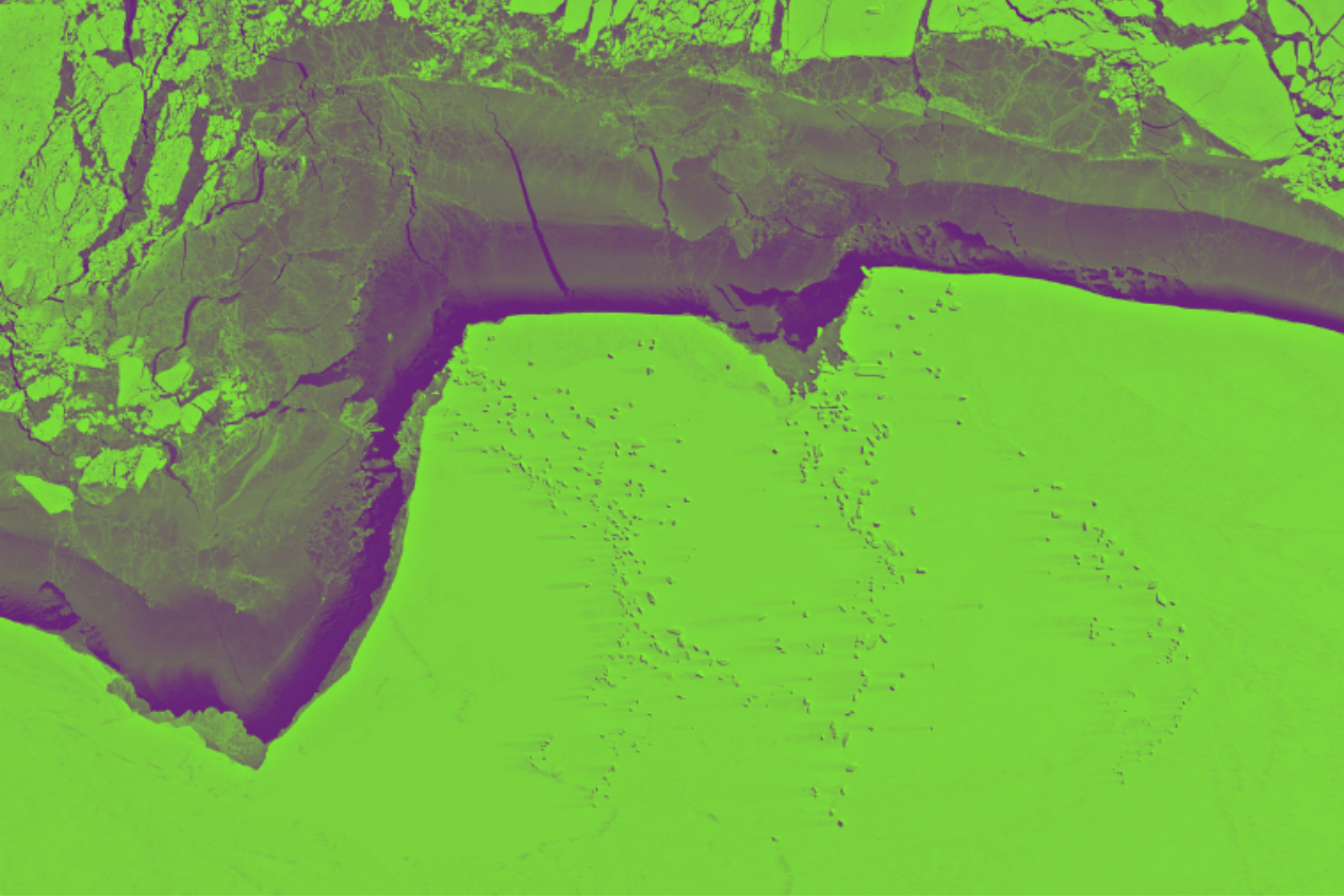
MASTER OF SCIENCE IN CLIMATE CHANGE

SUPERVISOR: SABRINA VITTING-SEERUP

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Preface and acknowledgments

This master thesis, “*Klimahistorier: The Art of Imagining a Green Future*”, is created at the Department of Science Education, University of Copenhagen. I have been engaged in researching and writing this thesis from August to December 2023. The thesis explores an interdisciplinary problem statement of communicating the climate crisis using literature for social change.

Before starting my thesis, I would like to give insights into my motivation for writing it, and to highlight my position. My interest in this field of study stems from my frustration of lack of action in the climate crisis even though there is immense knowledge in the field, why my interest in how to tackle the crisis has increased. I have a bachelor's in Geography from Aalborg University, where I have gained a deeper understanding of the relationship between human and nature and the many ways they interact, sparking my interest in philosophical questions as well. The fascination for this relationship ultimately led me to pursue my MSc in Climate Change to grasp the climate crisis and exploring the ways, we as humans, interact with the earth. This academic focus has furthered my understanding of how communication, politics, and social change is intertwined. This awareness, combined with my interest in art and culture in my personal life has led to the work of this thesis.

I would like to give thanks to my supervisor, Sabrina Vitting-Seerup, from Department of Science Education at the University of Copenhagen. Sabrina thank you for your time in guiding me through the structure and preparation of the thesis and keeping me on the right track when my scope got too broad. I have appreciated every supervision with you.

I would also like to give thanks to the 9 participants who participated in my focus group interviews. Thank you for taking the time to both read the excerpts from ‘Klimahistorier’ and discussing them with each other, resulting in insightful dialogues. Your participation have increased my understanding of the anthology and how climate fiction affects readers.

Abstract

This study addresses the potentials and problems in the anthology 'Klimahistorier', published in collaboration by the Ministry of Climate, Politikens Forlag and eight Danish writers. The research is motivated by the need for action in the climate crisis, where climate fiction is seen as a potential solution. However, research upon the impact of climate fiction to create social change needs furthering. By employing a constructivist and qualitative research approach, this case study analyzes the political context surrounding the Ministry of Climate's involvement and conducts focus group interviews to explore readers' interpretations of two excerpts from 'Klimahistorier'. This study reveals that while 'Klimahistorier' has great intentions for inspiring for change, the readers are left with a sense of powerlessness. The political context influences the anthology's potential, with emphasis on propaganda, commissioned work, and abdication of responsibility from the ministry. Moreover, the narrative style and quality of the stories has the readers feeling both frustrated, provoked and entertained. They emphasize that they lack representation in the stories for them to emotionally invest, and they are challenged in distinguishing the fictional from factual both in relation to the political context and instrumentalization, and in relation to the facts about the climate crisis, as the stories were characterized by caricature and an exaggerated style. 'Klimahistorier' may not have consciously made readers more critical or motivated in their personal actions towards the green transition, however it made the readers reflect upon the diversity of perspectives in the climate crisis amongst the public, and the need for organized efforts to enable discussions upon the climate crisis. Moreover, the study contributes to the field, with the finding of the importance of representation in climate fiction for reader involvement. Therefore, this study suggests a case-based approach for future research, highlighting the need to focus on specific works rather than climate fiction in the abstract. Overall, the discussion provides an understanding of the intersection between art, science, and politics as well as the potentials and problems associated with using climate fiction as a tool for communication and social change. In conclusion, this study finds that 'Klimahistorier' holds theoretical potential for creating social imaginaries, however the political context affects its realization, marking it as a potential rather than a realized tool for social change.

Keywords: climate crisis, climate communication, climate fiction, social imaginaries, reception analysis

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Introduction

The Earth is well outside of its safe operating space for humanity, with a new article by Richardson et al. (2023) concluding that “(...) *six of the nine boundaries are transgressed (...)*” (Richardson et al, 2023, p. 1), and this alarming trend has only escalated since the initial report was published in 2009 (Richardson et. al, 2023, p. 1 and 4; Rockström et. al, 2009, p. 472). The nine boundaries are critical for maintaining the Earth system in a stable and resilient state, as it has been during the geological period known as the Holocene. However, human activities have severely disturbed these processes, potentially leading to the Anthropocene epoch as described by Richardson et al. (2023), which could be dangerous for the sustainability of the planet.

It is emphasized that there is a need for new narratives and stories that can engage the social imagination, as ultimately, every crisis is a storytelling crisis (Solnit, 2023). Therefore, climate rhetoric needs to connect with people’s emotions to address the crisis effectively (Henwood, 2021, p. 77). As Jenkins, Peters-Lazaro & Shresthova, (2020) argue, “*Before you can change the world, you need a vision of what a better world might look like—this is the primary function of the civic imagination*” (p. 31). The climate crisis so forth does not only call for scientific expertise but also artistic engagement, which have been noticed by the Danish government.

The Danish government agenda of 2022 states that the climate crisis is the greatest challenge of our time and argues that ambitious action is needed. It further emphasizes that a council will explore how art and culture can contribute to solving the climate crisis. The rationale behind this is that instead of relying solely on technocracy to come up with economically practical solutions, we need to acknowledge the role of art as an essential voice in the climate discourse (Statsministeriet, 2022, p. 27 and 51).

However, political promises and agreements, as well as efforts to address the climate crisis have often fallen short due to the Social Democratic (S) and Social Democratic, Right and Middle (SVM) governments’ failure to deliver on time in a large number of areas (Nielsen (III), 2023). This raises the question of whether artistic action can effectively stand in the absence of political measures, such

as CO2 taxes. And what rationales, possibilities, and challenges lie hidden in utilizing art as a tool in the fight against the climate crisis?

I have chosen to base my research on the anthology ‘Klimahistorier’ which is written by *”the country’s eight most prominent writers and communicators”* (Price et al., 2022, p. 201, own translation) in collaboration with the Ministry of Climate, Energy and Utilities (referred to as Ministry of Climate), and Politikens Forlag. ‘Klimahistorier’ was developed from the idea of former Minister for Climate, Dan Jørgensen. The goal is to create support for the green transition by disseminate climate knowledge in novel ways through a work of fiction, as it is believed that *“there is no shortage of research (...) but (...) a need for communicating the climate crisis’ challenges and solutions in new ways and formats”* (Price et al., 2022, p. 201, own translation). This thesis therefore delves into the potential of climate fiction to bring about transformative change for a green future, while also considering the challenges. With ‘Klimahistorier’ as my case study, I will explore how the genre of climate fiction, can help reshape social imaginaries of the climate crisis, with my main research question:

What are the potentials and problems of the literary collection ‘Klimahistorier’, initiated by the Ministry of Climate?

To answer this, I will first explore the theoretical potentials of climate fiction as a genre by asking:

1) How can climate fiction engage with and shape readers’ perceptions of the climate crisis?

Then, I wish to examine the context surrounding ‘Klimahistorier’ by questioning:

2) What are the intentions and what are the implications of the Ministry of Climate being the initiator behind the publication?

And finally, I’ll investigate readers’ reception of ‘Klimahistorier’ by identifying:

3) What reactions and interpretations do readers have to the climate fiction presented in ‘Klimahistorier’?

Philosophy of Science

In this chapter, I will elaborate on the philosophical foundation of the thesis. The research presented in this thesis is situated within the paradigm of constructivism, a philosophical approach where the human is considered socially and historically constructed (Jensen, 2011, p. 16). Constructivism is based on the epistemological assumption that our knowledge and representations of the world are in principle subject to change (Jensen, 2011, p. 132), as they are in fact social constructions that are both historically and culturally conditioned (Jensen, 2011, p. 80). This philosophical foundation provides the basis of my study, where I will explore the potentials and problems of the literary collection ‘Klimahistorier’ and its role in addressing the climate crisis. In line with constructivism, I differentiate between the usage of ‘climate change’ and ‘climate crisis’ through this thesis, as they are respectively defined as “*a change in the state of the climate*” (IPCC (I), 2023), and “*a situation in which immediate action is needed to reduce or stop climate change and prevent serious and permanent damage to the environment.*” (Oxford University Press, 2023). I make use of ‘climate change’ when referencing to the scientific aspects, otherwise I will use ‘climate crisis’ when referring to the problems caused by climate change such as ecological collapse, food and water insecurity, displacement, violent conflicts, and health risks (UNDP, 2023, p. 21).

The first research question explores how climate fiction, as a genre, can engage with and shape readers’ perceptions of climate-related issues. This investigates how literature actively constructs and influences readers’ understanding of climate change and its associated challenges. The context is central for constructivism (Jensen, 2011, p. 135), and in the case of ‘Klimahistorier’, it is crucial to consider the context in which it was created and received, to evaluate its potential and problems. This is why my second question focuses on exploring the context surrounding the anthology. Further, constructivism emphasizes the role of questioning the norms in a given society or context, which in my thesis implies questioning the literary work and the Ministry of Climate’s involvement (Jensen, 2011, p. 134). The third research question examines readers’ reactions and interpretations of the climate fiction presented in ‘Klimahistorier’. This investigation seeks to uncover the individual and socially constructed meaning-making processes that occur when readers engage with the fiction. In summary, the constructivist approach of this thesis provides a focus on how knowledge is both constructed, shaped by social interactions, and context dependent.

Climate Fiction

In this chapter, I will conduct a literature review to gain insight into the already existing knowledge on climate fiction and answer the question: *How can climate fiction engage with and shape readers' perceptions of the climate crisis?* I will make use of various peer-reviewed academic articles and books. The chapter is divided into different sections including *Climate Change Communication*, *Climate Change Literature as Communication*, and *The Potential of Climate Fiction for Social Change*.

Climate Change Communication

The climate crisis is complex both in its comprehension and communication. Unlike immediate, tangible threats, climate change appears distant in both time and space, adding to the difficulty of conveying its urgency (Moser & Dilling, 2009, p. 5-7). Consequently, climate change communication is increasingly becoming relevant in addressing the climate crisis.

Traditionally, climate change communication has been narrowly focused on disseminating scientific findings, as it is often perceived as a technical and scientific process (Chirisa, Matamanda & Mutambwa, 2018, p. 1). However, Moser & Dilling (2009) state that while scientific evidence suggests a growing sense of urgency, society does not currently consider it an immediate threat. On the other hand, Chess & Johnson (2009) argue that climate change communication is "*as complex as the science*" (Chess & Johnson, 2009, p. 223), with the greatest challenge being to persuade people to take action due to its inherent complexity (Chess & Johnson, 2009, p. 223). So, effective climate change communication is needed for increasing awareness and engaging policymakers, stakeholders, and the public in constructive discourse and adaptation efforts (Moser & Ekstrom, 2010, p. 22029), though relying solely on information to drive behavioral change is much overrated as: "*Many informational efforts to promote environmentally responsible behavior lean on an implicit theory of behavior, that "right" behavior naturally follows from "right" thinking*" (Chess & Johnson, 2009, p. 223).

Stoknes (2015) further argues that conventional climate communication often leads to more distancing rather than increasing the concern about the crisis, why there is a need "*(...) for a radical*

rethinking in how to communicate climate change.” (Stoknes, 2015, p. 21 and 23). Huxley (2018) also raises questions of whether the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), despite providing fundamental scientific data, is the most effective way of communicating climate change to the public and inspiring action, suggesting it “*reflects an outdated model of how science is incorporated into society, and how social change occurs*” (Huxley, 2018, p. 202 and 209). Consequently, there is a growing consensus that better climate change communication involves more than just conveying information to mobilize action.

Stoknes (2015) though adds that scientists sometimes lose sight of the fact that they are, in fact, narrating a story (Stoknes, 2015, p. 119). With the IPCC employing scenarios to explore and present possible future risks by “*making futures not just forecasting them*”, which gives them ethical, political, and cultural responsibilities, due to the challenges associated with characterizing uncertainties (Tyszczuk & Smith, 2018, p. 56). The IPCC emphasizes that the scenarios should not be interpreted as predictions; instead, they are intended to foster a deeper understanding of uncertainties and alternative future paths. By encouraging people to contemplate “what if” through the scenarios, the IPCC aims to inspire individuals to actively participate in shaping the future they desire (Tyszczuk & Smith, 2018, p. 57).

Consequently, the rhetorical battle over the climate crisis is not confined to public discourse alone but is deeply embedded within the scientific community, where “*scientists’ professional culture, standards of conduct, and self-interest tend to emphasize uncertainty in standard communications,*” (Moser & Dilling, 2009, p. 9), which can confuse and create less trust in science (Moser & Dilling, 2009, p. 8-9). Paradoxically, this emphasis on scientific uncertainty has, at times, provided a justification for inaction and has emerged as a difficult barrier to effective climate change mitigation efforts. Thus, climate change presents a challenge to the scientific community, as every description and prediction of climate change is inevitably intertwined with specific depictions of how society currently exists and how it ought to evolve (Mehnert, 2016, p. 6). Therefore, climate change communication is intrinsically linked with values and politics, making it a highly political issue (Moser & Dilling, 2009, p. 9). As well, do beliefs, values, emotions, and economics significantly influence how people perceive and respond to climate change, where Chess & Johnson (2009) argues that assumptions about these factors are “*the greatest enemy of persuasion*” (Moser & Ekstrom, 2010, p. 22029; Chess & Johnson, 2009, p. 225-226). Recognizing this, Chess & Johnson (2009) further

emphasize the importance of understanding the preexisting cultural norms and concepts within which communication takes place, highlighting that people are often motivated by prior beliefs and values (Chess & Johnson, 2009, p. 224 and 227-228).

In summary, climate change communication demands a broader perspective beyond the traditional focus on information dissemination. From the above it becomes clear that effective communication requires an understanding of values, beliefs, and political contexts. This is because climate science does not just describe reality, it also shapes it by creating ‘worlds’ through its scenarios. Climate science is not neutral, and it acts as a means just as literary fiction, which is why an understanding of the political dimension is required. The following section will therefore explore the potential of climate change literature as a tool for more effective communication and overcoming barriers.

Climate Change Literature as Climate Communication

So, a new way of engaging with climate science is needed, with the acknowledgement that climate communication should be narrative, interpretative, and thoughtful to overcome communication barriers (Hawkins & Kanngieser, 2017, p. 1), and Ungar (2009) underscores the necessity of decoding scientific language and translating it into metaphors that resonate with popular culture to engage the public in political change (Ungar, 2009, p. 83 and 87). Further, Arnold (2018) emphasizes that public perception of the climate crisis significantly influences support for climate policies and states that this perception is culturally determined, since “*culture affects how humans understand the world, because we make sense of the world by cultural means*” (Arnold, 2018, p. 2). Indeed, climate change is as much a cultural shift, as it is a scientific and technical challenge:

Climate change is a cultural change, and climate literacy is more than just understanding climate science. It is about understanding the social, cultural and human dimensions of climate change. It is about grappling with the impacts of climate change on our minds and emotions, and also the ethics of climate change. (Tüskés, 2019, p. 309).

Recognizing the cultural dimension of climate change, Hawkins & Kanngieser (2017) stress the importance of embracing culture as an essential sphere of action, knowledge, and production, for instance, through literature, art, and other such practices. As such cultural productions are

fundamental to effective science communication practices (Hawkins & Kanngieser, 2017, p. 2). Bilodeau (2019) highlights that “*art and science are humans’ two fundamental ways of understanding the world,*” with science providing information about the world and art using imagination to shape ideas and emotions, thereby complementing, and contextualizing the scientific (Bilodeau, 2019, p. 328). The aesthetic discourse can evoke emotional experiences, which can help bridge the gap between scientific knowledge and the general public, as emotions work as a powerful motivator and can serve as a more comprehensive tool than a purely cognitive discourse (Nielsen, 2008, p. 185; Salama & Aboukoura, 2018, p. 137-141). However, it is worth noting that Gray (2007) raises concerns about the instrumentalization of art for non-cultural objectives (Gray, 2007, p. 203), why Eriksson (2008) also raises the question:

A question in aesthetic theory has naturally been whether art has only been given space and permission to experiment with possible worlds because it has no effects outside of its own realm. Is art institutionalized as a particularly comforting and pacifying field of practice in modernity, because a valve is thereby created for everything that cannot be realized elsewhere than precisely within the framework of art? (Eriksson, 2008, p. 117).

Schneider-Mayerson (2018) also argues that a belief persists that the particular important interest in literature on the climate crisis is due to its instrumental value, that is literature’s ability to achieve a particular end, and highlights that some have cautioned against viewing climate change literature as mere ecopropaganda (Schneider-Mayerson, 2018, p. 475). In order for ensuring that literature does not end up as propaganda, the principle of arms-lengths exists. It prescribes that there must be a certain distance, an “arm’s length”, between the political system and the cultural sphere to ensure art is not instrumentalized for non-cultural goals. This is to be understood as politicians do not directly dictate content and form but redistribute management to elected, apolitical professionals (Nielsen, 2006). Schneider-Mayerson (2018) states that most traditional literary critics and some ecocritics would argue that “(*...*) *aesthetics and not influence should be the focus of the humanities*” (Schneider-Mayerson, 2018, p. 475). Eriksson (2008) argues that art is not bound to communicate anything in particular, express a truth or create consensus, why it can create new constructions of the world and show that things could be different. He further adds that art can risk contributing to standardized and planned products, if it engages in communication (Eriksson, 2008, p. 117 and 122). However, it is still claimed by many ecocritics that narratives have a potential impact to affect ecopolitical influence

(Schneider-Mayerson, 2018, p. 475). Eriksson (2008) also argues that the art system is undifferentiated as one of many communication systems within the social system, and emphasizes that art might be overestimating its freedom as a receptive and loosely coupled medium and adds that “*art can only move in society and as such will always be communication and thus a fulfillment of society*” (Eriksson, 2008, p. 123). Moreover, Simonsen (2008) states that “*art is nothing if it is not free to create its own expression*”, but highlights that art, though free from direct censorship, is bound to the broader societal context. Art, including literature, serves as a critical reflection of reality, and its impact lies in its ability to provoke thought, challenge perceptions, and inspire change (Simonsen, 2008, p. 165-166).

Despite the concerns on instrumentalization, the use of climate change as a theme in literature has as such emerged in the last two decades because of its potential impact. Due to climate change being complex in both a cultural and scientific matter, climate change in fiction, ‘*climate fiction*’, can make the abstract concept of climate change more tangible and immediate for readers (Benenti & Giombini, 2023, p. 3). According to Andersen (2020) ‘climate fiction’ can be defined as a work of fiction that makes use of “*the scientific paradigm of anthropogenic global warming in their world-making,*” and further argues that “*a fiction is not automatically climate fiction if it presents a future in which human beings must persevere under difficult climatic conditions*” (Andersen, 2020, p. 5). Furthermore, literature contributes to the understanding of climate change by acknowledging multitudes of narratives when creating the meaning of climate change, allowing it to offer imaginaries of the future that extend beyond the boundaries of the story (Mehnert, 2016, p. 9; Benenti & Giombini, 2023, p. 3).

Moreover, Andersen (2014) identifies two other critical potentials of climate fiction, which involves prompting readers to engage in critical thinking about their own world and reimagining the world and human existence in the context of climate change (Andersen, 2014, p. 110). Milkoreit (2017) argues that social change can be achieved through fiction, as it has the ability to help envision desirable futures through social imagination. The concept of the social imaginary refers to societies’ visions of an ideal future and the ability to create and recreate institutions and norms by creating shared ideas and meanings. So, by immersing readers in alternative realities, climate fiction contributes to the formation of social imaginaries, collectively shaping the way society envisions desirable futures (Andersen, 2014, p. 113; Milkoreit, 2017, p. 1-3). A climate imaginary will then be a “*a shared socio-*

semiotic system of cultural values and meanings associated with climate change and appropriate economic responses” (Milkoreit, 2017, p. 3). Social imaginaries have political consequences as they can inspire and initiate possibilities for agency and activism, and thereby structure the reality of how the climate crisis is understood and experienced. Andersen (2014) further states that these imaginations must be understood as dominating the way the world is seen (Andersen, 2014, p. 113). Climate fiction though “*serves as a cultural-political attempt and innovative alternative of communicating climate change,*” since it has the potential for a deeper level of complexity within the aesthetic, social and political sphere (Mehnert, 2016, p. 4). It plays a great part in shaping our imaginaries of climate change and gives insight into both ethical and social consequences of the crisis and reflects on political conditions (Mehnert, 2016, p. 4). While acknowledging this, Trexler (2015) also underscores that nearly all climate change fiction is inherently political (Trexler, 2015, p. 119).

In summary, climate fiction offers a potential for furthering ones understanding of climate change, and inspiring for social change. By engaging both culture and narratives, climate fiction can shape social imaginaries, encourage critical thinking, and inspire for action. Art also has the ability to reflect reality while exceeding its specific message and thereby contribute to a broader social discourse. However, it still needs to be acknowledged that art can be instrumentalized for other purposes. So, in the next section, I will further explore the potentials of climate change literature for creating social change.

The Potential of Climate Fiction for Social Change

Climate fiction serves as a novel form of climate change communication, where different narratives enhance the potential of creating different social imaginaries in the climate crisis. However, an essential question remains: can these social imaginaries effectively drive social change?

Morris et al. (2019) offer insights, suggesting that climate change narratives structured as stories are more likely to result in readers behaving pro-environmentally than purely informational narratives. Their research, consisting of three experiments, revealed that narrative storytelling outperformed fact-based narratives in motivating action, why there is growing evidence that emotionally resonant stories have a more significant impact on motivating one’s behavior in a climate-friendly manner (Morris et al., 2019, p. 19-20). Therefore, literature has a great ability to motivate individual (Manolas, 2018, p.

39). However, pro-environmental behavior is influenced by a multitude of factors, including knowledge, emotions, values, beliefs in self-efficacy and infrastructure (Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2010, p. 248-256).

While the potential of literature as a climate communication tool is promising, it remains an underexplored field of study. As stated above, it is increasingly recognized that art can play a significant role in creatively communicating the climate crisis, where Schneider-Mayerson et al. (2023) found that “*reading climate fiction had small but significant positive effects on several important beliefs and attitudes about global warming*”. However, the effects were observed immediately after the participants had read the stories, but after a month the effects reduced to statistical no significance (Schneider-Mayerson et al., 2023, p. 35-36).

Schneider-Mayerson (2018) further highlights that people tend to be more aware of the climate crisis by the ease with which it comes into mind, but it is not yet known whether the heightened concern leads to meaningful changes in behaviors or politics (Schneider-Mayerson, 2018, p. 495). Moreover, Schneider-Mayerson (2018) research suggests that the people who read climate fiction tend to be younger, more liberal, and more concerned with the climate crisis than the people not reading climate fictions (Schneider-Mayerson, 2018, p. 473). In regard to this, he also highlights that the meaning of a text is constructed by its readers and suggests that literature can be “*effective at enabling or compelling readers to imagine potential futures,*” but it still depends on the reader, since it may not play a significant role in convincing skeptics and deniers, arguing that this also might be because they are less likely to read climate fictions (Schneider-Mayerson, 2018, p. 495).

Andersen (2020) states that the lack of transformation in different cultures might not be the lack of visions for the future, but on the contrary might be because of already-existing power formations. In line with this, Andersen (2020) refers to Andreas Malm’s concept of ‘The Capitalocene’, which emphasizes that the epoch should not be named the Anthropocene as it is not due to humans but due to capitalism that the earth is outside of its safe operating zone: “*it is impossible to avoid climate catastrophe without a radical break with the economic logic and methods that have been taking us in that direction for 150 years*” (Andersen, 2020, p. 142). This argument suggests that climate fiction alone cannot bring about social change, where Richards & Carruthers Den Hoed (2018) also argue that “*scientists will not be able to encourage climate action by merely providing more and better*

information,”, as the problem primarily lies in the political decision-making process rather than the science itself (Richards & Carruthers Den Hoed, 2018, p. 147). However, Howarth (2019) argues that effective communication aimed at improving decision-making processes should be relatable and employ stories and narratives. Therefore, climate fiction has the potential to “*to be a place where the imagination can try out different actions to test their value.*” (Howarth, 2019, p. 72; Andersen, 2020, p. 142).

In summary, climate fiction has the ability to effectively communicate the climate crisis due to the mere likelihood of behaving more pro-environmentally as one’s imaginaries change when exposed to climate change narratives structured as stories. However, the connection between social imaginaries and the effect of reading climate fiction requires further exploration. Therefore, this thesis aims to contribute to this growing field by interviewing climate fiction readers in focus groups to gain deeper insights into the effects of climate fiction as a tool for social change.

Sub conclusion on Climate Fiction

In conclusion, climate fiction has an immense potential to contribute to climate change communication, as it has the potential of making climate change more tangible in contrast to traditional climate change communication. Further, climate fiction enables readers to further understanding and engaging readers in a process of imagination and becomes a means of creating social imaginaries. However, there are concern about climate fiction becoming ecopropaganda due to its instrumental value, and questions about if art is being institutionalized just to create a valve for everything that cannot be realized elsewhere than precisely within the framework of art. Moreover, the effects of reading climate fiction reduced to statistically no significance after a month of reading it, why it is also argued that one’s awareness of the climate crisis tend to be greater by the ease with which it comes into mind. Further it is stated that the lack of transformation in different cultures might not be the lack of visions for the future, but on the contrary might be because of already-existing power formations, as well as other barriers to behavioral and social change, such as self-efficacy. So, while the potential of literature as a climate communication tool is promising, it remains an underexplored field of study, which is why I will delve into the potentials and problems of ‘Klimahistorier’ to contribute to the field.

Intentions and Implications of the Ministry of Climate Being the Initiator of ‘Klimahistorier’

In this chapter, I will elaborate on the political context of ‘Klimahistorier’. Examining the Ministry of Climate’s role as the initiator of the publication raises questions about their intentions and the implication of their involvement in the publication, which is why I will delve into the question: *What are the intentions and what are the implications of the Ministry of Climate being the source behind the publication?* To gain knowledge on the intentions and implications of the Ministry of Climate being the initiator of the publication, I will investigate the postscript of the anthology, the promotion of it, the reception of the anthology in the media and the Ministry of Climate’s visions and political action so forth.

Intentions behind ‘Klimahistorier’

‘Klimahistorier’ is written by Adam Price, Anders Abildgaard, Anders Morgenthaler, Eva Tind, Iben Mondrup, Kaspar Colling Nielsen, Mathilde Walter Clark, and Sofie Jama, in collaboration with the Ministry of Climate and Politikens Forlag. In the postscript it is stated, that ‘Klimahistorier’ was created from the idea of former Minister for Climate, Dan Jørgensen, who aimed to disseminate climate knowledge in novel ways through a work of fiction, as *“There is no shortage of research (...) but (...) a need for communicating climate changes’ consequences and solutions in new ways and formats”* (Price et al., 2022, p. 201, own translation). Consequently, the *“(...) country’s eight most prominent writers and communicators”* are employed to freely narrate the green transition, and to provoke the reader’s contemplation of a sustainable future through the fictional work (Price et al., 2022, p. 201, own translation). The seven short stories and the illustrated narrative are grounded in facts provided by the Ministry of Climate during two instructional days at the ministry, where the writers were equipped with knowledge on climate science. The texts encompass a range from dystopian to utopian narratives and depict *“(...) stories that imagine the role of climate in various lives”* (Politikens Forlag., n.d., own translation). The aspiration of the anthology as stated in the postscript is that the readers will be further motivated to contribute to the green transition, and that these stories can enhance a more engaging and well-informed public discourse (Price et al., 2022, p. 201-202). This aspiration aligns with Moser & Ekstrom (2010) as mentioned before, who argues that

effective climate change communication is crucial for increasing awareness and engaging the public in a constructive discourse, and Arnold (2018) who also emphasizes that public perception of the climate crisis significantly influences support for climate policies. Though Chess & Johnson (2009) argue that climate change communication is complex with the greatest challenge lying in persuading people to act as there also exist other barriers to behavioral and social change such as prior beliefs and infrastructure. However, Morris et al. (2019) suggest that climate change narratives structured as stories are more likely to prompt pro-environmental behavior than purely informational narratives, whereas Schneider-Mayerson (2018) highlights people tend to be more aware of the climate crisis by the ease with which it comes into mind, but it is not yet known whether the heightened concern leads to meaningful changes in behaviors or politics. This highlights that the aspiration of the anthology is in line with already existing knowledge on climate fiction's potentials on affecting readers.

Furthermore, the authors have in different settings promoted the anthology, where Sofie Jama and Eva Tind were in "Kulturen på P1", where they both argued that they contributed to the work due to the opportunity to convey a subject that may not necessarily fit their style otherwise, and arguing that it is an important matter, but it is easier to contribute to an anthology than creating a whole novel (DR P1, 2022). The authors, Kasper Colling-Nielsen and Iben Mondrup, were in "Go' Aften Live" on TV2 Danmark, where Mondrup stated that she does not usually write about the climate crisis, but she felt obliged to use her voice in this matter. She further argued that she contemplated whether she could put herself in a political frame considering the Ministry of Climate being the initiator of the publication, but when she was told that she had 'free hands', she only saw it as a challenge (TV2, 2022). Jama and Tind also emphasized in P1 that the anthology is seen as a way for politics and culture to collaborate and not a matter of activism, but rather recognized that it is a great communication form for climate science knowledge (DR P1, 2022). Colling-Nielsen also argued in "Go' Aften Live" that the anthology is not to be seen as a replacement for data and scientific reports, but rather seen as a different way for people to engage with the climate crisis that is less focused on data. He further argued that the ministry's officials trained them to be able to write about the climate crisis in a precise way, since a certain level of the text needs to be factual and not speculative (TV2, 2022). So, the authors all agree on the importance of addressing the climate crisis through the anthology and see it as a valuable contribution to the discussion surrounding climate change.

However, Findalen (2022) at Frihedsbrevet got access to an inspection of the correspondence between Politikens Forlag and the Ministry of Climate, where it was stated that former Minister for Climate Jørgensen wanted to write the first chapter in the anthology, resulting in the authors being so concerned about the implications that they threatened to withdraw their contributions. This instance has added another layer of complexity to the debate of the anthology. Jørgensen stated to Frihedsbrevet:

I offered to write the foreword because I wanted to commend the contributors for taking part and for using their skills in perhaps the most important debate of all; the debate about the future of our planet, (...) But I fully understand that it could be misinterpreted as if someone should be associated with my views, so it's fine that they turned it down. (Findalen, 2022, own translation).

Instead of the foreword, Jørgensen got to write the postscript stating that the anthology was created after an initial proposal from Jørgensen. This episode had Findalen (2022) raising additional questions about the extent of the Ministry's involvement and the potential impact on the book's creative and political integrity. Jørgensen defended his decision that it was important that it appeared in the anthology to create full transparency (Findalen, 2022). Nevertheless, Findalen (2022) assumes that the book might be a part of Jørgensen's communication strategy.

In summary, the intentions of the anthology were to communicate the climate crisis in a less scientific manner by employing climate fiction but still relying on facts from the Ministry of Climate to inspire for change. These aspirations are in line with the existing literature on the topic, though there still are implications about the effectiveness. The authors further argues that the anthology can be seen as a way for politics and culture to collaborate in order to communicate the climate crisis in a new manner, also as discussed before by Bilodeau (2019) who highlights that art and science are the fundamental ways of understanding. Though, Mondrup contemplated the involvement of the Ministry of Climate being the initiator, she still argued that the arms-length-principle was in place as she saw it as having 'free hands'. Still the involvement of the Ministry of Climate and the former Minister for Climate can raise questions of possible implications, where Gray (2007) also raises concerns about the instrumentalization of art for non-cultural goals, cautioning against ecopropaganda. Therefore, I will in the next section examine the implications of the Ministry of Climate being the initiator behind the

publication by looking into reviews of the anthology in the media and by exploring the Ministry's vision.

Reception of 'Klimahistorier' in the media

The reception of 'Klimahistorier' in the media has been marked by strong opinions, revealing the intricate intersection of literature and politics in the context of addressing the climate crisis.

Kristensen (2023) states:

(...) the short story anthology 'Klimahistorier', a book most people have forgotten or repressed again, even though it was published as recently as last year. (...) a book which first and foremost has a marketing agenda as political communication; then an artistic one. (Kristensen, 2023, own translation).

The anthology has sparked some debate and controversy in its reception, with some praising the authors' communication skills and others questioning the anthology's intent and its potential alignment with government messaging. Thagesen (2022) highlights that the authors are excellent communicators, but states that "*Dan Jørgensen has made the Danish writers pull his load*". While Balsby (2022) also suggests that the anthology bears the mark of being commissioned work and is "*a textbook example of the instrumentalization of literature, where art serves as a vessel for the ministry's communication, a text-advertisement, or - and now I'll simply use the p-word - propaganda*," (Balsby, 2022, own translation) arguing that the anthology works as an advertisement for the former Minister for Climate (Thagesen, 2022). In Politiken, Katzenelson (2022), further expresses skepticism about the intentions behind 'Klimahistorier' and questions whether commissioned art can effectively address the seriousness of the climate crisis.

The ministry wants to remove climate anxiety with a commissioned collection of short stories? (...) Art may very well be political, but politics must refrain from being artistic. Arm's length, please (...) With 'Klimahistorier', they wanted to write about a serious subject with capital letters, but they've produced something that is far from serious. It's a waste of climate crisis. (Katzenelson, 2022, own translation).

This quote reflects skepticism about the efficacy of ‘Klimahistorier’ in addressing the seriousness of the climate crisis and raises questions about the Ministry’s involvement and agenda in utilizing art in addressing the climate crisis. Kristensen (2023) further states about the government’s strategy: “*If Klimahistorier is a result of the then government’s strategy of using art to convey political messages as stories, then I am morbidly curious about what a council set up by the SVM government can come up with*” (Kristensen, 2023, own translation). Thus, it is clear that the media’s reception of the anthology is heavily marked by skepticism about the political involvement and the political strategy in addressing the climate crisis through literature.

Kristensen (2023) further argues that “*Art must not be the technocracy’s useful idiot, trained for a civil service and delivering politically sanitized narratives to order,*” (own translation) but instead argues for letting art speak for itself. Schneider-Mayerson (2018) also argues, as mentioned before, that aesthetics should be the focus of literature, but also acknowledges the potential impact of environmental narratives to affect political influence as climate fiction can transcend the communication capacity of other nonfictional media as argued by Mehnert (2016). Kristensen furthers that: “*When it comes naturally to many to use art as a starting point for discussing political issues, it says more about art’s possibilities to contribute alternative and critical perspectives to the public debate than the framework dictated by politics*” (Kristensen, 2023, own translation). This highlights the intricate relationship between art and politics, but also the potential for art to influence and transform social imaginaries, suggesting the anthology is highly affected by the political context.

Furthermore, Katzenelson (2022) points out that there are no young authors in the anthology, arguing that it is not because young writers do not grasp the climate crisis, with there being a steadily increasing amount of climate poetry and prose, stating: “*Someone in the ministry could have just googled ‘ecopoetry’ and dealt with it*” (Katzenelson, 2022, own translation). The decision to feature authors over the age of 40 in this context may however have been intentional. This is also even though that, as discussed earlier, Schneider-Mayerson (2018)’s research suggests that the people who read climate fiction tend to be younger, more liberal, and more concerned with the climate crisis than the people not reading climate fictions.

While literature has the ability to be “*effective at enabling or compelling readers to imagine potential futures,*” as stated by Schneider-Mayerson (2018), its impact still varies based on the reader. It may

not be particularly influential in persuading climate skeptics and deniers, potentially due to them being less likely to read climate fictions. Kristensen (2023) also questions what the anthology brings to the table that literature does not already do, since “*the climate crisis is everywhere*” (Kristensen, 2023, own translation). This observation raises questions about the government’s priorities. Is an anthology the most effective way to address climate change, or should the focus be on concrete policies like a CO₂-tax? Thagesen (2022) also argues that “*even though many agree that a politically adopted CO₂ tax is the key to the green transition, the Minister for Climate’s wish (...) has been (...) to investigate “how we act as people,” and “what the development of new technology means”.*” (Thagesen, 2022, own translation). It is further argued that the authors are no more independent of their surroundings than “*several of the texts reflect Dan Jørgensen’s desire to focus on human action and technological development*” (Thagesen, 2022, own translation). This observation also raises doubts about Mondrup’s claim of having ‘free hands’ as the climate information provided to the authors originated from the Ministry of Climate, and as mentioned before by Tyszczyk & Smith (2018) climate scenarios are rooted in both natural science and economics making them political.

In summary, the reception of the anthology in the media is strongly opinionated, where it is stated that the anthology is commissioned propaganda that works as an advertisement for Dan Jørgensen. But as discussed before, Moser & Dilling (2009) highlights that climate change communication is intrinsically linked with values and politics, making it a highly political issue, and thereby arguing that the anthology is political in itself as it suggests what the future could look like and how the present is. It is though argued that the authors are no more independent of their surroundings than the texts reflects the government’s climate policy of focusing on human action and technology. Thereby, suggesting that the authors are reflecting the politics of the Ministry of Climate as the ministry also provided the knowledge on climate change. The critics therefore emphasize the arms-length-principle with the argument of politics must refrain from being artistic, calling the anthology a waste of climate crisis. This emphasis in the reception further questions the level of ‘free hands’ the writers have had and has led to questions about the extent to which the Ministry of Climate’s vision and agenda might have influenced the creative direction of the anthology and whether it is the most effective way to address climate change, or should the focus be on concrete policies like a CO₂-tax? I will look into the political context of the anthology by examining the Ministry of Climate’s visions and policies in the following.

The Broader Political Context

An understanding of the Ministry of Climate's visions and thereby implications for 'Klimahistorier' necessitates a closer examination of the broader political context. In the Ministry's vision, it is outlined that they want to create a climate-neutral society in growth and balance by "*developing the basis for a green transition in Denmark and globally*" with the approach of "*supporting political action and create real change through development*" (Klima-, Energi- og Forsyningsministeriet, n.d., own translation). Their main focus is political action by utilizing technology and the market to reach the government's target of reducing greenhouse gasses by 70 percent in 2030, as articulated in the Climate Law (Klima-, Energi- og Forsyningsministeriet, n.d.; Klimaloven Kapitel 1 §1). The Climate Law was introduced in 2019, by former Minister for Climate Dan Jørgensen, who stated:

[it, ed.] is one of the world's most ambitious. I see the law as a decisive turning point in the climate battle - and a fantastic starting point for the upcoming negotiations on a climate action plan, where the ambitious goals must be translated into concrete green policy. (Regeringen, 2019, own translation).

In the Climate Law, it is further stated that the Climate Council must give a professional assessment of whether the government is on the right track towards the ambitious goals (Klimaloven Kapitel 2). However, it has become apparent that the government's policies are falling short of achieving these targets. For the third time since 2020, the Climate Council have failed the government's official climate efforts and the possibilities for meeting the official climate targets (Nielsen (I), 2023). It is stated that it is going far too slowly, and the pace and level of ambition must be drastically increased if there is to be any chance of achieving the goals. It does not seem realistic to achieve the goal with the current policy and there is a high risk that the target of a 70 percent reduction in 2030 will not be reached (Nielsen (I), 2023; Klimarådet, 2023).

Danish climate policy has mainly been influenced by the hockey-stick strategy, where greenhouse gas-reductions are mostly stagnant until just before 2030 where technological developments in various carbon sequestration technologies will be the solution (Haaland & Hagel, 2020). When the former social democratic government was in power, they implemented 487 climate measures. The Climate and Transition Council (Klima- og Omstillingsrådet), which is a researcher-driven initiative, reviewed the measures concluding that fundamental problems persist with the Danish approach to

climate policy. The vast majority of measures aim to ‘green’ existing consumption and production through technology instead of creating more structural changes or completely stopping doing certain things that damage the climate (Krogh, 2023). This strategy can be seen in relation to ‘Klimahistorier’ both due to the instrumentalization of art and lack of political action, and as stated by critics, the stories reflect the policy of focusing on technological developments questioning the agenda of the anthology. Further, the political strategy of stagnation may affect the reception of the anthology, since the Ministry is the initiator, and they have other responsibilities with Katzenelson (2022) also calling it “*a waste of climate crisis*” (own translation). In line with this, Richards & Carruthers Den Hoed (2018) argument of the problem lies in the political decision-making process, as information will not generate climate action, further implicating the political involvement in the anthology.

The current Minister for Climate, Lars Aagaard, stated in an interview on “DR P1 Morgen” that “*We need a climate policy that 80 percent of the Danes can see themselves in*” (Nielsen (III), 2023, own translation), thereby arguing that there’s a need for broad support, since the green transition makes demands on every segment of society (Nielsen (II), 2023; Nielsen (III), 2023). This aspiration is in line with the aspiration of the anthology, which states that readers will be further motivated to contribute to the green transition by reading ‘Klimahistorier’ and as discussed earlier, Arnold (2018) emphasizes that public perception of the climate crisis significantly influences support for climate policies. This argument so forth legitimizes the making of the anthology, however, the pursuit of achieving this 80 percent support has led to a form of political stagnation as mentioned before, with the policy falling short of its climate targets. This is also despite the 2019 Ministry of Climate own research indicates that there exists significant public support for the green transition, with 72 percent in support (Klima-, Energi- og Forsyningsministeriet, 2019). Further, CONCITO (Denmark’s Green Thinktank) has done a survey, Klimabarometeret 2022, on the Danes’ climate commitment, where the respondents stated that they want political action on climate change, but they are not satisfied with the current level of political action on the climate crisis. They state that the greatest responsibility lies with the state, however only 13 percent of the respondents believe that the state lives up to its responsibility (Madsen & Fertin, 2020, p. 8 and 14). The Green Youth Movement (DGUB), a climate activist movement of young activists fighting for a green just future, has also argued that the government is getting better and better at derailing the climate debate, arguing that Aagaard is “*sitting on his hands*” and blaming the voters instead (Grum-Nymann, 2023, own translation). In relation to the anthology and the Danish politics, as mentioned earlier, Andersen (2020) raises the possibility

that the lack of transformation in different cultures might not be the lack of visions for the future, but on the contrary might be because of already-existing power formations.

In summary, the Ministry of Climate's vision focuses on creating a climate-neutral society through technology and market-driven approaches, which 'Klimahistorier' also focuses on as stated by critics. However, there is a gap between the ambitions and the practical results, as indicated by assessments from the Climate Council. This disconnect raises questions about the government's approach and priorities and questions the purpose of the anthology as Kristensen (2023) also questions: "*How do you as a citizen, reader and critic relate to a book that was both conceived and partly financed by the ministry, even if you sympathize with the political agenda?*" (Kristensen, 2023, own translation). The anthology might have the ability to change social imaginaries as its potentials are in line with the already existing knowledge on climate fiction, but is there a need for a change in social imaginaries, considering that 72 percent of the Danish population supports more climate action? This furthers the question if the anthology can be seen as an abdication of responsibility from both Dan Jørgensen and the Ministry of Climate?

Sub Conclusion on Intentions and Implications of the Ministry of Climate Being the Initiator of 'Klimahistorier'

In conclusion, the involvement of the Ministry of Climate in 'Klimahistorier' has sparked a critical debate, emphasizing the complex interplay between literature, politics, and the climate crisis. The intentions behind the anthology spans from motivating readers to contribute to the green transition, and enhancing a more engaging and well-informed public discourse, to the authors arguing that they wish to use their voice on an important matter. The implications of the Ministry's role spans from being questioned to not have uphold the arms-length-principle and being propaganda as several of the texts reflect the Ministry's vision on human action and techno-fix, to the Climate Council failing the government's climate efforts, questioning if the anthology can be seen as an abdication of responsibility. So, the intentions behind the anthology, as well as the implications of the ministry's role offers valuable insights into the complex relationship between art and politics in the context of climate change. Is the anthology an abdication of responsibility from both the Ministry of Climate, or does it have the ability to change social imaginaries? This is what I will examine in the next chapter by conducting focus groups interviews to analyze how readers respond to 'Klimahistorier'.

Readers' reactions and interpretations of 'Klimahistorier'

In this chapter, I'll investigate the reception of 'Klimahistorier' by testing: *What reactions and interpretations do readers have to the climate fiction presented in 'Klimahistorier'?* I will do this by conducting interviews in two different but comparable focus groups to contribute to the growing field the effects of climate fictions as a tool for social change.

Focus Group Interview

To gain insight into the reception of the anthology, and thereby the potentials and the problems of 'Klimahistorier', I have chosen to do a qualitative study by conducting two focus group interviews with potential readers of the anthology. I wish to gain this insight both due to the anthology's postscript that argue that it wishes to "*provoke the reader's contemplation of a sustainable future*" (Price et. al, 2022, own translation) with the aspiration of motivating the readers to contribute to the green transition, and due to the strong opinions in the media. Further, I wish to gain insight into the reception, since Schneider-Mayerson et al. (2023) argue that the potential of literature as climate communication tool is not fully explored and that is not yet known whether the heightened concern leads to meaningful changes in behaviors or politics. While two focus groups cannot provide universal insights, the goal is to gather knowledge about the potentials and the limitations of 'Klimahistorier' by engaging potential readers in discussions of two excerpts from the anthology. The focus group interviews may lead to a better understanding of how literature can serve as a tool for climate change communication.

I have chosen to utilize focus groups as a research method, drawing on Milkoreit's (2017) claim that climate fiction contributes to the formation of social imaginaries, by collectively shaping the way society envisions desirable futures. Thereby arguing that the participants in the focus groups will give insight into the potentials and problems of creating social imaginaries by discussing 'Klimahistorier'. The focus group's characteristic is the combination of group interaction and researcher-determined focus, which makes them particularly suitable for producing empirical data that say something about the formation of meaning in groups (Halkier, 2009, p. 9). Focus groups potentially provide the opportunity for the participants to express otherwise silent and taken-for-granted meaning formation

in their interactions with each other. Focus groups are therefore particularly good at producing data about patterns in groups' interpretations. Likewise, focus groups are also good at producing data on how social processes lead to specific interpretations, and on data that shed light on norms, as one gets to know something about what a group of people can agree or disagree about (Halkier, 2009, p. 10).

One of the potential weaknesses of focus groups is that the social control and dynamic in the group can prevent differences in experiences and perspectives, such as atypical individual practices or understandings, shining through (Halkier, 2009, p. 13-14). Though, it is not a given that this will come out in an individual interview either, but in relation to constructivism (see Chapter: Philosophy of Science), it is assumed that people always construct their individual accounts and understandings in relation to their social setting, suggesting that there will be different constructs depending on the context of interaction (Halkier, 2009, p. 13-14). This can also be seen in a tendency towards conformity and polarization, resulting in the data having less variation. Halkier (2009) argues that this weakness is a basic condition for social interaction, furthering that it can also be seen as a methodological strength in using the group as a means of producing more complex data. This is since the social interaction is the source of data, with the different participants' comparisons of experiences and understandings in the group, could produce knowledge about the complexities of meaning formation and social practices, which can be difficult to bring out in individual interviews (Halkier, 2009, p. 14).

Selection of Participants

To gain an understanding of the reception of 'Klimahistorier' I have chosen to conduct two focus groups in relation to the participants different levels on climate change knowledge, one with experts and one with novices. This is done to further the understanding of how different readers interact with climate fiction. The two groups are a group of six students from the Master of Climate Change at the University of Copenhagen, here described as 'experts', and a corresponding group of six students from various other master's degree programmes, here described as 'novices'. Halkier (2009) argues that group size can range from 3-4 to 10-12 participants and be seen as successful. Small groups are more vulnerable to cancellation, and there is a risk of small groups producing too little dynamic interaction, if the participants look alike (Halkier, 2009, p. 34); however, I have invited six participants with a margin of four participants regarded as an acceptable turnout. Moreover, my aim with the focus groups is to gain insights into how different levels of knowledge interpret the climate

fiction, why the participants in the groups will look alike. I will be aware of the risk of too little dynamic interaction, during the interviews and will try to foster an environment where discussions will happen.

The participants are chosen in order to showcase two knowledge poles in relation to interacting with the anthology, where I will be comparing the differences and the similarities, with the assumption that if the anthology is to fulfill its postscript, the stories will provoke the readers thoughts of a sustainable future, and inspire the readers to contribute to the green transition, and lastly the anthology will contribute to a more interesting and qualified public debate (Price et al., 2022, p. 201-202). The focus group interviews will so assess the potential of ‘Klimahistorier’ in achieving its intended goals, where it is expected that the experts will offer feedback on the accuracy and offer guidance on the alignment of the narratives with strategies that are known to drive behavioral change. Whereas it is expected that the novices will provide insights into its accessibility and the level of public interest and concerns. According to Smith et al. (2011) experts tend to prefer precise scientific texts with no need or desire for a narrative format, while novices generally favor a narrative style (Smith et al., 2011, p. 30). Additionally, they found that experts typically look for what the creators were trying to convey and what information is being communicated (Smith et al., 2011, p. 38).

Further, lie the differences between the groups in Milfont’s (2012) argument, who did a paper on examining the interplay between knowledge, perceived personal efficacy, and level of concern, and stated that *“knowing more about global warming and climate change increases overall concern about the risks of these issues, and this increased concern leads to greater perceived efficacy and responsibility to help solving them,”* (Milfont, 2012, p. 1003). People have many different levels of climate knowledge, so engaging both groups allows for capturing a wide range of perspectives, interpretations, and reactions to the material. The assumption is so forth that the experts will have a broader knowledge on climate change and its complexities than the novices, which might result in a greater concern and thereby more prone to acting pro-environmentally due to greater perceived self-efficacy according to Milfont (2012). The novices are chosen in order to see the potential of ‘Klimahistorier’ in the general public to provoke concern for the climate crisis and thereby efficacy, as their knowledge on climate change will be varied. The novices will reflect the views of the public, even though it is argued that young people (18-29 years) tend to be more concerned and engage more in the climate crisis (Madsen & Fertin, 2020, p. 14). Milfont (2012) additionally argues that it is

possible that concerned individuals are more likely to search for information and as a result have more efficacy for changing their behavior (Milfont, 2012, p. 1005). Therefore, the participants from various studies might have a greater knowledge than society as a whole due to their increased concern and will show the potential for a certain group. Further, Milfont (2012) states that information is more likely to be accepted and internalized if it comes from someone who shares similar political leanings (Milfont, 2012, p. 1014), arguing that the political dimension of the anthology might affect the participants in such way.

I have selected my participants by certain demographical characteristics such as their social background, age range, and geographics to eliminate difficulties that may otherwise arise in generalizing empirical patterns analytically. The participants are all master's students living in Copenhagen in the age range of 25 to 28 years. Furthermore, all the participants are women, which can be seen as an error in my data. The gender distribution might be because I have utilized participants from my own network, though I tried to have an even distribution. However, women tend to read more literature than men, and engage more in the climate crisis, which might have influenced the outcome of participants (Rasmussen, 2017, p. 7; Madsen & Fertin, 2022, p. 7). The focus groups are each internally homogeneously segmented in relation to academic background, since the specific interaction between participants with similar characteristics allows for easier communication and understanding (Halkier, 2009, p. 28). By conducting a comparative analysis both differences and agreements in interpretation, and areas of consensus or contention can be identified, which allows for insight in how individuals with varying levels of knowledge perceive and engage with 'Klimahistorier'.

In relation to whether the focus groups should consist of people who do or do not know each other, as it can create different forms of social interaction and group dynamics, I have chosen to go with participants who both do and do not know each other. As some participants are in the same year of studies for Climate Change students and some participants are in the same study for the students from different masters. However, if the participants know each other beforehand, there is a risk that they will behave according to established dominance relationships (Halkier, 2009, p. 30). Though, it is also easier for people to take part in the conversation if the group consists of network participants because it is safer to interact with already known people as to have an idea of how they might react. Participants from the same network can also deepen each other's perspectives due to shared

experiences. This also means that the social control in the group against individual statements, which are completely skewed in relation to what the person normally says and does, can come into effect, precisely because people in a social network have both a past and a future together. However, the social space in the focus group will then be more socially recognizable or comparable to people's everyday life (Halkier, 2009, p. 30).

I have recruited participants via my own network since I am recruiting students from my own Master's and due to the deadline of recruiting participants. Halkier (2009) emphasizes that if participants are recruited via own network, it is important to ask people from the network to find someone from their network that is not known to the researcher, as it can be more difficult to interview participants you have a personal relationship with, as large parts of the communication are implied (Halkier, 2009, p. 32). However, the focus group has the advantage of being based in discussion between the participants, arguing that my involvement in the interview as a moderator is minimal.

The groups ended up looking like this. Group CC (Climate Change) consists of five students from Masters of Climate Change from University of Copenhagen:

PARTICIPANT	AGE	GENDER	STUDY
CC1	27 years	Woman	Climate Change (writing thesis)
CC2	25 years	Woman	Climate Change (1st year)
CC3	25 years	Woman	Climate Change (2nd year)
CC4	26 years	Woman	Climate Change (writing thesis)
CC5	25 years	Woman	Climate Change (2nd year)

Table 1. The table shows the participants in the focus group interview for Climate Change Students.

Group DM (Different Masters) consists of four students from different masters from different universities in Copenhagen:

PARTICIPANT	AGE	GENDER	STUDY
DM1	26 years	Woman	Global Health (2nd year), University of Copenhagen
DM2	28 years	Woman	Global Health (2nd year), University of Copenhagen
DM3	25 years	Woman	Sociology (1st year), University of Copenhagen
DM4	25 years	Woman	Software Design (1st year), IT University

Table 2. The table shows the participants in the focus group interview for students from different Masters.

The Focus Group in Practice

The interviews were semi-structured with an interview guide to let the conversation flow between the participants but also to make sure that the groups had the same prerequisites. The interview guide can be seen in Appendix I. A week before the interviews, the participants got sent excerpts from the anthology consisting of two stories, 'Flipper' by Adam Price and 'Husholdning' by Mathilde Walter Clark. This was done so that the participants could read the stories, and be able to discuss the anthology and reflect on the question: "*Would you like to share any specific stories or elements from 'Klimahistorier' that stood out to you or made an impression?*" I chose two out of the eight stories due to time limit in the interviews and for the preparation for the focus group interviews not being too time demanding on the participants.

'Flipper' by Adam Price is set in future Denmark where climate change has worsened even though it is argued that: "*It's not fucking fair, considering that we had almost become CO2 neutral by 2030. I mean: Denmark did its damn part, and it's a shame that we now have to pay the price just because we are low laying.*" (Price, 2022, p. 37, own translation). It is a first-person narrator contemplating about the past both personally and in relation to the green transition, where the main character visits his father at a retirement home and reminisces thoughts on his childhood, where he was given a blow-up dolphin. He ended up losing the dolphin, but when they in the present go for a walk by the beach, they find a stranded whale and start looking into the corpse, seeing his blow-up lost dolphin, Flipper. The story has been chosen due to its reception, where Balsby (2022) argued that Price had understood the task: "*Adam Price, who is supposed to be one of Denmark's greatest writers, has delivered a pathos-filled and laughable short story about the consequences of the climate crisis (...) This is exactly the pat on the back that 'Klima-Dan' [Dan Jørgensen, ed.] wants.*" (Balsby, 2022, own translation).

'Husholdning' by Mathilde Walter Clark is about a main character who is hired to use his literary skills to "*(...) based on knowledge, on facts, (he said the word as if it were an archaeological find), to come up with some positive descriptions of a sustainable future, so that the 'climate fight', as he called it, is not only driven by fear.*" (Price, 2022, p. 107, own translation). It follows the main character through both his work life and his personal life, where he is torn about his role in society as he has to make money for living as well. The story was chosen due to its prominence in the media's reception with Thagesen (2022) arguing that "*the three stars are given for two reasons: the authors*

are excellent communicators, and Clark’s contribution in particular is both thoughtful and well-executed” (Thagesen, 2022, own translation). Katzenelson (2022) further calls it a genuinely funny text, whereas Balsby (2022) states that Clark’s story is well-written and amusing satire, arguing for “zero stars for the idea, but one star each for Kasper Colling Nielsen and Mathilde Walter Clark” (Balsby, 2022, own translation).

The interviews have been conducted at University of Copenhagen, where some of the participants have their daily routine and social interactions, though Halkier (2009) argues that a neutral institutional location may affect the interaction and possibly make it less relaxed since it may be less socially recognizable (Halkier, 2009, p. 36). In reality, the interaction seemed relaxed, possibly due to the setting or pre-existing relationships between participants.

	Group CC	Group DM
Participants	5	4
Duration	01:05:45	01:04:47
Time and date	November 10 th at 10:00	November 13 th at 15:00
Location	Gothersgade 140, 2. sal, C. Raunkiær	Gothersgade 140, 2. Sal, C.H. Ostenfeld

Table 3. The table shows the number of participants, duration of interview, time and date and location for the two focus group interviews.

Processing of the Empirical Data

The empirical data will be analyzed according to Braun & Clarke’s (2006) thematic analysis for qualitative research. Thematic analysis involves searching for repeated patterns of meaning across data sets such as focus group interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 86).

I started by transcribing the interviews to familiarize myself with the data and to be able to code the data. During this process, I marked down ideas for coding and generated initial codes both inductive, also known as data-driven, and deductive, also known as theory-driven. It is beneficial for the research to both generate codes inductive and deductive as both theoretical knowledge as well as emerging patterns from the dataset gets attention. Codes such as Immediate reactions and Tangible

is identified in relation to theory, whereas codes such as In doubt about the genre, Target group and Caricature is identified by analyzing data.

After this process, I created a mind map using the themes that emerged in the coding to create an overview of the dataset in relation to my research question. The resulting figure is shown in Figure 1. The themes are sectioned into theory-driven themes, which consist of the overarching *Potentials and Problems*, and *Interpretations* as well as *Reactions*, whereas these themes are sub sectioned into data-driven themes. The themes are primarily identified semantic, which means they are both generated from the explicit statements made by the participants; however they are also identified latent, which is by identifying the underlying ideas of the statements, seen in relation to social imaginaries.

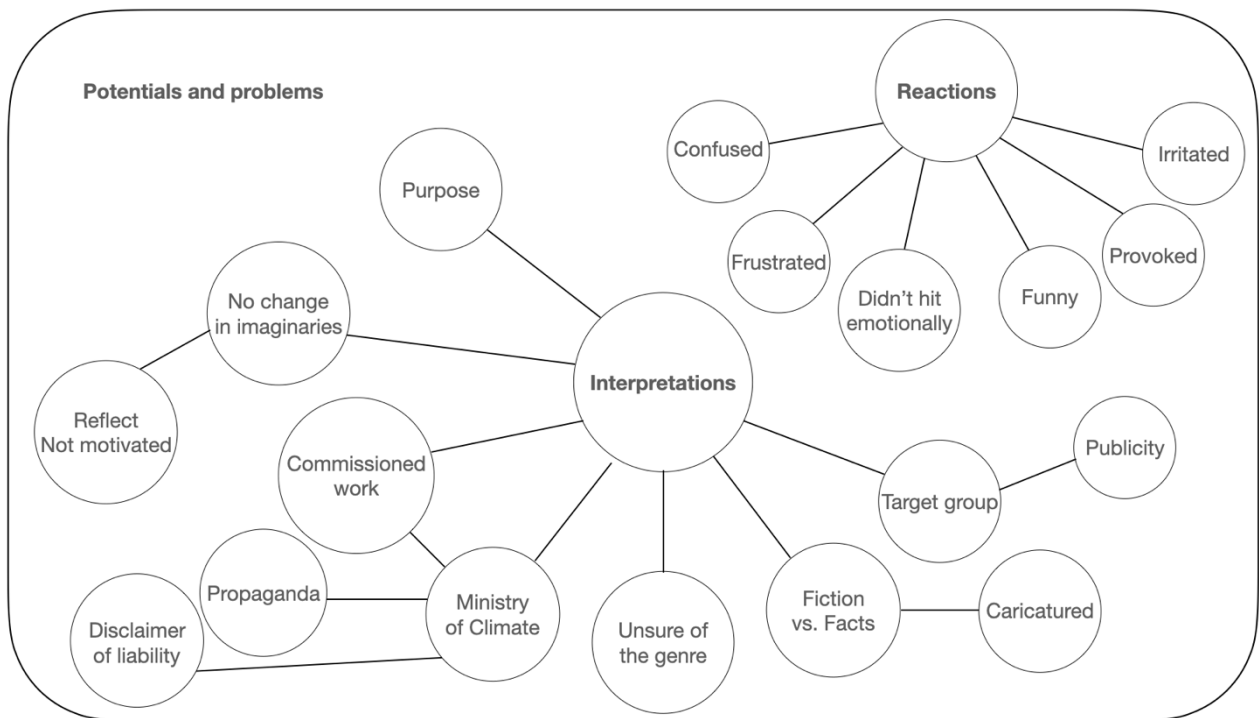


Figure 1. The figure illustrates the different themes from the interview data.

After a further examination of the data to refine the specifics of each theme, the following themes were made in relation to the patterned responses and the meaning within the dataset, generating clear definitions for each theme, see Figure 2. The theory-driven themes are still *Potentials and Problems*, and *Interpretations* as well as *Reactions*, whereas the data-driven in Interpretations has been narrowed down to *Social Imaginaries*, *Commissioned Work*, *Exaggeration promotes understanding*, and *Representation*.

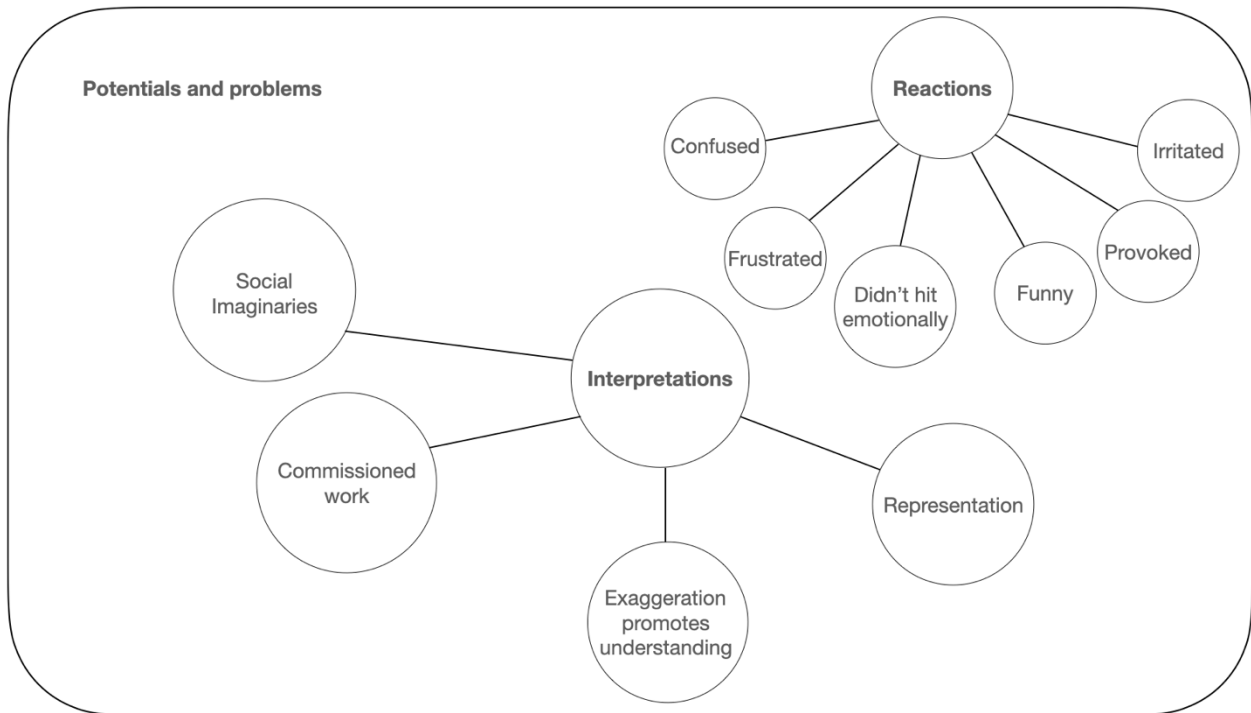


Figure 2. The figure illustrates the themes from the interview data that will guide the analysis.

Methodological Criticism

There are certain limitations to my study of readers' reception of 'Klimahistorier' that is apparent before execution, here the time horizon and the representativity.

The focus group interviews are based on two out of eight stories from 'Klimahistorier' making it more difficult to generalize the findings to the rest of the anthology, as the stories all differ in style. However, it can be argued that the two stories are representative for the anthology, though a more thorough examination of the potentials of 'Klimahistorier' as a whole would require the participants to read the whole anthology.

In relation to the time horizon Schneider-Mayerson et al. (2023) found that "*reading climate fiction had small but significant positive effects on several important beliefs and attitudes about global warming*". However, after a month the effects of reading the stories reduced to statistical no significance, why another limitation for this study is that the focus group interviews were completed within a week of the participants reading the excerpts. Therefore, the effects were observed immediately after they had read the stories, with no follow-up interviews to see the effect after some

time. This was not done due to difficulties in gathering the participants again, however it can be argued that the method still gives valuable insights into the anthology's potentials for creating social change. Therefore, for a thorough exploration of the reception of 'Klimahistorier', one would need to have interviews when the participant has been exposed to the climate fiction and further some months after to gain a more insightful understanding on how the anthology might affect readers in relation to contributing to the green transition as expressed in the postscript.

In relation to the representativity, I have done two interview groups with only female students from universities situated in Copenhagen. The two groups are so forth comparable as the participants all have the same prerequisites, though differing climate knowledge levels due to academic and personal involvement. However, even though the interviews contribute to an understanding of how different readers interpret climate fictions in relation to knowledge levels, these two groups are not representative as a whole for the population of Denmark, which is why more focus groups are required for future exploration to gain more knowledge on climate fiction's potential.

In summary, the methodological approach offers insights into how different readers interpret the climate fiction presented in 'Klimahistorier', and thereby contributes to the understanding of how climate fiction might serve as a tool for climate change communication to create social change. In the next section, an analysis upon the data from the focus groups interviews, will be presented.

Reception of ‘Klimahistorier’

In this section, I will analyze the data conducted in the focus group interviews with the focus of answering the research question: *What reactions and interpretations do readers have to the climate fiction presented in ‘Klimahistorier’?*

The analysis is categorized into different sections including, *Introduction of Participant, Readers’ Reactions to ‘Klimahistorier’, Readers’ Interpretations of ‘Klimahistorier’* and *Potentials and Problems of ‘Klimahistorier’*. The sections have been made deductive, in relation to Braun & Clark (2006), with the arguments of an understanding the participants will highlight their cultural norms; further the exploration of reactions is qua fiction being able to awaken emotional response; more the participants interpretations of the stories will showcase if the stories made climate change more tangible or think critically about their life; and finally the potential of the anthology according to readers will be concluded. Further, I have generated subsections within the section of *Interpretations*. Three of these sections have been made inductive in relation to Braun & Clark (2006), where themes such as *Exaggeration promotes understanding, Representation, and Commissioned work* came up in the data, while the last section is made deductive in relation to the emphasis on social change as a potential in the literature review, here *Social Imaginaries*.

By collecting data through focus group interviews, where the participants discuss the excerpts from ‘Klimahistorier’, I have been able to gain insights into climate fiction’s potentials and problems in relation to creating social imaginaries that can enhance pro-environmental behavior. The two groups differentiated as the Climate Change students had more of a discussion with each other trying to understand what the anthology wanted to convey in relation to facts, in line with Smith et al. ’s (2011) arguments. Whereas the students from different master’s programmes were quick in finding consensus between each other, as they had more emphasis on the narrative style. However, the participants from both groups made some of the same statements, arguing that the findings are somewhat general.

Introduction of participants

In this section, I will introduce the participants more thoroughly. This will be based on their own introduction in the focus group interviews, where they presented their knowledge of climate fiction and their engagement in the climate crisis. The introduction serves as a contextual description to highlight the participants preexisting cultural norms and concepts, as stated by Chess & Johnson (2009), and thereby furthering the understanding of how the participants prior beliefs and existing knowledge might affect the interpretation of the anthology.

Knowledge on the Climate Crisis and Involvement Through Everyday Life

The majority of the participants in both groups do not have any academic background in communication or literature, whereas the participants within different master's programmes had divergent knowledge about the climate crisis as all of them have had climate change as a theme in their study program, and some of them are active in climate movements and engage in the crisis in their everyday life. Further, all the participants noted that they try to act pro-environmentally in their everyday life by eating vegetarian or vegan, taking the bus or train instead of flying and actively engaging in conversations about the climate crisis. Though, all the participants stated that their actions were small and marginalized their efforts. More, the participants also emphasized the difficulties in behaving pro-environmentally with arguments like structures and power. Additionally, one of the Climate Change students, CC3, attributed her everyday actions to her study and argues that she might be a bit more climate conscious than the average Dane. In contrast, CC4 and CC5 both stated that qua their study in Climate Change they are doing less in terms of behaving pro-environmentally from being surrounded by the crisis all the time. However, these findings highlight that all the participants have knowledge about the crisis, which according to Milfont (2012), lead to an increased concern and greater perceived efficacy, as seen in the statements as well. Therefore, the assumption that the participants from various master's programmes might have a greater knowledge than society, is proven right, which will affect the findings. However, this acknowledgement will be taken into account. Further, these findings highlight the participants' ability to reflect upon their position in society, and how they view individual action, as they act upon the crisis but acknowledge that their actions cannot do it all.

Familiarity with Climate Fiction

There is a mix of opinions on climate fiction, with some finding it depressing and out of touch with reality, while others express uncertainty about the genre's definition and are in doubt whether they have come across climate fiction before. CC2 was the only participant who was certain that she had read climate fiction before, with the example of the Danish author, Theis Ørntoft. Otherwise, there was a discussion in both focus groups about the genre of climate fiction. CC1 and CC4 had pre-knowledge about climate fiction through their study in Climate Change, as in their first semester of studying, a group did a project on climate fiction. CC1 found the genre depressing and over-done in relation to that, making her question why fiction is used in that context, when the crisis already is severe enough. CC3 was in doubt about the genre at first sight, but in the discussion, she thought about different movies. CC5 had also looked at some climate fiction, but thought it was too out of touch with reality and depressing, so she did not want to read it. All participants in the focus group of different master's programmes students were in doubt about the definition of the genre. In relation to this, DM1 raised the question of how much climate is needed for it to be climate fiction and stated that literature is a reflection of reality and the climate crisis is a part of reality. Further DM3 and DM4 both mentioned that they had read fiction where some parts of the book were about climate change. So, despite Schneider-Mayerson (2018)'s research stating that the people who read climate fiction tend to be younger, more liberal, and more concerned with the climate crisis than the people not reading climate fictions, this was not the case in my study. In relation to this finding, the majority of the participants had not heard about 'Klimahistorier' before being introduced to it in this thesis, which might be attributed to their prior knowledge on climate fiction, or the lack of impact the anthology has had in their social circles.

Readers' Reactions to 'Klimahistorier'

In this section, I will delve into the participants' reactions to the excerpts from 'Klimahistorier'. As noted earlier in 'Climate Change Literature as Climate Communication', emotions work as a powerful motivator, where the narrative and aesthetic discourse can activate emotional forms of experience. Therefore, I will elaborate on the participants reactions to the two excerpts from 'Klimahistorier' in order to gain knowledge on the emotional forms of experience. The section is divided into subsections relative to the excerpts '*Flipper*', and '*Husholdning*' to better understand how the specific story affect the reactions.

The participants in both groups explicitly worded their reactions, where words like ‘silly’, ‘frustrating’, ‘shallow’, ‘funny’, ‘entertaining’, and ‘caricatured’ was used to describe reactions to ‘Flipper’ and ‘contrasting’, ‘critical’, and ‘confused’ was used for ‘Husholdning’.

‘Flipper’

The reactions to ‘Flipper’ amongst the Climate Change students were more scattered with participant CC1 stating that: “*When I read Flipper, I thought it was absolutely ridiculous (...) We’ve done plenty of things that were bad that we could have addressed instead of inventing something ridiculous.*” (Focus group interview CC, [13:49 - 14:14], own translation). Further, CC1 argued that she became frustrated by reading ‘Flipper’ and saw it as a sad attempt to describe the climate crisis in “*such a silly way*” (Focus group interview CC, [54:40 - 54:57], own translation). These statements can be seen in line with Smith et al. (2011), who argue that experts tend to prefer precise scientific texts with no need or desire for a narrative format, as the participants find the narrative style silly and ridiculous. Still, CC3 argued that even though ‘Flipper’ was exaggerated, it had some humor to it (Focus group interview CC, [14:28 - 14:53]), as well as participant CC4 who stated that she had a slightly different experience with both stories:

I think it was quite funny, but I read both of them critically, in their absurdity, which they emphasize. So, in that way, I think it was quite fun to read. But it’s not like they left me with a: I have to reflect on it. I already know something about it, so it’s just fun entertainment. (Focus group interview CC, [55:53 - 56:22], own translation).

Thereby, she finds the story as entertainment without having the ability to make her reflect, as she is already knowledgeable, which makes her able to read the story critically. She further stated that:

I’m a bit torn, because on the one hand: I think it’s a really good idea to get more literature out about it - I mean, it’s another way to reach people. But I’m also torn about what message you get out with those stories. (Focus group interview CC, [26:52 - 27:53], own translation).

Arguing that even though the stories had humor to them and provoked a positive cognition, the overall purpose of the stories can distort the reaction. Since the stories are meant to motivate for climate action, and depending on your prior knowledge on the topic, you will read the stories differently. CC1 stated that ‘Flipper’ could end up becoming a “*sovepude*”, an excuse for not changing something existing, for a target audience who do not have any or much prior knowledge about the climate crisis due to its caricatured style, since “*At least it’s [real life, ed.] not as bad as in Flipper*” furthering her annoyance towards the story (Focus group interview CC, [56:24 - 56:56], own translation). This emphasis also highlights that the Climate Change students have a focus on the information that is being communicated which makes them unsure about the use of a narrative style, which is line with Smith et al.’s (2011) findings.

Amongst the students from different master’s programmes, there were consensus about ‘Flipper’ awakening annoyance as a reaction. DM1 stated:

I think I was annoyed that there was so much focus on the future, that it had to be put so much on the cutting edge with all sorts of future elements. It was a bit too much for me. (Focus group interview DM, [10:34 - 11:04], own translation).

DM3 and DM4 both stemmed in and found it very caricatured, where DM4 stated that she felt it was “*far-fetched*” and obvious in relation to writing about climate change set in the future (Focus group interview DM, [11:05 - 12:29], own translation). However, both DM1 and DM3 thought ‘Flipper’ got better along the read, but DM4’s first impression was: “*Just my whole first impression was kind of like... Okay, are there going to be many pages, where it is just a bit overdone? Without nuances?*” (Focus group interview DM, [11:05 - 11:42], own translation). These reactions emphasize that the execution of climate fiction matters as to how it affects readers’ emotions as the exaggerated writing style made it hard for the participants to get emotionally invested in the story. Further, DM3 stated that ‘Flipper’ failed to evoke an emotional response making it hard for her to find a purpose in the story. She stated: “*I knew it was a climate story, but I just found it a little hard to figure out what the message was in this one. Maybe because it didn’t hit me emotionally. And I felt like it was trying to play on emotions a lot.*” (Focus group interview DM, [11:43 - 12:29], own translation).

DM3 more emphasized the challenge in evoking emotional response with: *“I think the woman was very simplified in the mother in the story. And I was just incredibly provoked by that. The authoritarian or the father and his attitudes.”* (Focus group interview DM, [13:37 - 14:30], own translation). This finding stresses again the importance of the execution of climate fiction in relation to representation, and so forth the reading experience. The reactions to ‘Flipper’ underscore the significance of the execution of climate fiction in influencing readers’ emotions and thereby perceptions and conveying its message about the climate crisis. While some found humor, others experienced annoyance and a lack of emotional connection. Further, the participants perceived the story as a potential excuse for inaction among those with limited prior knowledge about the climate crisis, which provoked more annoyance against the anthology. Though the participants recognized the potential for climate fiction to be a valuable tool for raising awareness, the effectiveness of ‘Flipper’ in motivating meaningful action was questioned.

‘Husholdning’

In regard to ‘Husholdning’, participant CC2 found it exciting due to the incorporation of and emphasis on facts, where she contemplated that it might be because the facts were new to her that she found it interesting (Focus group interview CC, [12:36 - 12:54]). This finding suggests that the story has a potential as CC2 is the only first year Climate Change student. Arguing that she is less knowledgeable than the rest of the participants in Group CC and finds it exciting, why less knowledgeable might find it exciting as well. However, she is still knowledgeable and have a concern about the crisis and the rest of the participants in Group CC also found ‘Husholdning’ critical and humoristic.

Amongst the different master’s students, DM4 found ‘Husholdning’ confusing as she had a hard time understanding the format, however she found it exciting:

It took a very long time to comprehend. But I actually thought it was a very exciting format. I liked the interplay between having your everyday life and then all the things you have to deal with on a larger scale. (Focus group interview DM, [12:46 - 13:36], own translation).

DM3 agreed and found it better and more contrasting than ‘Flipper’. She stated that ‘Husholdning’ *“certainly hit me more than the first one. Maybe also because I could just identify more with the*

thoughts and feelings in it. Also, the fact that it was a woman.“ (Focus group interview DM, [13:37 - 14:30], own translation). These findings showcase again the importance of the execution of climate fiction as ‘Husholdning’ evoked emotional response both with the content in the story, but also due to the fact that the participants could identify more with the story as they felt represented. The representation is emphasized with the statement of *“the fact that it was a woman”* authoring the story, arguing that representation plays a role in the reading experience and thus the emotional engagement as also stated in the arguments about ‘Flipper’.

Further, DM3 stated that: *“You get that extra frustration of “then let’s get started”, feeling from this. But it’s not certain that everyone gets that feeling from this. I just don’t know; I think it’s exciting how it affects other generations.”* (Focus group interview DM, [28:59 - 29:42], own translation). This finding emphasize that the reader’s preexisting beliefs and knowledge affect how they interpret the story, and that the participant reflect on her own position in relation to others. So, it stresses the argument of one’s level of knowledge plays a role in one’s reaction towards climate fiction.

In summary, the responses to ‘Husholdning’ reveal a more positive and engaging reception compared to ‘Flipper’, showcasing the importance of relatability and representation, as well as execution. So forth, climate fiction is not being judged as definitively good or bad by the participants as it depends on the execution of the stories. This finding of execution is not emphasized in the literary review, why it deserves more emphasis. Further, all the Climate Change students wants to read the rest of the anthology, whereas none of the participants from different master’s programmes have the need to finish it. The question of how these emotions invite motivation and whether they lead to a change in participants’ view on climate change is essential and will be elaborated in the following, where the readers’ interpretations of ‘Klimahistorier’ will be analyzed.

Readers’ Interpretations of ‘Klimahistorier’

In this section, I will delve into the participants interpretations of the excerpts from ‘Klimahistorier’ to highlight how the anthology is read and perceived for it to provoke the reader’s contemplation of a sustainable future. The goal is to understand the impact of the stories on readers’ view of climate change, their motivation, and the potential for creating new imaginaries about the future. The section

is divided into subsections of *Exaggeration promotes understanding*, *Representation*, *Social Imaginaries*, and *Commissioned work*.

Exaggeration as a Narrative Style

As noted by Benenti & Giombini (2023) a hope for utilizing climate change in fiction is that it can contribute to make climate change more tangible and immediate to readers. Nevertheless, discussions within both participant groups highlighted the challenge of distinguishing between fiction and fact in the narratives. Both focus groups had an emphasis on how the distinction might affect one's motivation for pro-environmental behavior, and tried to gain an understanding on how the narrative style affects one's reading experience in general. Moreover, the Climate Change students had a thorough discussion on the distinction between fact and fiction in trying to enhance their own understanding on the factual and fictional as well as trying to understand what information is being communicated through the caricatured style. The students from the different master's programmes did not focus on the factual elements in themselves but focused rather on the distinction. Indicating that the students from different master's programmes had an understanding of the facts being exaggerated, however they were more interested in how the exaggerated style is understood. This finding highlights that one's preexisting knowledge affects how the stories are read, with all the students having an emphasis on understanding how the narrative style affects one's reading experience in general, whereas the Climate Change students search for the information conveyed in the stories to understand the intentions and purpose.

DM4 argued that the use of fiction instead of facts can distort and make climate change less tangible and concrete: "*Can't we just say that it's absurd that we're making turbo chickens? Why does it have to be sci-fi and wild when we have something that is quite concrete?*" (Focus group interview DM, [17:42 - 18:12], own translation). CC1 also stated that: "*It doesn't really help when it's so caricatured, I think (...) Flipper is not at all realistic, so therefore it becomes a bit silly. But it's also more humorous.*" (Focus group interview CC, [34:14 - 34:32], own translation). Arguing that the use of fiction, especially in exaggerated and caricatured forms like 'Flipper', might make the climate crisis less concrete and detached from reality.

The participants further contemplated how other target groups would read and interpret the facts, where CC3 raised concerns about readers interpreting factual elements as dystopian fiction, creating

confusion about the severity of climate change. CC1 criticized the exaggerated portrayal in ‘Flipper’ as unrealistic and distracting from the seriousness of environmental issues, and CC5 stated: *“I think it’s clear that there are some people who would think, since it is so exaggerated the climate crisis is not so bad.”* (Focus group interview CC, [14:53 - 15:11], own translation). DM3 also stated in line with CC1 about ‘Flipper’ becoming a *“sovepude”* that:

I can get really scared that it’s a slightly dangerous tool in some way. (...) It’s a different outcome than what is described with the purpose. That it actually ends up with someone reading it and leaning back in a little bit: I’m not the only one, so it’s okay to have this feeling. (Focus group interview DM, [41:48 - 42:05], own translation).

The participants further noted a lack of seriousness in the narratives, describing them as having a Danish ‘hygge’ level, where the seriousness of the crisis is being diminished in humor. The use of humor and a somewhat detached tone raised questions about the effectiveness of the anthology in conveying the urgency of the crisis, with DM4 stating: *“Even though it was a comment on the absurdity of this way of thinking. There was just a lack of seriousness in it,”* and DM2 calling it *“nationalism-hygge”* (Focus group interview DM, [27:40 - 28:59], own translation).

In summary, these findings show that communication through climate fiction, where exaggeration is emphasized, might distort the readers’ interpretation of what is fiction and what is fact and raise concerns about the seriousness of the crisis, potentially influencing readers’ actions based on these misinterpretations.

Representation

The generational gap portrayed in the stories sparked discussions about the anthology’s potential impact on motivating readers to take action. DM4 argued that the generational gap in ‘Husholdning’ portrays the youth as in some ways extreme, with the older generation struggling to accept and understand this behavior and mindset (Focus group interview DM, [20:09 - 21:30]). DM1 sided and expressed a feeling of provocation and frustration due to the exaggerated portrayal. She further acknowledged the existence of the generational gap, but also expressed caution against how the exaggeration of the gap might divide more than it benefits:

I can't quite decide how I feel about the portrayal of the generation gap all the time, because I believe that it exists to a certain extent. But I also think it's something that sometimes gets talked up a lot. And maybe in some ways it divides more than what I necessarily think is beneficial. On the other hand, I don't think we should deny that there are sometimes differences. (Focus group interview DM, [21:55 - 22:15], own translation).

Moreover, she argued that it also depends on the reader how the portrayal is interpreted, and criticized the caricatured style of the generational gap and its potential to reinforce stereotypes about young people advocating for climate action:

Maybe that's also one of the reasons why I think it's (generational gap, ed.) a bit annoying that it's so caricatured. Because I also think, okay, it's just a bit of a self-affirmation: "Well, okay, it's also typically one of those young people who want some climate action." (Focus group interview DM, [41:22 - 41:47], own translation).

DM3 also added that the caricatured emphasis on the generational gap left her confused as to what to do with the story, as it did not leave her with motivation: "*What was the idea of creating that big "us and them", between generations?"*" (Focus group interview DM, [23:15 - 25:35], own translation). She further questioned the emphasis on gender as well as she was provoked by how women were portrayed in 'Flipper', hindering her ability to identify with the narrative:

As a woman reading... I was just provoked by the way gender played a role. It doesn't really have anything to do with the climate crisis. (...) But it also just makes it a little difficult to see yourself in it. When the father is given such a big role and the mother "laughs like a girl". Little things like that. Some sentences, a girlish grin or something. I was just very provoked by that. Because what does that have to do with the climate crisis? (Focus group interview DM, [23:15 - 25:35], own translation).

In line with this the participants collectively questioned the target audience, as they did not feel like it was written for them due to the lack of representation with the emphasis on gender and the generational gap. CC4 further questioned if the target audience even exists: "*Who does it want to*

reach? Who would pick it up if they saw it in Bog & Ide?” and added that it is more likely that someone who works with climate change will be curious about the anthology (Focus group interview CC, [30:26 - 30:57], own translation). Arguing that the anthology targets an audience already involved in the climate crisis, which is also stated by Schneider-Mayerson (2018). However, the stories do not target the participants in this case, why the question, of who the target audience is, becomes apparent. DM4 also expressed doubts about the anthology’s potential for reaching an audience that is not already involved in the climate crisis in some way:

I’m actually a little doubtful that these people will ever pick up that book. You know, a screaming green book with ‘Klimahistorier’ written on it. That’s how I sometimes feel about some of these things, since we are all very concerned about the climate crisis, and it hasn’t really changed anything, because some of the things that are pointed out in these texts, we may already know. (Focus group interview DM, [40:19 - 41:22], own translation).

DM3 debated whether the potential of the anthology lies in people, already engaged in the climate crisis, gifting the anthology to people with less knowledge and stated: *“It should be an obvious gift.”* (Focus group interview DM, [08:50 - 09:01]). DM3 though added that it is perhaps more divisive: *“If you have a man who could relate to that. Will they be motivated and feel more seen by reading that story?”* (Focus group interview DM, [23:15 - 25:35], own translation). CC5 suggested that reaching an audience unfamiliar with climate issues might require a more subtle approach, with climate playing a more passive role in the background:

I think maybe if it were to reach someone who hasn't read Climate Change, then the climate should perhaps be much more understated, that is, play a slightly smaller role and have it a little more in the background. So that it might be more about family intrigue (...) some themes where it’s not so explicit. (Focus group interview CC, [31:26 - 31:37], own translation).

CC1 emphasized the need for longer, more detailed stories with well-developed characters to create a lasting impression and reader engagement, as:

The stories are so short, you don't really get introduced to who these people really are. I can't relate to that because I don't know who his father is, and I don't know what kind of relationship they had. (Focus group interview CC, [32:24 - 32:54], own translation).

Moreover, she stated that the anthology might leave a bigger impression if the stories had another focus than climate change, like an emphasis on family intrigue that is caused by climate change, so climate change will not be the focal point but in the background (Focus group interview CC, [32:24 - 32:54], own translation).

In summary, these findings indicate that for climate fiction to actively engage readers, the participants need to be able to understand and identify with the stories. Additionally, the use of caricatures and exaggerated portrayals raised concerns about the anthology's effectiveness, where some participants suggested that a main focus on something else than climate change could engage a wider target audience.

Commissioned work

The participants in both groups expressed thoughts about the stories being commissioned, as also stated by literary critics. The participants suggested it felt forced rather than genuine storytelling and thereby created distrust towards the project, and furthering the question of whether the stories were written within certain constraints. Moreover, they questioned the impact of the stories due to the political context. The different master's programmes students were more skeptical about the involvement of the Ministry of Climate due to the political dimension and the trust in the ministry. The Climate Change students however emphasized the apolitical role of government officials, stating that the anthology might be commissioned but they do not interpret it as affected by political agendas. This finding shows how the different groups interpret the political dimension and highlights that different audiences consider the involvement differently, with the Climate Change students being less critical of the involvement.

There was an agreement between the two groups with the emphasis on the anthology being commissioned, where CC5 stated: "*I don't think I was too keen on the fact that the Ministry of Climate has been involved. It's just a bit of commissioned work.*" (Focus group interview CC, [26:08 - 26:20], own translation). Further, both groups stated that the excerpts seemed like they were written as a

‘school assignment’ emphasizing the interpretation of the anthology being commissioned work. CC1 stated that:

I think the way it maybe shines through the most is that it feels like an essay written in eighth grade. They’ve been given an assignment and they’ve written it. I don’t think the story itself was characterized by the fact that it was commissioned by the Ministry of Climate, but you can kind of feel that there was a framework for what this story should be about. (Focus group interview CC, [40:10 - 40:35], own translation).

Moreover, she emphasized the characterization of the work being commissioned, but she does not attribute it to the Ministry of Climate, but rather to the concept in whole of commissioning authors to write a story. CC1 also stated that especially ‘Flipper’ reminded her of an assignment an eighth grader could have made, resulting in everyone outbursting in laughter, as *“I think it’s really being dragged down to a low level, which is also good if you want to communicate something, but I just think that the seriousness is lost. It just becomes a bit like talking for talking’s sakes.”* (Focus group interview CC, [27:53 - 28:36], own translation). The participant here argues that the narrative style and quality of the story might compromise the seriousness of both the work and the crisis, which for her seems meaningless. However, she added that she could easily see the potential in the anthology, as the narrative style is seen as a good in communication as to being able to convey scientific knowledge in novel matters (Focus group interview CC, [01:03:57 - 01:04:17]), but she also argued that it is very much commissioned work:

It’s not because the stories are bad. I don’t think the book itself is a bad idea. It’s more that you have this assignment, where you have to create this story. And then we print them all together, and that’s the answer to this task (Focus group interview CC, [01:05:25 - 01:05:45], own translation).

DM1 also characterized the stories as assignments, however she corrected herself when mentioning it: *“Okay, I have to write this assignment. Well, not assignment, but I have to write this story.”* (Focus group interview DM, [15:59 - 16:12], own translation). These findings highlight the importance of the execution of climate fiction, as the participants interpreted the anthology as commissioned work,

even calling it a school assignment, why it is not only researchers and literary critics who interpret commissioned work as problematic.

DM2 raised concern about ‘Husholdning’ portraying a story, where it’s clear that it is commissioned work, raising suspicions about the anthology’s authenticity and furthering the debate about fact versus fiction:

If you follow that short story, you just become suspicious of the whole book. Because you think, okay, did it happen like this in real life, or not. Then you start to doubt how much of it is fiction. Or how free it has been, even if you say it’s been free. (Focus group interview DM, [48:53 - 49:11], own translation).

Moreover, a lot of the different master’s programmes students stated skepticism upon the involvement of the Ministry of Climate in relation to the ministry instrumentalizing art for their own purpose, with DM4 questioning the purpose of the anthology due to the involvement of an authority (Focus group interview DM, [32:22 - 32:52]). This is in line with Gray’s (2007) concerns about the instrumentalization of art for non-cultural goals, which is also reflected in DM3’ statement, where she emphasized that she sees an “*enormous potential in cultivating an emotional side of the climate crisis, that literature, culture in general, can contribute to*” but due to the involvement of the Ministry of Climate her trust fades and she becomes more aware of questioning the intentions of the anthology (Focus group interview DM, [44:27 - 44:58], own translation). DM4 also emphasized the potential for art and culture being a “*big*” tool in promoting awareness but expressed her skepticism about the ministry being the sender: “*I don't know if I can trust them to deliver it in a proper way.*” (Focus group interview DM, [01:00:52 - 01:02:15], own translation). Moreover, she questioned if it can be seen as propaganda:

I think, for me, it’s a lot of mistrust. Then it may well be that they have actually been given free hands. But I think I just can’t help but put it in that context. And put it into a political perspective. And then maybe find it a little hard to believe that they have tried to get... Well, of course they want nuances, it’s not like they’re total climate deniers. But I think I’m still quite distrustful of such an agenda sometimes (...) At the same time, I’m also very frustrated with what’s happening politically. I mean, if you don’t

completely agree with the direction that's being set, then I just don't know if... Then I can quickly become a bit of a tinfoil hat kind of person, like oh-oh, is this propaganda that I might not want to be influenced by. (Focus group interview DM, [47:41 - 48:52], own translation).

DM3 stemmed in with: *“Yes, it's a slightly dangerous cocktail when politicians go in and play with something that doesn't really belong in that sphere at all.”* (Focus group interview DM, [01:02:16 - 01:02:59], own translation). Thereby, it is seen that, the skepticism towards the Ministry of Climate is related to mistrust, as the confidence in the ministry and their agency is low, why their involvement in the anthology has, in this case, affected the readers' interpretation and made them question the intentions behind the publication. DM3 further stated that:

(...) it makes you wonder, what are facts? What is fiction? So, it's a bit of an exciting experiment. But I don't really think it's successful either in this way, because it seems like we all have that feeling, my confidence is just further eroded by this work. ([01:02:16 - 01:02:59], own translation).

Moreover, DM2 argued that she interprets the anthology as propaganda: *“But I also think it's hard not to see it as propaganda in some way. (...) where you become a little doubtful about what the point of this is.”* (Focus group interview DM, [52:33 - 53:14], own translation). This finding shows that the participants are doubtful about the authenticity of the anthology and the purpose behind the creation, ultimately raising questions about mistrust and the boundaries between artistic expression and propaganda. DM3 further stated that: *“It would have been nice if it had just been taken up outside the Ministry of Climate, that climate change in general was just a thing that was more prominent in culture.”* (Focus group interview DM, [44:27 - 44:58], own translation). Arguing that the anthology's intentions are novel, however the involvement of the Ministry of Climate messes with the potential.

However, the majority of the Climate Change students did not find the stories colored by the ministry as they considered the stories critical and without political bias (Focus group interview CC, [43:50 - 44:44]). CC1 stated that: *“I don't think of the Ministry of Climate Change as an organization or as an institute that is interested in it being a positive narrative.”* (Focus group interview CC, [46:00 - 46:25], own translation). Moreover, CC4 argued that: *“The way it was portrayed was actually a bit*

critical. I wouldn't think it would be if it was colored." (Focus group interview CC, [43:50 - 44:44], own translation). This distinction in interpretations between the groups highlights the individual understanding of the ministry's influence on the anthology. This further emphasizes the need for a more thorough understanding of instrumentalization of art as well as commissioned art in relation to climate fiction.

In summary, the interpretations of the anthology reflect challenges in balancing fiction and facts, targeting different audience at once as well as the "right" audience, and ensuring the seriousness of the climate crisis is not lost in humor or caricature. Furthermore, the majority of the participants expressed skepticism, distrust and concerns about the political influence, while some did not find the involvement to be a problem, however they were critical about the ministry's action, which made them more critical of the anthology.

Potentials for Creating Social Imaginaries

Andersen (2014) argues that climate fiction has the potential to prompt readers to engage in critical thinking and to contribute to the formation of social imaginaries and create new constructions of the world, however the participants in this study stated that the anthology did not make them consciously more critical of their own lives or motivate them. However, as stated earlier, all the participants already engage in the climate crisis with the Climate Change students doing it academically and all participants engaging personally. In fact, the stories left the participants with a sense of powerlessness rather than empowerment. DM1 stated that:

It somehow remains just a fiction, right? Stories, climate, stories. But it doesn't go beyond that. I think their hope is that you as a reader will reflect on it and think about it further, but I don't think it does that. (Focus group interview DM, [51:26 - 51:42], own translation).

DM4 further argued that the anthology had not changed anything for her, but rather left her discouraged (Focus group interview DM, [38:13 - 38:26]). Similarly, DM2 acknowledged that the anthology might have a potential if it brought other emotions into play as she was also left with a feeling of powerlessness like DM4 (Focus group interview DM, [42:26 - 42:54]). CC4, while recognizing a lack of hope in the stories, interpreted the stories as a commentary on how we relate to

the climate crisis with arguments and rationales portraying “poor excuses” (Focus group interview CC, [08:47 - 09:14]). She further stated that climate fiction needs some hope, so one is not left “*totally depressed, because then nothing happens,*” why it can be interpreted that the stories left her discouraged as well even though she interpreted as a commentary on the absurdity (Focus group interview CC, [26:52 - 27:53], own translation).

DM3 reflected on how the anthology did not alter her perspective on climate change and left her with a feeling of “well-then-now-what”, however: “*It hasn’t changed my view. Maybe it has opened a little more to the fact that there are many different stages, where the population is in the climate crisis. And there are many different target groups to reach.*” (Focus group interview DM, [36:04 - 37:23], own translation). Indicating that the anthology might not have contributed to her understanding of climate change and how to act in the climate crisis, but it has contributed to an understanding of the severity of reaching different audiences. She more added: “*It would make perfect sense to encourage more dialog across generations. (...) It’s obvious to perhaps cultivate it even more,*” for creating the change, but she did not find the anthology to be able to start a conversation (Focus group interview DM, [36:04 - 37:23], own translation).

However, it was stated by CC1 and CC4 that the anthology would be able to start a conversation if it was introduced in educational settings, where students are compelled to discuss its themes, as they did not find a potential for it otherwise: “*I think as a book in itself, then you have to have picked it up, and be interested in it and read the story and be two to talk about it.*” (Focus group interview CC, [35:42 - 36:09], own translation). Why the participants are arguing that the anthology requires a lot of organization, however they see a potential in it if it happens: “*Someone must have taken it up and thought it was exciting. And a lot of organization in some way that I don’t really see happening naturally in relation to everyday life (...) That’s probably the biggest potential.*” (Focus group interview CC, [36:10 - 36:28], own translation). This finding highlights the importance of organized efforts to facilitate discussions and ensure its reach for it to have an impact on social imaginaries as literature only can work as a catalysator for conversation to lead to social imaginaries. DM3 questioned the efficacy of the anthology in creating conversation and motivating for action, when the anthology is initiated by the ministry, who “*actually have the opportunity to act. Then it’s just a bit interesting what the book is supposed to be able to do.*” (Focus group interview DM, [31:18 - 32:22], own translation).

The potential for 'Klimahistorier' to inspire for social change, is thereby also questioned due to the involvement of the Ministry of Climate, where DM3 further argued that the involvement of the ministry gave her a sense of provocation as *"you're waiting for them to take action and you feel completely aware of what's at stake here."* (Focus group interview DM, [44:27 - 44:58], own translation). DM1 further stated that the anthology gave her a sense of powerlessness due to the involvement as *"it's a bit like passing the buck, as we mentioned earlier. Then we stare back at them. Pushing the problem in one way or another."* (Focus group interview DM, [01:04:08 - 01:04:28], own translation). Further, DM3 argued that *"It's an abdication of responsibility,"* (Focus group interview DM, [51:42 - 52:08], own translation) and stated:

I just think that the role of politicians is to make policy and create action. So, I think it's a bit, it's really cool with this initiative, but when there's no action behind it, it all just falls to the ground. (Focus group interview DM, [49:28 - 50:54], own translation).

This is in line with Andersen (2020) statement, that the lack of transformation in different cultures might not be the lack of visions for the future, but on the contrary might be because of already-existing power formations, where DM4 also argued that the agenda of getting citizens to gain agency is insincere as: *"It's more like it's the damn system that's wrong. You could feel that powerlessness."* (Focus group interview DM, [19:07 - 19:27], own translation). She further argued that there is both an individual responsibility, but there is also a fairly large structural political responsibility that needs to be addressed as there are many aspects of society where it is the system and structure that makes it difficult to act pro-environmentally (Focus group interview DM, [30:54 - 31:18]). CC4 stated that it feels hollow that the Ministry of Climate is the initiator:

When you see how little they have actually done in terms of what I would classify as a real action, or something that has a more concrete impact on CO2 than 'Klimahistorier' (...) it feels a bit like that: Why? What do you want? (Focus group interview CC, [38:16 - 38:28], own translation).

This finding is also emphasized with Eriksson's (2008) statement of art being institutionalized to create a valve for everything that cannot be realized elsewhere than precisely within the framework

of art. Thereby, suggesting that the anthology might have been published to create a valve for the climate action that cannot be realized, making it look like the ministry have politically done something. CC4 though argued that ‘Klimahistorier’ might have a ripple effect, which is important, but compared to the Ministry of Climate’s action, she finds it hard to see the purpose of the anthology (Focus group interview CC, [38:16 - 38:28]). DM2 stated that: “*It’s also just funny in general with the Ministry of Climate to want to make this book as if it’s the citizens who have to solve the problems*”, and further brought up the argument of 80 percent support from the Danes for the government to do climate policies and finds it hard to see the potential in the anthology in getting Danes to agree in climate policy (Focus group interview DM, [18:54 - 18:43]; [46:12 - 46:32], own translation).

In summary, these finding shows how the anthology’s potential, in regard to creating social imaginaries and fostering support for the green transition, is affected by the execution of the stories in regard to representation and caricature, as well as affected by the involvement of the Ministry of Climate due to the ministry’s action so forth in the climate crisis. Arguing that, the participants emphasize the need for more significant policy measures and systemic changes instead of political initiatives such as the ‘Klimahistorier’. This emphasis reflects a broader skepticism about the effectiveness of climate fiction in addressing the climate crisis, when an authority is the initiator. Moreover, the participants state the importance of organized efforts to facilitate dialogue and ensure its reach for it to have an impact on social imaginaries. The study so forth underscores the challenges of climate fiction driving significant structural change and its potentials and problems at facilitating conversations that contribute to the creation of social imaginaries, with DM3 stating that: “*It makes you reflect. But it’s hard to put action behind the words.*” (Focus group interview DM, [33:39 – 33:54], own translation).

Sub Conclusion on Readers’ Reactions and Interpretations of ‘Klimahistorier’

In conclusion, the reactions and interpretations of ‘Klimahistorier’ according to the participants in the focus group interviews suggest that the anthology’s potential to make readers support the green transition, is affected by the quality of the stories and the involvement of the Ministry of Climate. This is seen in regard to the caricature, where the seriousness of the crisis is distorted due to the exaggerated style, and due to the distinction between the fictional and factual, which might make readers justify inaction. Moreover, the participants reactions and interpretations show the importance

of relatability and representation to actively and emotionally engage readers. This emphasis also raises concerns about targeting different audience at once as well as the “right” audience. Further, the participants stated that they found the anthology commissioned due to the quality of the narrative style, as well as due to the involvement of the Ministry of Climate. The majority of the participants expressed skepticism, distrust and concerns about the involvement of the ministry and their political influence, interpreting the anthology as propaganda, whereas others stated that they did not find the stories to be colored by the ministry. Moreover, the participants do not see a potential in the anthology creating new social imaginaries and social change, as it somehow remains fiction, that it does not go beyond reflection, why the participants emphasize the need for more significant policy measures and systemic changes. Moreover, the participants state the importance of organized efforts to facilitate dialogue and ensure its reach for it to have an impact on social imaginaries. However, climate fiction is not being judged as definitively good or bad by the participants as they can see the potential in using it as tool for communication, though it depends on the execution of the stories. The analysis emphasizes the challenges of climate fiction contributing to generating support for the green transition as well as its potentials and problems at facilitating conversations that contribute to the creation of social imaginaries. In the next chapter, I will discuss all the findings in relation to the potentials and problems of ‘Klimahistorier’.

Potentials and problems of ‘Klimahistorier’

In this chapter, I will discuss the findings from the political context and the reception analysis of ‘Klimahistorier’ in relation to the existing literature on climate fiction. I will do this by discussing: *What are the potentials and problems of the literary collection ‘Klimahistorier’, initiated by the Ministry of Climate?*

In the existing literature, climate fiction is described as if having the potential to make climate change more tangible and concrete for the readers (see page 8 for more), while awakening emotions that can generate motivation (see page 7 for more). Further, climate fiction has the potential of creating new social imaginaries and make the readers more critical of their own lives (see page 8-9 for more). However, there exists concern about instrumentalization of art for non-cultural objectives, as well as arguments of that already-existing power formations might be the reason behind the lack of transformation and not the lack of visions for the future (see page 10 for more). This study reveals that while ‘Klimahistorier’ aimed to communicate the climate crisis to inspire social change, different potentials and problems to this ambition arose. Despite the acknowledged potential of culture and art in addressing the crisis amongst literary critics and focus groups participants, concerns were raised about the anthology being perceived as propaganda as well as commissioned work, leading to a primarily frustrated and provocative emotional response. Moreover, the participants perceptions of the Ministry of Climate’s role in ‘Klimahistorier’ reflected both skepticism of the execution, distrust upon the involvement, leading to questions of authenticity and effectiveness in an authority addressing the climate crisis through literature. Readers’ interpretations of ‘Klimahistorier’ also characterized the stories by caricature and an exaggerated style, highlighting challenges in distinguishing the fictional from the factual both in relation to the political context and in relation to the factual of the climate crisis. This left the participants feeling both frustrated and provoked, however also entertained due to the emphasis on the absurdity of the crisis, leading to the participants raising questions about how the anthology would be perceived by audiences less informed about the climate crisis. These findings, further questions how the anthology is to target different audiences at once as well as the “right” audience, as the participants lacked a sense of representation in the stories, for them to emotionally invest, and are doubtful of who will read the anthology. All in all, the participants were left with a sense of powerlessness after reading the excerpts. Though the anthology

may not have consciously made readers more critical or motivated in their personal actions towards the green transition due to the above, it has sparked reflections on the diversity of perspectives on the climate crisis amongst the public, and the need for organized efforts to enable discussions upon the climate crisis.

These findings raise the question if the Ministry of Climate can be the direct sender of any climate fiction due to the political context the literature will be enclosed in. The authors argued that the anthology is a great way for politics and culture to collaborate and stated that they had ‘free hands’ with the collaboration, with the ministry, only being a challenge. It was though mentioned by the participants that the plot of ‘Husholdning’ makes one suspicious of the whole anthology, as it makes one question what is factual and what is fictional about the process of making the anthology, and how free the process has been. Moreover, DM4 stated that a lot mistrust has been created and questioned the involvement of the ministry: *“Then it may well be that they have actually been given free hands. But I think I just can’t help but put it in that context. And put it into a political perspective.”* Why both participants and literary critics raised concerns about instrumentalization of the anthology for a non-cultural objective, calling the work propaganda. Therefore, it is seen in this study, that it is not just scientists and critics who think art loses something by being instrumentalized. However, the ministry could with the arms-length-principle maybe have avoided the problem of interpreting the work as instrumentalized propaganda. Therefore, the involvement highlights the arms-length-principle and the balance between artistic freedom and political influence, as the participants raise doubt about the authenticity of the anthology and the purpose behind the creation due to the involvement. Or as stated by literary critics, the ministry could have just dealt with the existing literature on climate fiction. The reception of ‘Klimahistorier’ therefore states that the arms-length-principle is needed for readers to engage in the climate fiction, as the political context influences the interpretations, with critics also stating that art may be political, but politics must refrain from being artistic.

Another question that rises, is if the politicians have misunderstood what is possible with climate fiction and have expected too much from literature. As stated by the participants, the anthology did not motivate, but rather left them with a feeling of powerlessness. It was mentioned that the anthology felt like an attempt by the Ministry of Climate for *“passing the buck”* and *“pushing the problem in one way or another.”* Moreover, they highlighted that the anthology’s intention of getting citizens to

gain agency is insincere as they find that the lack of action is to be attributed to the “*damn system*”. One could therefore argue that ‘Klimahistorier’ did not live up to its intention, at least based on this study. The ministry has the power to act upon the climate crisis, however, as stated earlier, the ministry fails to live up to their ambitions, with the policy falling short of its climate targets. The climate fiction in ‘Klimahistorier’ did however make the participants reflect upon their own and others’ position in the climate crisis, which might contribute to a more engaging public discourse as the readers will further their understanding of the diversity of perspectives. Though, it can be argued that the Ministry of Climate expect too much from the readers with the emphasis on motivation and engagement from the anthology. The lack of political action in creating infrastructure that supports a green transition is often the obstacle for individuals to take action, why the ministry’s intentions of the anthology might demand too much from both the authors and the citizens, when the ministry not live up to their ambitions themselves. However, it is emphasized that support for climate policies is influenced by public perception of the climate crisis, why the ministry’s attempt to affect the perception through ‘Klimahistorier’ might foster support for future climate policies. This argument so forth legitimizes the making of the anthology, however questions on the need for a change in social imaginaries arises, when considering that 72 percent of the Danish population supports more climate action, as mentioned before. Why the anthology maybe can be seen as an abdication of responsibility as also stated by both critics and participants, as it is also argued by research that the lack of transformation might not be the lack of visions for the future, but on the contrary might be because of already-existing power formations. Therefore, the anthology as well as the current Minister for Climate statement of that for political climate action to happen, 80 percent support must be achieved, might be leading to political stagnation. It is also questioned by research whether art has only been given space and permission to experiment with possible worlds because it has no effects outside of its own realm, however the potential impact of environmental narratives to affect political influence is also acknowledged. But as questioned by critics, what does the anthology bring to the table that literature does not already do and is an anthology the most effective way for an authority to address the climate crisis, with some literary critics calling it a waste of climate crisis. It can therefore be seen that there are both potentials and problems of this anthology created by the Ministry of Climate, but the reception analysis shows that the involvement of the ministry challenges the potentials.

This follows with the question of what it takes to create successful climate fiction. Both critics and participants stated that the anthology is interpreted as commissioned work, with the participants

stating that especially ‘Flipper’ feels like a school assignment written by an eight-grader, that needs to be written, because the authors were told so, not because they were inspired to do it. However, it is stated by both critics and participants, that the writers are doing a great job, but the involvement of the ministry as well as the fact of it being commissioned, challenges their reception of the work. This is in line with the literary critics’ question of whether commissioned art can effectively address the seriousness of the climate crisis, with them also questioning: *“How do you as a citizen, reader and critic relate to a book that was both conceived and partly financed by the ministry, even if you sympathize with the political agenda?”* (Kristensen, 2023, own translation). However, the participants also stated that they could see the potential in utilizing literature for communicating the climate crisis, where the literary critics also argued that it comes naturally to utilize art due to its potentials to contribute with new perspectives, but due to the involvement of the Ministry of Climate this potential is influenced.

Moreover, the participants emphasis on the uncertainty between distinguishing fact and fiction also raise concern about justification for inaction. This finding is similar to how the rhetorical battle in science over the climate crisis can confuse and create less trust and result in being a barrier for climate change efforts, as stated earlier. So, this uncertainty of what is in fact a description and prediction of climate change is not just happening in science but also in fiction, where the exaggerated narrative style challenges the potential of the anthology. In line with this, the participants also stated that the emphasis on climate in the stories, also made them question the quality, as they found the emphasis to take too much of the plot, with the thought of having it in the background would make it better as other stories would be able to come through, which would make them able to relate better and thereby feel emotionally invested. Moreover, the participants do not deem climate fiction as either bad or good, where CC4 highlighted that the emphasis on absurdity in the stories gave insights into where society is in the climate crisis. However, the majority of the participants stated that it was contra productive to exaggerate the absurdity of the crisis, as they were worried it might lead to justification for inaction. They stated that it made them reflect upon the diversity of perspectives, but that it somehow just remained stories.

The participants’ emphasis on a need for relatability and representation in the stories to actively engage readers is a significant find, as the existing literature on climate fiction does not stress the importance of representation. The focus is on climate fiction’s potential in the abstract, where this

study underscores the importance of the execution of climate fiction to foster reader involvement, as the lack of representation in relation to gender and the generational gap affected the reading experience, why this study contributes to the literature in the field. It was highlighted by participants that due to the simplified description of women in the ‘Flipper’, provocation was triggered, while “*the fact that it was a woman*” authoring the ‘Husholdingning’ affected the emotional engagement in a positive direction. Questions of how the anthology is to be reached by the other target audiences also rises as the participants in this study, do not feel represented in the stories, though Schneider-Mayerson (2018)’s research suggests that the people who read climate fiction tend to be younger, more liberal, and more concerned with the climate crisis than the people not reading climate fictions. The participants suggested that it maybe should be given as a gift to people who engage less with the climate crisis. Additionally, the participants discussed if the potential in the anthology it that it can be used to create dialogue, which then can create social imaginaries, however, they also stated that they find it hard to believe that the anthology will create conversations, without it being initiated as through educational forms. Further, the participants expressed concerned about how readers with less knowledge on the climate crisis would interpret the exaggerated style, and if it would lead to inaction. While literature has the ability to be “*effective at enabling or compelling readers to imagine potential futures,*” as stated by Schneider-Mayerson (2018), its impact still varies based on the reader. It may not be particularly influential in persuading climate skeptics and deniers, potentially due to them being less likely to read climate fictions.

Limitations

The following limitations to the methodological approach became apparent during this thesis process. Such as, my interview questions are crafted to guide participants in a distinctive way of engaging with the text, resulting in a structured and possibly less spontaneous dynamic in the conversation, as compared to the more natural interaction of readers in a casual, non-interview setting. Arguing that the settings obviously force participants to interact with the text in a different way than readers who are not in an interview situation would, why this is needed to be taken into consideration.

Moreover, the participants in the focus group interviews are used to both reflect and interpret due to their academic background, which is also reflected in the data. The participants make a lot of considerations upon their own position in society, how the anthology affect them, and how the involvement of the Ministry of Climate affects their perception. This might also be the reason why

the participants express a lot of skepticism upon the stories and the settings, as they are able to reflect on the context of the anthology, as well as being quite knowledgeable about the climate crisis and the ministry's actions. Further, the participants are chosen based on their assumed knowledge on the climate crisis, where it is seen that the participants are much alike in their comprehension of the crisis and the context, though with differing understandings, where the Climate Change students had a more thorough understanding of the facts. Moreover, the participants reflected on how they imagine other people will be affected by the anthology, which made them question the potential of the anthology, as they were afraid the narrative style would lead to justification for inaction by people less knowledgeable. Nonetheless, the study cannot say anything about how other audiences will interpret the anthology, which is why the conclusion on the potentials and problems of the anthology only shows for certain audiences.

Moreover, it is beyond the scope of this study to conclude whether 'Klimahistorier' have contributed to the creation of new social imaginaries, as the concept is based in how people view the world and their values and beliefs. In this study social imaginaries were tried analyzed by looking at discourses in the participants statements to form a notion. The participants explicitly expressed their thoughts on the anthology's ability to affect one for contributing to the green transition, where they expressed feelings of powerlessness and hopelessness by reading 'Klimahistorier'. This was both due to the realization of how complex the climate crisis is, and the realization of how the public is in different places, which can create a frustration but also an understanding about the current situation. The stories have not contributed to a new idea of what a green future might look like but have instead provided a picture of the situation now. This approach to analyzing social imaginaries gave a small understanding of how the participants imagine society, which might have contributed to their social imaginaries. Further research is needed to establish how researchers in communication work with social imaginaries as to how it is tested and analyzed, due to the immense focus on imagination as a potential for climate fiction in existing literature.

This study makes use of media articles to gain insights on the perspectives of the authors and the ministry, where it has been difficult to find statements in the media that praise the anthology, why further research is needed to enhance the understanding of how the political sphere have influenced the authors.

The reliability of this study is strengthened by multiple perspectives, such as an analysis of the context and the media's reception, which are included to gain a broader understanding of the empirical data and thus the problem. The method triangulation thus leads to a nuanced understanding of the case, but the generalizability of case studies is generally low, as the empirical data is context-dependent for each case, making it difficult to simplify the results. However, a case study approach precisely contributes to a context-dependent knowledge and a nuanced perception of reality, which is ideal in the study of social science and humanities (Flyvbjerg, 1992, p. 143-144). The choice of 'Klimahistorier' as a case so forth has some strengths and limitations to it. The anthology is heavily influenced by the political context it is situated in as well as the fact that it is commissioned work, which might not be universal, however this case contributes to an understanding of how significant the sender of specific climate fiction is. Moreover, this case is an anthology, where the readers read climate fiction from different authors, which has contributed to an understanding of how important the quality of the narrative style and representation is in order for readers to emotionally invest in climate fiction.

Future Research

In a future study, it would be preferable to have the participants read the entire anthology to obtain a thorough understanding of the anthology's potential as the stories differ in subject and whether they are based in utopianism or dystopianism. Moreover, it would be interesting to have an emphasis on the stories subject and acknowledging that the stories bring forth different social imaginaries, which might have contributed to a more comprehensive analysis on how the creation of social imaginaries happens. It would be preferable to conduct follow-up interviews to track the impact of 'Klimahistorier' and thereby gain a more thorough understanding of how climate fiction affects readers over a longer time and how it can contribute to creating social imaginaries, as the effect is stated to weaken over time. Besides, it would be interesting to have a broader range of participants in the focus groups interviews to examine how it affects different target groups, such as readers' who are less engaged in the climate crisis and might lack more insight. Another suggestion for future studies would be to enhance the focus on arguments for structural changes and pro-environmental behavior to understand the drivers of individual climate action as well as how societies change over time. Thereby, an understanding of how climate fiction can affect actions and attitudes, which might as well make the analysis of social imaginaries more tangible. Moreover, it will contribute to the discussion of the responsibility of the Ministry of Climate, and how they best can create change. It

would be preferable to interviewing both the authors and the ministry to get their respective perspectives, which could have aided to gain an understanding of how the political sphere have influenced the authors, as the question of whether the ministry have upheld the arms-length-principle still needs to be explored. Moreover, the perspectives might contribute to a less critical position.

Moreover, where previous research has focused on climate fiction as a genre, these findings emphasize that the use of case study as a research approach is needed due to the context-specific findings in the reception of 'Klimahistorier'. Therefore, it is suggested that employing a 'case by case' approach in future studies rather than a focus on climate fiction as an abstract phenomenon in the attempt to furthering this scientific field is required.

The discussion so forth underscores the complexities of using climate fiction as a tool for communication, especially when embedded in a political context. In the next chapter, I will conclude on this thesis.

Conclusion

In this section I'll conclude on the research question:

What are the potentials and problems of the literary collection 'Klimahistorier', initiated by the Ministry of Climate?

The incentive for this study lies in an understanding for the need of new ways of communicating the climate crisis, with climate fiction as a potential answer due to its ability to make the crisis tangible and engage readers in a process of creating social imaginaries. In relation to this, the Ministry of Climate in collaboration with Politikens Forlag and eight of Denmark's greatest writers has created 'Klimahistorier' to encourage reader action in relation to the green transition. However, the government itself fails to deliver on climate action on time, why questions of whether an anthology can effectively stand in the absence of political measures are raised, as it is stated by existing literature that existing power-formations might be the reason behind lack of transformation and not the lack of visions for the future. Therefore, this thesis delves into the case study of how 'Klimahistorier' can contribute to address the climate crisis.

The methodological approach to the thesis is based in constructivism and qualitative research. Why a literature review upon existing peer-reviewed research, and an analysis upon the political context to further understanding of the Ministry of Climate's involvement, as well as focus groups interviews to gain knowledge on readers' interpretations and reactions to excerpts from 'Klimahistorier', has all been made to qualify the findings in examining the research question.

Based on this thesis, it can be concluded that the effectiveness of literature in shaping social change is dependent on various factors, including the framing of narratives, the recipient and the sender, and the broader political context. It is concluded that participants and literary critics acknowledge the potential of culture and art in addressing the crisis, however they deem 'Klimahistorier' lacking potential due to the stories' quality and due to the context surrounding both the authors and the Ministry of Climate. The participants were left with a feeling of powerlessness after reading 'Klimahistorier', as their interpretations characterized the stories by caricature and an exaggerated style, highlighting challenges in distinguishing the fictional from the factual both in relation to the

political context and in relation to the factual elements of the climate crisis. This left the participants feeling both frustrated and provoked, however also entertained due to the emphasis on the absurdity of the crisis, leading to the participants raising questions about how the anthology would be perceived by audiences less informed about the climate crisis. These findings, further questions how the anthology is to target different audiences at once as well as the “right” audience, as the participants lacked a sense of representation in the stories, for them to emotionally invest, and are doubtful of who will read the anthology. The reception moreover shows concerns about the anthology being perceived as propaganda as well as commissioned work, leading to a primarily frustrated and provocative emotional response. Moreover, the participants’ perceptions of the Ministry of Climate’s role in ‘Klimahistorier’ reflected both skepticism of the execution, distrust upon the involvement, leading to questions of authenticity and effectiveness in an authority addressing the climate crisis through literature and questions of the anthology being an abdication of responsibility from the ministry. Though the anthology may not have consciously made readers more critical or motivated in their personal actions towards the green transition due to the above, it has sparked reflections on the diversity of perspectives on the climate crisis amongst the public, and the need for organized efforts to enable discussions upon the climate crisis.

Overall, a comprehensive study of the potential and problems of using climate fiction as a tool for communication and social change has been made in relation to ‘Klimahistorier’. This has contributed to an understanding of the intersection between art, science, and politics, while recognizing that effective climate communication through climate fiction requires an approach that engages diverse perspectives for reader representation and considers the political context for it to create social change. My study so forth contributes to the literature in the field, with the finding of how an emotional attachment is affected by the participants’ sense of representation in the stories. Thus, representation becomes crucial in climate fiction to foster reader involvement. These findings moreover emphasize the need for ‘case by case’ approach in future studies rather than a focus on climate fiction as an abstract phenomenon in the attempt to furthering this scientific field. It is thus concluded that ‘Klimahistorier’ holds theoretical potential for creating social imaginaries, however the political context and the quality of the anthology affects its realization, marking ‘Klimahistorier’ as a potential rather than a realized tool for social change.

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