Film clubbing

- Collective rituals for processing eco-anxiety

Felicitas Paul

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Felicitas Paul

Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences
Faculty of Natural Resources and Agricultural Sciences
Department of Urban and Rural Development
Division of Environmental Communication

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Abstract

Research shows that an increasing number of people suffer from the emotional consequences arising from the confrontation with climate crisis (CC), often referred to as eco-anxiety. Due to a lack of opportunities to express and process these emotions, a common response is to withdraw from talking about the CC leading to a constructed silence around the topic. Creating settings for collectively learning to live with the CC seems promising, especially in highly individualised societies like Sweden or Germany. This thesis aims to contribute to this debate by exploring if and how engaging with movies thematising the CC can facilitate its collective processing. Small-scale bottom-up film clubs are chosen as an analytical entry point for everyday life interactions that can facilitate emotional experiences and provide access to difficult issues such as the CC. With the help of a qualitative interview study applying an Interaction ritual theoretical perspective and using recent research from media psychology on the role of eudaimonic (truth-seeking) entertainment experiences, I answer the following research questions: What is the motivation and driver to engage with the climate crisis through climate film clubs? And: How do film clubs guide thoughts, emotions, and feelings? The study has shown an urgent need to address the emotional challenges connected to the CC. While film clubs cannot solve people´s individually experienced eco-anxiety, they provide a setting for collective experiences to facilitate meaningful interactions and promote social bonding. My study, therefore, highlights the importance of researching emotions as collective rather than individual experiences to better understand how meaning is co-created around the CC. Future research could investigate the long-term effects of film clubs and similar formats in creating solidarity and hope and include a more comprehensive selection of participants to find more generalisable benefits.

Keywords: film clubs, eco-anxiety, processing, emotions, interaction rituals, eudaimonic entertainment

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Abbreviations

CC	Climate crisis
CEMUS	Centre for Environment and Development Studies
EE	Emotional energy
EG	Environmental governance
FC	Film club
IR	Interaction rituals
OOO	Object-oriented ontology
RQs	Research questions
SLU	Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences
UU	Uppsala University

1. Introduction

Humans are part of a complex interconnected system that is and is not (re)produced through individual actions (Blasdel 2017). The climate crisis (CC) lets many of us become aware of this uncomfortable position, where individual acts are statistically irrelevant but, summed up, lead to a *"collective act of ecological destruction"* (Blasdel 2017:12). The term `eco-anxiety' has become popular in recent years in high-income countries like Germany and Sweden and encapsulates this feeling of powerlessness regarding the CC that leaves many oscillating between anxiety and avoidance (Norgaard 2012; Pihkala 2018). While these negative emotions create silence around CC, they also affect people´s well-being and mental health (Pihkala 2018). At the same time, people in these contexts are bombarded with instructions on how to live `sustainable lives´ accompanied by environmental governance (EG) practices that often focus on the individual rather than collective action (Middlemiss 2014). While not being able to comply with these instructions may lead to feelings of guilt (Verlie 2019), they are concurrently considered insufficient to match the existential threat the CC poses (Marks et al. 2021) in preventing a future that has already arrived (Horn 2014).

The lack of processing of the whole range of these CC-related experiences requires communal settings that enable opportunities in everyday life (Pihkala 2018; Verlie 2019). In this context, processing refers to identifying and managing one´s and others emotions but also recognising the role of emotions in social relationships (Brackett et al. 2011; Pihkala 2018). I am interested in the positive effect collective culture, and art materials may have on addressing issues faced by those who worry about the CC. For instance, films may cultivate particular entry points for dissolving distance and abstraction (Hawkins & Kanngieser 2017) and facilitating emotional experiences (Dill-Shackleford & Vinney 2020).

With my thesis, I **aim** to explore if and how engaging with movies thematising the climate crisis (CC) can facilitate its collective processing. I will investigate why and how participants discuss the CC in film clubs (FCs). I believe this can be societally relevant because emotions have a crucial impact on social relationships and society as a whole and academically because I think environmental communication scholarship benefits from researching the role of collective emotions in studying sense-making. To approach my research problem, I pose the following **research questions** (RQs):

1) What is the motivation and driver to engage with the climate crisis through climate film clubs?

2) How do film clubs guide thoughts, emotions, and feelings?

After having explained the problem, the aim, and the research questions of the study in this introduction, I will describe the thematic background in the next section (ch. 2). I discuss eco-anxiety, how people typically deal with climate anxiety by themselves, how there is a lack of collective opportunities to reflect, discuss and in different ways process emotions in relation to CC, and how FCs have been singled out as possible settings for such collective processing. In Chapter 3, I explain my theoretical framework, which consists of Randall Collins´s (2005) *Interaction ritual theory* and Bartsch & Hartmann´s (2017) *Role of cognitive and affective challenges in entertainment experiences*. I also present the conceptual framework that I use to approach the FCs' collective experiences and understand the film´s influence. Chapter 4 Methodology presents my methods and materials. It is here that I position my research as social constructivist with influences from object-oriented ontology (OOO). Then in Chapter 5, I introduce the analysis of the interview transcripts. After that, I will discuss the analysis with the help of the conceptual framework and supplementary literature connected to the thematic background. Finally, I will conclude with the learnings I took from conducting this study and possible future explorations.

2.   Thematic background

This chapter briefly introduces the phenomenon of eco-anxiety, its origins, and possible ways to better deal with the negative feelings that arise from confronting the CC, discussing the potential of FCs. These insights should pave the way for a more extensive discussion.

2.1. Our environment as a threat

Climate research is unanimous in that the climate crisis and biodiversity loss pose an existential threat to humanity (IPCC 2022). In the press conference presenting the latest IPCC report, UN secretary-general António Guterres called it an *"atlas of human suffering"* (United Nations 2022:2). Timothy Morton poses relevant umbrella questions regarding the gravity of the situation to contour the overarching idea behind this thesis (Morton 2018). How are we supposed to feel when we perceive ecology as a threat? How can we bear ecological facts, and if we cannot, what do we do then (Morton 2018)?

One reaction to these questions and how the climate crisis manifests itself is distressing emotions, especially in children and young people. A recent survey conducted in 10 countries asked 10,000 children and young people between 16 and 25 years how they felt about climate change and their government's responses. 27% stated that they were `extremely worried', 32% `very worried' (Thompson 2021:5). The top 5 feelings named were (in that order): `sad´, `afraid´, `anxious´, `angry´, and `powerless´(Thompson 2021:4). The highest proportion of responses with `very worried' and `extremely worried' by the CC were from the Philippines (84%), India (68%) and Brazil (67%), nations that have been hard-hit by the CC (Thompson 2021:5).

The survey reflects a phenomenon frequently referred to as `eco-anxiety', which is a complex emotional response to an existential crisis (Pihkala 2018:545). According to Pihkala (2018), eco-anxiety refers to different emotions and mental states resulting from environmental conditions and knowing about these. These cognitive and affective processes are intertwined with other aspects of life: global warming causes direct effects on the livelihoods of individuals and communities, but many people also suffer indirect impacts such as `depression´ and `loss of well-being´ (Pihkala 2018:545).

Empirical research on eco-anxiety and how it might affect mental health and behaviour is relatively new (Pihkala 2020; Wullenkord et al. 2021). Expressions of this phenomenon are often future-related anxiety (Gillespie 2016; Pihkala 2018; Verlie 2019), fear and/or worry (Pihkala 2018, 2020), melancholia (Lertzman 2015), hopelessness (Pihkala 2018), grief and guilt among other emotions (Verlie 2019). Experiencing these emotions has implications for one's sense of identity, place and safety (Norgaard 2012). Further, feelings of hopelessness and paralysis are common (Pihkala 2018). Another well-known response is a state that is read as apathy but might be, according to Lertzman (2012), more often the opposite. He found that many people seem to care a lot and resort to social and psychological defences such as feeling numb. He also identified a sort of `environmental melancholy´ that he describes as anticipatory mourning that some people do so they will suffer less when the moment has come when they lose their environment (Lertzman 2012:124). Albrecht (2007:96) coined the term `solastalgia´ as another relevant phenomenon and a direct consequence of the CC describing the experience of losing one's physical home.

Consequently, social groups often avoid talking about global warming altogether as a coping strategy (Norgaard 2012). This constructed silence functions as an unspoken agreement to not (or only occasionally) discuss certain topics such as the CC. That is not primarily a rejection of facts but rather a mismatch to integrate the information into everyday life practices or social actions (Norgaard 2012). As mentioned earlier, this mismatch and the defence and coping mechanisms may reflect the inability to process the emotions emerging from the threat global warming poses (Norgaard 2012). There are various other reasons for avoiding talking about the CC, be it indifference (Norgaard 2012) or (voluntarily and/or involuntarily) differing priorities and realities of life. In the context of this thesis, I focus on those who worry and are looking for ways to process their negative emotions in constructive ways that promote well-being and meaning amid the CC.

2.2. Lack of community

As described above (ch. 2.1.), the pressure due to the CC is building up. The quote I use from Guterres (ch. 2.1) is one amidst a seemingly endless stream of bad ecological facts. If knowing about climate science is not enough and does not automatically translate into action, then other angles to approach the crisis in everyday life situations need exploration (Morton 2018).

Since the Enlightenment, Western societies have experienced an individualisation driven by rationalisation and faith in technology (Senge 2013). This and the detachment of the individual from institutions that once provided meaning, such as religion, led to an increasing focus on individual feelings (Senge 2013). The tendency to direct attention inwards deflects from collective and

systemic issues such as the CC. Two trends have become visible regarding this individualisation since the early 1990s (Middlemiss 2014; Nehring et al. 2020). First is the likelihood of being individualised, which means perceiving oneself and acting primarily as an individual (Middlemiss 2014), which has become visible in the significant growth of the self-help movement. Secondly, environmental governance practices can often have an individualising effect, which encourages people to primarily perceive themselves and act as individuals (Middlemiss 2014). Linking this to the individuality typical for experiencing eco-anxiety (see 2.1), I do not think people who suffer from negative emotions regarding the CC should deal with these as individual problems. I think building communities and creating situations in which these negative thoughts and emotions can be expressed, channelled, and shifted can be a more effective way of practising self-help.

Pihkala (2018) argues that deep emotions but also existential questions that emerge from confronting global warming can best be processed through the exchange with others, especially in communities. In general, speaking openly about the difficulty of the situation with others is most helpful (Pihkala 2018). Marshall (2015) explains this, saying to admit that dealing with the CC is difficult on a practical and cognitive level. According to Pihkala (2018), most people do not have much room to express their eco-anxiety-related emotions and thoughts due to a lack of spaces and occasions to share with others. He labels these settings `holding environments´, a term commonly used in psychology, which are interpersonal or group safe spaces that enable processing of deep and troubling topics and emotions (Pihkala 2020:553). Additionally, psychological research shows that humans tend to use their local conditions to judge global conditions. As a result, the role of local holding environments impacts how people feel about the general state of the world (Pihkala 2018), which I think is important for how people feel about and act in the CC.

Verlie offers another interesting approach for collectively processing eco-anxiety, which she calls `bearing worlds´ (2019:751). To her, this means finding ways to learn to live-with the CC, meaning collective practices that help people learn to endure these negative emotions to foster livable alternatives (Verlie 2019). A core concept for this is affective adaptation, which she defines as *"not just coping, not just resilience, and not just a transformation of the self* [it] *is also the capacity to navigate and work with the emotional and affective responses of others"* (Verlie 2019:761). This statement emphasises the essential role of processing as an act situated in groups or interpersonal relationships. For Verlie (2019), affective adaptation is a form of care work and is necessary to cultivate a relational understanding of well-being counteracting individualisation (Verlie 2019).

To conclude this section, Pihkala (2018) and Verlie (2019) both highlight the crucial role of hope in collectively engaging in the CC and dealing with eco-anxiety. Verlie (2019) says that anxiety and hope are closely linked and often alternate or

are felt simultaneously. Hoping and mourning together is a vital aspect of collectively learning to live with CC together with what she calls other *"climate-changed humans"* (Verlie 2019:758).

2.3. Film clubs as collective sense-making

Small scale bottom-up FCs are an interesting analytical starting point for my study because they typically emerge in private and public spaces in the vacuum (ch. 2.2) where civil society tries to make sense of and relate to the CC. In this part, I will start by discussing the role of films as the cultural material in the FC events and how they can impact their viewers. Following that, I will discuss what functions a meeting in a FC may have for its participants.

(Non-)fictional movies can capture contemporary discourses and ideologies and are part of societies' collective consciousness, which can be an insightful source of knowledge. Especially, pop-cultural fiction movies can, through their artificiality, sharpen and simultaneously expand our view of reality, ourselves, and each other if we critically engage with what we see (Schmitt 2022). How one is affected by a story varies across cultures and depends on the personal and social background, but generally, movies are meant to convey stories and evoke emotional experiences (Dill-Shackleford & Vinney 2020). According to Dill-Shackleford & Vinney (2020), people find and (co-)create meaning in and through stories: stories can function as platforms for vicarious experiences that generate and help understand common emotions shared with others. Processes of self-discovery and personal growth can result from the emotional experiences that movies offer (Djikic et al. 2009). Engaging with the world in this way can be healthy and adaptive for processing emotions and thoughts by clarifying values, issues, and goals (Smith et al. 2017; Dill-Shackleford & Vinney 2020). Dill-Shackleford & Vinney (2020) argue that beloved stories facilitate feelings of unlimited possibilities and understanding of universal truths. Their study found that sharing and referring to stories in conversations is helpful for inter-personal communication and help people to bond (Dill-Shackleford & Vinney 2020).

Environmental topics can be found in many movies; especially in the last decade, environmental fiction, often called `climate fiction' or `cli-fi', has gained increasing popularity, both in literature and film (Schneider-Mayerson 2018). Contemporary cli-fi is dynamic and covers a more diverse range of topics than the apocalyptic and dystopian narratives that have been popular in the last decades (Cole 2021; El Ouassil & Karig 2022). The existing research sees cli-fi as helpful for the viewers and readers to reflect on their perceptions of and role in the CC (Milkoreit 2017; Schneider-Mayerson 2018; Cole 2021). In sum, research points out how movies facilitate the (co)creation of meaning and discussions about difficult issues such as the CC, which is important for my study. At the same time, there is so far little

research on what happens when people interact through films. Therefore, I will now turn to present several functions that I collected from diverse literature that I think FCs may have and compare them later with the outcomes in my discussion.

1) FCs make use of movies as a *collective and visual reference*, i.e., typically all participants have seen the film, and this collective experience is used as the entry point into a collective discussion. By dissolving abstraction and distance, they can help participants visualise and understand the CC (Hawkins & Kanngieser 2017).
2) FCs make use of *dialogical tools*, i.e. using narratives that can structure how people comprehend the CC (Veland et al. 2018). The *"joint attention"* of watching a movie together (Hanich 2014:344) helps participants learn about the affinity and divergence in their experiences and contextualises complex issues such as the CC.
3) As an art-based event, they provide a *liminal space*, i.e., by dissolving the boundary between reality and fiction (Islam 2016; Pihkala 2018). Movies can facilitate access to *"the unfamiliar and non-linear change we struggle to grasp"* (Veland et al. 2018:44) such as CC.
4) They can create s*ocial bonding* through sharing of emotions bridging individual and collective experiences (Rime 2007).

3.   Theoretical framework

3.1. Interaction ritual theory

Randall Collins explains his Interaction Ritual (IR) theory as a `radical micro-sociology' that looks at everyday life micro situations as an entry point to understand broader social issues (Collins 2005:7). He argues that interactions form the individual- not the other way around. Collin´s theory focuses on communicative rituals and how they can influence individuals' decisions to become part of groups (2005). The following quote by Sen explains how looking at IRs can show how rituals develop in groups but also how they help (re)produce cultures:

> Rituals, in turn, can be considered a sort of upward sedimentation, rising up from an ocean of talk to congeal into the substance that is sociality and are of crucial importance because they create the forms of relations that ground the social order. This chain of determinations demonstrates that communication as ritual is constitutive of human society. (2017:474)

Collins takes the ritual as the basis of interactions, but his work reflects different theoretical traditions and concepts that show where within sociology this theory is situated (Collins 2005). He combines theories on rituals from two distinct scholars - Émile Durkheim and Erving Goffman – with a conflict theory of social processes (Collins 2005; Greve 2013). First, his focus on the micro goes – along with Goffman – back to the broader tradition of symbolic interactionism (Greve 2013), which aims to explain how human behaviour and interaction can be understood based on the exchange of symbols or meaningful communication (Allen 2017). Second, Collins borrows Weber´s assumption that the core of social structure is based on the stratification of structures of domination (Greve 2013). Third, Collins draws on Durkheim, when he uses the idea that solidarity emerges from a situation of *collective effervescence*, a collectively experienced intense and shared emotional state among participants of a ritual (2005:35; Draper 2014). Collins expands Durkheim´s idea of rituals to everyday face-to-face interaction, arguing that rituals take place not just in specific phases of life such as religious ceremonies (Collins 2005). His concept is part of the sociology of emotions and aims to connect

emotions and cognition with social structures through situated action (Collins 2005).

In IRs, Collins views individuals and groups as gatherers of emotional energy (EE) (2005). The goal of interactions is to gain and distribute EE through IRs. IRs take place in situations where individuals, groups, and activities produce EE. Collins defines EE as *"a feeling of confidence, elation, strength, enthusiasm, and initiative in taking action"* (2005:49) that helps individuals orient in their social world. Whether IRs can produce high levels of EE depends on four conditions: *group assembly (bodily co-presence), barrier to outsiders, mutual focus of attention, and shared mood* (Collins 2005:48). High EE leads to feelings of confidence that can be expressed in a drive for action; low EE to isolation and depression (Collins 2004). A successful IR - a maximisation of EE – results in so-called collective effervescence. Collective effervescence describes a shared, strong emotional experience that connects members of a group to a collective identity and goals through experiencing solidarity, the construction of group symbols, and standards of morality, which can help groups and individuals understand the world (Collins 2005:49). *Figure 1* depicts the structure of an IR.
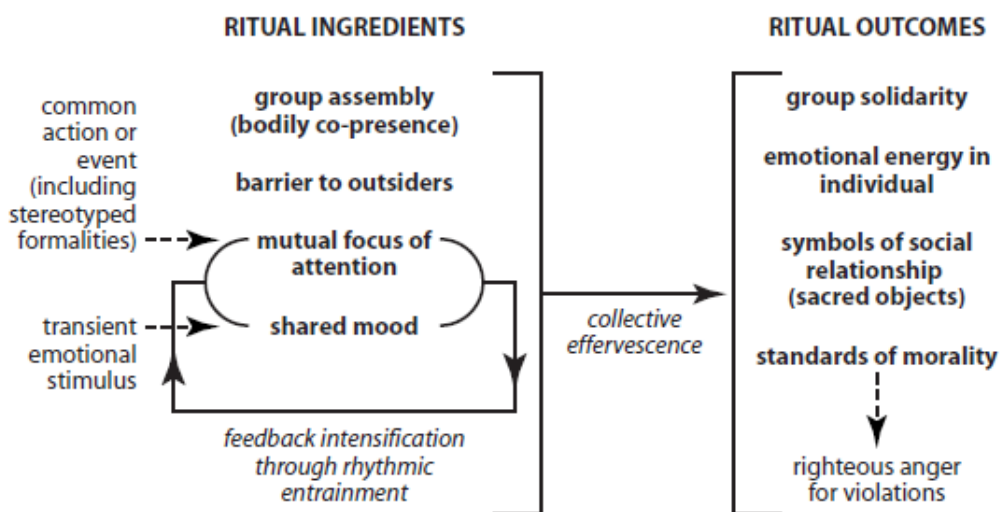

Figure 1 Interaction ritual (Collins 2005:48)

3.2. The Role of cognitive and affective challenge in entertainment experiences

To better understand the impact films play as communication tools in the FCs, I use Bartsch & Hartmann´s (2017:29) work on *The Role of Cognitive and Affective Challenge in Entertainment Experiences* and complement it with contributions

from their colleagues in recent entertainment research. These scholars emphasise the difference between *hedonic (pleasure-seeking)* and *eudaimonic (truth-seeking) entertainment experiences* and their effects on the viewers (Oliver & Bartsch 2010; Oliver & Raney 2011; Bartsch 2012; Bartsch & Hartmann 2017).

Bartsch & Hartmann´s (2017) study explores the assumption that the underlying causes of these two types of entertainment and viewers' overall experiences might be connected to the level of cognitive and affective challenge the media content poses. According to the authors, there is a general belief that audiovisual entertainment, such as films is regarded as passive consumption. This idea underestimates the complexity of the visual experience and the motivation to watch a film (Bartsch & Hartmann 2017). However, an increasing body of research shows that viewers often seek film content that they perceive as meaningful, moving, and thought-provoking (Oliver & Bartsch 2010; Oliver & Raney 2011; Bartsch & Hartmann 2017). This demonstrates that watching films can require active engagement depending on the content (Bartsch & Hartmann 2017).

Three aspects play a major role in how viewers perceive entertainment experiences: *fun, appreciation* and *suspense* (Bartsch & Hartmann 2017:29). Appreciation as part of eudaimonic experiences can be described as *"the perception of deeper meaning, the feeling of being moved, and the motivation to elaborate on thoughts and feelings inspired by the experience"* (Oliver & Bartsch 2010:76) and is often driven by the level of cognitive challenges or a combination of affective and cognitive challenges, for instance, tragic stories. Affective challenges result in increased suspense (e.g., thriller), while the absence of both cognitive and affective challenges leads to the experience of more fun (e.g., predictable, stereotypical stories). These results support the assumption that fun is associated with recreation-appreciation is more related to cognitive challenges and personal development (Oliver & Bartsch 2010).

Since all the FCs showed films about the CC, I will focus on the findings on eudaimonic entertainment in more detail. Eudaimonic entertainment often covers complex and dissonant themes, such as justice violations, human hardship, and moral dilemmas (Oliver & Raney 2011; Tamborini et al. 2011). Controversial scientific and political conflicts also fall into this category due to their complexity and uncertainty of information (Bartsch & Hartmann 2017). All these issues lead to cognitive and affective challenges that make the experience eudaimonic. Especially overcoming affective challenges can lead to personal development, as it is important for individuals to be able to understand and regulate negative emotions (Bartsch & Hartmann 2017). This `emotional mastery´ may indicate why individuals choose this type of entertainment (Bartsch & Hartmann 2017:45), where the confrontation with negative feelings is considered essential for meaning-making (Anderson et al. 1996; Park 2010). Based on this research, the need for meaning-making stems from the negative experience of viewers when their

individual belief in a just and meaningful world is violated. This leads to a cognitive dissonance which, when resolved, can lead to a deeper understanding of the world and oneself. This is a first step toward personal development and is already used in the therapeutic field, where film therapy is more frequently used as a stimulus (Bartsch & Hartmann 2017).

However, the authors suggest not neglecting the fact that whether the content is perceived as challenging and how it is processed depends strongly on situational factors and personal dispositions of the viewers (Bartsch & Hartmann 2017). To conclude, the study helps to better understand the potential of engaging with audiovisual media. The authors point out that the results should be the starting point for further research looking more at possible therapeutic and prosocial outcomes of eudaimonic entertainment (Bartsch & Hartmann 2017).

3.3. Conceptual Framework

In the previous section, I discussed both theories separately. Now, I want to look at them together to see how they can complement each other so I can use them as a tool to discuss the results from my analysis and answer my research questions.

I chose Collins´s (2005) IR theory because all the FCs fulfil the four ritual ingredients, namely *group assembly (bodily co-presence), barrier to outsiders, mutual focus of attention, and shared mood* (2005:48). To better understand how to apply this theory, I looked at other studies, which was helpful, but the research contexts differ significantly as the majority of papers I read focus on religious rituals (Barone 2007; Baker 2010; Heider & Warner 2010; Wollschleger 2012; Wellman et al. 2014). I believe that religious rituals might trigger more intense experiences for their participants than the FCs I focus on because participants in worship services demonstrate a very strong emotional commitment. Nevertheless, both are similar in that they can be settings for processing emotions and thoughts that may serve as sources for meaning-making, depending on the level of collective effervescence produced. Thus, IR theory is an approach that helps me see if the FCs generate collective effervescence and if that leads to one or more ritual outcomes (ch. 3.1).

I chose to investigate FCs because I think films as cultural and art materials can be a meaningful entry point for engaging with the CC. In relation to IRs, films might facilitate the generation of collective effervescence that can lead to successful IRs by establishing, sustaining, and heightening the mutual focus of attention that can lead to a shared mood. To better understand the movie´s impact on the interactions, I utilise Bartsch & Hartmann´s (2017) work on *the role of cognitive and affective challenges in entertainment experiences*. Further, their research on eudaimonic entertainment experiences can help me understand how climate films impact the participants' sense-making as I saw many parallels between their research and the

interviewees' experiences. In the discussion, I will explore how the ritual outcomes and participants' meanings relate and how this aligns with the concept of eudaimonic entertainment. Figure 2 depicts the connections I see between the ritual outcomes and meanings from the analysis that I will discuss in more detail in chapter 6.
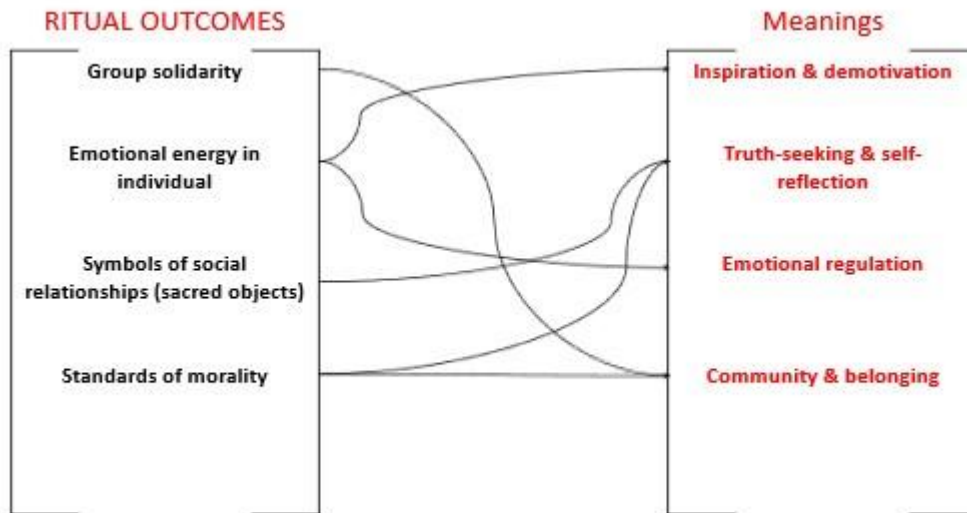
Figure 2 Connection between IR outcomes (Collins 2005:49) and meanings from analysis

4.   Methodology

In this chapter, I will introduce and explain the methodological approach I chose. I follow Creswell & Creswell´s (2014) three-part design consisting of my world view, the research design, and the methods. I will complement these parts with a brief description of how I decided to process my data, ending with some critical reflections.

4.1. World View

For this thesis, I base my qualitative research on a social constructivist worldview, following the belief that individuals make sense of themselves and their experiences through subjective meanings, in other words, through the subjective interpretation of social action (Crang & Cook 2007; Creswell & Creswell 2014). In my role as a researcher, my goal is to better understand these complex meanings that are co-constructed and negotiated through situated interactions (Creswell & Creswell 2014).

However, I am not a radical social constructivist, meaning I believe there is a world outside our understanding. I base this view on Timothy Morton´s work on object-oriented ontology (OOO), a philosophical orientation first formulated by Graham Harman. OOO asserts that there is no complete access to a thing in its entirety. Here, access means any mode in which a thing can be comprehended (Morton 2018). According to Morton (2018), thinking is not the only mode of access and by no means the primary mode because, in OOO, there is no primary mode of access. Among other things, OOO does not single out thinking, especially human thinking, as a special access mode that truly gains access to the essence of things. OOO strives to eliminate the type of anthropocentrism that claims that humans are at the centre of meaning and power. This idea of different accesses might also explain my interest in FCs which I perceive as an alternative mode to access the CC (Morton 2018)

4.2. Research design

This research is performed as a qualitative study, which I use to explore the meaning-making and meanings that people assign to their participation in FCs, which can help me answer my research questions. This approach is also in line with my world view (ch. 4.1) that reality is socially constructed as meaning-making is often a core part of qualitative research (Gibbs 2018).

For the whole thesis project, I try to follow Swedberg´s (2014) approach to *theorising*, i.e., the process before formulating a final theory. Today, social sciences students are often unaware of this process as they are mostly exposed to finished theories. For him, it is essential to learn how to construct theories drawing on empirical materials (Swedberg 2014). I followed his suggestions for my thesis by first observing or exploring the topic I chose to gain a sufficient empirical understanding. At this stage, I neglected any theoretical considerations. Secondly, through discussing with my supervisor, I tried to find a name for the phenomenon at the centre of my thesis. In this stage, I looked at existing concepts that I thought could help me explain the detected phenomenon, thus, answering my research questions. For theorising my analysis, I drew on Randall Collins´ (2005) *Interaction Ritual Theory* and complemented it with concepts from Bartsch and Hartmann´s (2017) work on *the role of cognitive and affective challenges in entertainment experiences*. This whole process was abductive, meaning I went back and forth between my empirical material and theories as an iterative process.

4.3. Methods and materials

This chapter describes the data collection process in my interview study and how I recruited the participants.

4.3.1. Qualitative interviews

As I conduct a qualitative research study, interviews are a suitable method to learn about the interviewee's experiences and meanings (Creswell & Creswell 2014; Robson & McCartan 2016). Here, the type of interview relates to the depth of answers. I chose semi-structured interviews because while I think keeping flexibility based on the flow is essential, I still wanted to cover the same main topics throughout the different interviews for reliability and comparability. During the interviews, I took notes to ask follow-up questions and ensure that I covered the main topics. Depending on the interviewee's answers, I asked unplanned, follow-up questions to see what they considered essential and adapt to the different FCs. Regarding the length of the interviews, I always stayed between 40-60min, which is considered an appropriate time interval to gain deep insights without prolonging

the conversation beyond the saturation of data (Robson & McCartan 2016). Additionally, 5 out of 6 interviewees were held in English, one in German.

As a method, interviews display benefits and drawbacks, which I can connect to my own experience conducting the study. First, interviews tend to be flexible and adaptable (Robson & McCartan 2016), which I would add feasibility to as a Master thesis project disposes of few resources. Second, interviews heavily depend on verbal communication, which in combination with non-verbal cues, can help investigate meanings (Robson & McCartan 2016). For my thesis, doing all interviews face-to-face benefited this paraverbal communication - the non-verbal cues such as facial expression, tone of voice, or posture - to listen to what and how something is said (Donovan et al. 2016). Robson & McCartan (2016) also list several disadvantages of interviewing, from which I will briefly explain the ones that applied to my data collection. First, the lack of standardisation can affect reliability and the difficulty of avoiding biases (Creswell & Creswell 2014; Robson & McCartan 2016). To counteract these issues, I attempt to be transparent about my role as a researcher and how I collected and used my data (Creswell & Creswell 2014). Second, organising, conducting, and processing the interviews is very time-consuming, which I alleviated by using transcription software (Robson & McCartan 2016).

4.3.2. Participant observation

To complement the data from the interviews and better understand the interactions taking place, I intended to do a small participant observation. Through this, I wanted to be able to directly observe and be present in the situation in which the participants make their experiences (Robson & McCartan 2016). Creswell & Creswell (2014). However, I was planning my field research when such events were barely taking place due to the COVID-19 pandemic. To decrease the organisational load and uncertainty due to the pandemic, I decided to revive the FC at the Centre for Environment and Development Studies (CEMUS), a joint centre between Uppsala University and the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, my employer at the time because there it was easier to communicate and understand the restrictions. In a meeting with one of the leadership members, we planned a FC. In the pandemic, this option was more feasible, but I also found CEMUS to be an interesting location as they focus on transdisciplinary collaborative learning that aims to transcend the boundaries between academia and society at large. Unfortunately, the week of the event, I got COVID and could not do the field research.

4.3.3. Recruitment of participants

Below, *Table 1* gives an overview of the participants from my data collection. In the beginning, I found it difficult to recruit participants as I was looking for small-scale FCs that are often private or not advertised much online. Once I started the first interviews, I found an increasing number of FCs.

As previously described (ch. 4.3.2), the original design of my data collection contained one observation of a FC I organised at CEMUS, followed by interviews with its participants. My at the time colleague from the leadership with whom I planned and who facilitated the event was kind enough to ask the event participants to sign up on a list if they would be willing to be interviewed for my thesis. Through this, I found two interviewees (P3.1, P4). Additionally, P3.1 offered to share their experience from a recent event in their activist group, through which I found P5. P1 and P2 participated in the friends´ movie night that I organised. P6.1 from the work lunch seminar was a suggestion by my supervisor. In the Interview, P6 offered to also talk about the weekly Sunday movie nights (P6.2).

Table 1 Overview of interviewees

Interviewee	Gender	Age	Education & Occupation	Nationality & Location	Living Situation	Film club
P1	Female	25	Master student	Swedish; Uppsala, Sweden	Collective	Friends' movie night
P2	Female	31	Master student; Field Coordinator	German; Uppsala, Sweden	Single household	Friends' movie night
P3.1	Non-binary	26	Master student; Course coordinator	British; Uppsala, Sweden	Collective	CEMUS movie night
P3.2						Activism movie night
P4	Male	39	Master; PhD student	Swedish; Uppsala, Sweden	Farm	CEMUS movie night
P5	Female	25	Master student	German; Uppsala, Sweden	Collective	Activism movie night
P6.1	Female	27	Master; Research Assistant	German; Uppsala, Sweden	Collective	Work lunch seminar
P6.2						Sunday movie nights

4.3.4. Interview guide

When I designed the interview guide, I thought about what I needed to know in order to answer my research questions. I started the interviews by briefly introducing my topic, explaining practicalities (consent form and interviewees´ rights, and demographic questions), followed by `grand-tour´ questions about their general experience of the event (Crang & Cook 2007:69). After that, I had dived deeper into the experiences at the events, focussing on the interactions, followed by more general questions on FCs and experiences with similar events (e.g., book clubs). I ended with reflection questions on how the interviewees felt since the events and asked if they would like to add anything. When preparing the guide, I had read about Collin´s (2005) IR theory, and even if I did not know if I would apply it to my data later, it helped me think about what I wanted to ask the interviewees regarding the interactions at the FCs, which links to the idea of theorising (ch. 4.2). Other elements of the guide focussed on the FCs in general and the interviewee´s experiences at the evens, especially emotions. After each interview, I adapted the interview guide slightly, keeping the main topics but losing or re-phrasing some questions.

4.4. Processing of data

All interview recordings were transcribed the same day while my memory was still fresh. I used the transcription software *otter.ai* and listened to the generated transcripts to make corrections. For the interview in German with P5, I used *descript*. In the transcripts, I left disfluency words in but left them out in the analysis (ch. 5).

To prepare and structure the analysis, I did three rounds of coding, mixing open or emergent with *a priori* coding. The first round was very open, where I did not try to see patterns but be perceptive and take notes of whatever became salient. The second round was still open but more structured in the way I was looking for emerging codes and themes, which was influenced by how I structured my interview guide. The third round was *a priori* coding, where I applied predetermined codes to the transcripts (Gibbs 2018) using the coding software MAXQDA. I assigned the codes I found in the first two rounds to the three themes: *Setting, Interaction ritual ingredients,* and *Meanings* (ch. 5). The interaction ritual ingredients (ch. 5.2) are based on Collin´s (2005), while Setting (ch. 5.1) and Meanings (ch. 5.3) are other elements of the FCs that are also in line with the structure of my interview guide. During this round, I adapted and changed the predetermined codes.

4.5. Critical reflections

In this qualitative study, I have to be aware of the highly contextual nature of the data I collect and the overall conclusions I draw (Creswell & Creswell 2014). In my role as a researcher, I have to be aware of my subjectivity, by which I mean recognising that my knowledge is positioned and partial, requiring me to reflect on my background that shapes the study´s outcome (Crang & Cook 2007; Creswell & Creswell 2014).

After the interviews, I reflected on several points that I think I could do better as an interviewer and would have improved the interviews in general. First, English is a second language for me, which influenced the clarity of my language. Second, reducing sounds and expressions of approval was difficult, avoiding suggestive questions and doing the silent probe. Third, I do not have experience in interviewing. Fourth, it was difficult to ask questions about emotions. My impression is that for most interviewees, it was unusual to be primarily asked about emotions rather than thoughts. Fifth, for most interviews, several days, often weeks, passed since the events which noticeably impacted their memory. This might have also enabled the rationalisation of the interviewee´s experiences meaning the human tendency to *"formulate reasons for our actions afterward, based on what we at that moment think sounds sensible"* (Joosse & Marshall 2020:610). Sixth, it could have been beneficial to conduct the interviews in the same location where the events took place (which was only the case for P4 and P1) due to the `situatedness of knowledge´ (Joosse & Marshall 2020:610).

5.   Analysis

This chapter presents the qualitative analysis of the data I gathered through the interviews. The descriptions of the themes *Setting* (ch. 5.1) and *Meanings* (ch. 5.3) and their sub-themes directly emerged from the transcripts through several rounds of coding. The theme of *Interaction ritual ingredients* (ch. 5.2) comes from a priori coding Collins´s (2005) IR theory. All themes are interwoven and interdependent, which will become visible in the analysis but more in the discussion. At the end of each theme, I summarise the main points and show why they are relevant to my topic. To explain the themes, I use quotes from the transcripts, excluding disfluency words like `uhm´ or repetitions like `that… that´.

Figure 3 shows a depiction of an IR, which I modified to apply to the FCs (Collins 2005:48) and which provides an overview of my analysis. Everything in burgundy is the themes and sub-themes I identified through the coding of the interview transcripts that lead to the structure of my analysis.
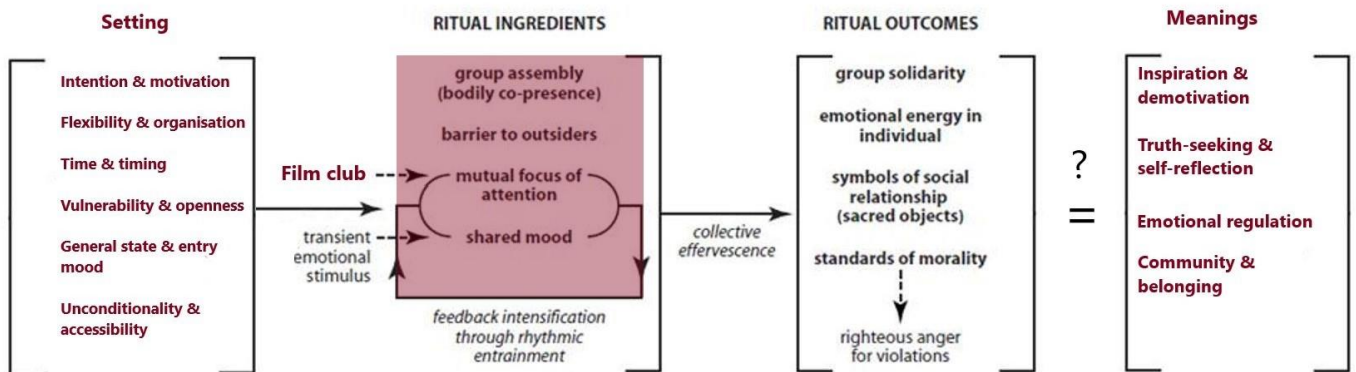

Figure 3 Interaction ritual in a film club. Modified from source: Interaction ritual (Collins 2005:48)

5.1. Setting

5.1.1. Intention and motivation

Common reasons mentioned for attending the FCs by all participants highlighted were curiosity, novelty, and fun *"It was a fun idea. Because I'm not really used to do that."* (P2). The expectation of recreational entertainment that is relatively light and effortless (e.g., compared to a documentary) seems to be a mobilising factor in convincing people to join. P3.1, who works with CC related issues and is an activist, expected a controlled emotional experience with a `return ticket', where one can momentarily engage with a story but disengage afterwards.

> I will say that it was kind of easier to go to the *Don't look up* screening, because I knew that it was a fiction story [...] often I just don't have the mental or emotional capacity for that [*consuming non-fiction*]. *Don't look up*, it is just fiction. Like, even if it makes me sad, I can sort of blow it off as a fiction afterwards, and I can sort of let it go. But then that's what kind of threw me when I watched it, because it actually just rung so true of our actual experience [*as activists*]. But it kind of got me there easier than for a documentary (P3.1)

The mobilising potential of movies is also a strategy P3.2 use to generate new members in their activist group. There seems to be an assumption that movies are relatable and can help connect with different groups in society that might be otherwise difficult to reach. Here, hedonic motivations serve as an entry point to raise interest for the group's overall goal of making activism more accessible and fun.

> We thought one of the activities we could do to encourage people to get more engaged with [name of organisation] in general, is to organise film screenings, because we know that people like coming to film screenings, even if they don't necessarily want to go to a protest. (P3.2)

Using a discussion about a pop-cultural film was also seen as a tool for a more informal exchange of perspectives in a professional environment and an alternative approach to studying a phenomenon relevant to work.

> [The film] was really hyped. I remember that I saw a lot about it on social media and heard about it. And from just seeing the trailer it seemed to be really matching with our storytelling project and really, with what stories do we tell about the climate crisis? And how people act according to what they're told? And what do they believe in? (P6)

P4 enjoys settings like the FC, which he described by comparing it with a similar, more meaningful event he organised in the past to show how it can generate different access to topics and bring together different kinds of knowledge. *"There's an intention to learn something, there's an intention to do something you will open up a different kind of possibility for something else to happen" (P4).* Overall, I found that the interviewees saw the film events as opportunities to generate a more relaxed

atmosphere and a pleasant and creative way of exploring a topic through different lenses.

5.1.2. Flexibility and facilitation/ organisation

I found the interviewees value the FCs and often compare them to similar experiences from their past that they found meaningful or enjoyable. While such a format requires a minimum of organisation, the informal and relaxed atmosphere attracts participants. Thus, semistructured or organised gatherings with an intention that is slightly facilitated but mostly free-flowing seem to be appreciated most.

While the interviewees describe the FCs and similar settings as dynamic, stressing the need for flexibility to fulfil the group's needs, I also find that communicating the setting's intention provides orientation for participants to know what to expect or how to act. For instance, having prepared questions may structure and help ease the conversation *"we still had these questions prepared in case no one really has a specific question. Or if we need a conversation starter, then we have these questions prepared"* (P6.1).

> Creating a space where things could happen that is you don't know what's going to happen. But it had that intentionality again, that three or four points that we tried to formulate what kind of space it was. But then what happened in that space was up to everybody who felt that there was a need to have events. (P4)

Defining the intention may also establish a more comfortable atmosphere that enables constructive discussions. *"I think this topic* [FCs and similar formats] *is also very interesting because I feel like many times in society, when you have different viewpoints, you directly become antagonistic" (P2).*

Several interviewees mention consistency as another essential factor for FCs and similar formats. Everyday life demands many practical decisions, and attending an organised (recurring) event might alleviate the mental load. P6.2 here uses the term `institutionalised´, which I think captures this idea of providing structure while acknowledging the dynamic nature of social life and interactions.

> It sounds a bit more serious than it is, but they [movie nights] are somehow institutionalised, so they are sort of an institution […] almost every Sunday, we come together, and we watch a movie, and we discuss it. So, there's not the need to kind of ask should we do this and kind of this whole organisation around it […] I really appreciate that. (P6.2)

P4 remarks that while he thinks the FC format can foster meaningful discussions through its focus, organising such settings can feel unnatural or staged as it might disrupt the natural flow of interactions.

And that's part of what life is, in some sense, if you tried to sort of pin it down, you're gonna lose something in that. That doesn't mean that there aren't sort of general things that seem to create some sort of effects.

I think the interviewees all appreciate a certain degree of organisation, but there seems to be a fine line between having a setting that feels too formal or too amorphous.

5.1.3. Time and timing

Among the interviewees, time seems to be the essential condition or constraint for attending an event or not. While all interviewees express the wish to have more opportunities to engage with CC collectively, they find it challenging to make time for such activities.

I'm glad that I have time at the moment, so if I were working full time now, I think it would be very different. But because I have a lot of time, I can also take the time to deal with things psychologically. (P5, *authors translation*)

P5 saw the possibility of being in charge of one's own time as a driver for a more communal life, which she associates with overall well-being.

I would wish that people could organise their time more how they want, that there would simply be more time to also be there for a community and to be there for oneself, but I think that this is also mutually dependent […] When I get stressed, I pay much more attention to myself than to other people […] and that then also annoys me. (P5, *authors translation*)

When reading through my interview transcripts, I find that a FC format is generally seen as less time-consuming, for instance, compared to a book club, which requires much more preparation and effort, *"It's more doable for many people like, so if you want a broader group of people than I think a movie is, it's good, because more people maybe have time to actually look at a movie"* (P2).

Extending this idea of manageability, P3 values that a FC takes place in a predefined time frame. In this way, a FC externally presets a period when to engage, which may take less effort to motivate oneself to talk about the CC but may also benefit well-being.

As an event it kind of encloses it in this time. You know, it's like, this is a set time where you can engage with it and maybe talk to other people about it, you understand as well versus sort of, I can watch this video or watch this film, or we listen to this podcast at any time. So, you don't, because you're just gonna do the easier thing. (P3)

Apart from `time', I also found that `timing' contributes to whether a setting suits the interviewees.

> You can learn what can help you be a part of creating really good conversation, of course, but there's also the sort of, you know, when sometimes it just feels like there's this **this magic sort of factor** [author´s emphasis] that you can't really predict, or you can't really understand either. Why suddenly a certain conversation just really, really creates a different kind of ambience or feeling or a possibility than others and I think it has to do with all sorts of things. (P4)

I interpret this `*magic sort of factor*' (P4) as timing because while a setting can invite meaningful interactions, it depends on how the different elements of an event interplay, for example, how the group dynamic can be influenced by the choice of film. In Sweden, where people usually have time off on Sundays, P6.2 relates timing to having headspace.

> It's [*movie nights*] also a Sunday, it's kind of a day where in the best case, in an ideal case, no one is working. And where you are kind of also feel like maybe you have more head capacities and also time capacities to, to talk about other things. […] And during the week I don't know what people think about but it's kind of a lot of practical thinking. I noticed that at least also with my housemates and sometimes with myself, where I find myself, okay, now I'm in functioning mode. […] So, there's also something about the timing maybe?

5.1.4. Vulnerability and openness

All interviewees speak about vulnerability and openness in different ways as factors facilitating meaningful discussion with others. P4 speaks about vulnerability and openness as a choice participants make. This willingness can be interpreted as a sort of agency or even responsibility one has for their own but also the experience of others.

> If there's like that additional sort of intention to sort of explore things and to test things out, but the more experimental sort and you have people with who you are, that are willing to make themselves a little bit vulnerable as well.

To me, the willingness to be open and make oneself vulnerable depends on the level of intersubjectivity, for example, how participants share meanings, which for the interviewees seems to depend on the level of trust and empathy among other factors. P2 compares her experience with if she had watched a film with close friends. Knowing people well can provide intimacy and carefreeness that might make it easier to share.

> I would just be like more, saying whatever. But being with other people, I think more about what I say so maybe I don't know how to say it but maybe it would be more like, more parts, more colorful, more dynamic. (P2)

Whether the interviewees feel comfortable discussing topics like the CC seems to depend on the background and personality of the respective friend(s), making the group constellation vital. P1 said, *"I'm also very selective with which friends, I*

discuss, because it's all about the space, yesterday in the discussion group, we had the space to discuss about it". P1's and P2's accounts of past discussions with friends surrounding the CC make them worry about the social repercussions *"So, in some circles, I might feel judged that I'm so interested, or that I could be viewed as such an Ökotante* [treehugger] *and put in a box"* (P1). The quote indicates that talking about CC can feel quite sensitive, personal, and threatening to one's identity. However, friendship and the resulting closeness do not make oneself automatically more comfortable sharing. Assumptions about how friends and family react lead some interviewees to avoid discussing CC related issues. P2 echoes this, recalling an experience with her father *"So that was good for me to get this surprise that oh, he's actually open to talk about it [...] you are kind of expecting this resistance"*. CC for P1 is an important topic, and she reflects how the way she talks to others can negatively affect them *"I wish there would be a way to show people or ignite the interest in people without being superior and judgy"*. For me, this shows that in a discussion, vulnerability is mutual, and trust is not a state but actively created through the participants.

5.1.5. General state and entry mood

A recurrent theme in the interviews is how the general state of the participants and the mood in which they enter the situation affected the discussion. For instance, the freshness of an experience can shape the discussion, meaning how much time passed since the participants watched the movie, which differed among the events.

> I think the difference also comes from if you discuss something right after you watched it, when you really have the feelings inside you compared to when the few days have passed, and it has been settling a little bit. (P6)

Another factor could be *"what their* [interviewees] *current state is"* (P4), which I think links to well-being. P3.1 draw connections to an intense phase of their activism, which made the movie resonate strongly with them.

> I'm doing so much activism at the moment; I'm really involved with a lot of things. Watching a film that so perfectly captured that feeling of like hitting a brick wall of trying to tell people what the truth is […] It hit quite close to home and it actually made me feel really quite anxious watching it. (P3.1)

Personality traits may also impact the experience *"I was a bit sceptical even before watching it […] that's also like a personal quality of mine, when everybody else sort of, like, oh, this is such a great movie, then I immediately become sceptical."* (P4). In this case, a discussion may provide clarity by confirming or suspending an opinion. Current events on a global or national state that preoccupy people's minds may shape the discussion in how people relate to the movie and

which aspects are salient: *"Our conversation ended up going in all sorts of different directions. And I think also it was just when Russia had invaded Ukraine"* (P4).

5.1.6. Unconditionality and accessibility

A common view amongst interviewees is, that, apart from a few ground rules, a space like a FC should not demand anything from its participants and be accessible to a broader group of people with different needs.

Interviewees often connect accessibility to time poverty, which I already discussed in 5.1.3. Several interviewees indicate that having resources at one's disposal can influence participation, for instance, financial reasons, stress but also physical access due to infrastructure. Several interviewees also mention knowledge as a resource necessary for accessing an event. Some feel pressured to contribute with knowledge to be valuable to the group, such as P5 feeling a lot of *"insecurity"* and being ashamed of her *"uninformedness"* (*both translations by author*). P6 refers to the unconditionality of participation by generally reflecting on Western societies putting much value on productivity leading to a high pressure to perform for individuals and the need to have spaces free from that.

However, all interviewees mentioned that a film – especially a pop-cultural one - was more accessible than, for instance, discussing a book, *"so maybe Don't look up has this more universal, sort of, a lot of people can understand it"* (P3.1). *"It's [the movie] not superior, like, you should know that. You should understand that this is facts"* (P2).

Summary: From the transcripts, I take that the setting is crucial for how interviewees experienced the FCs. I found that `setting´ does not only refer to the physical space, but various intangible, situational conditions key to creating a social and emotional atmosphere where participants can experience, express, and manage emotions and thoughts and establish rewarding relationships with other participants. A setting can also be an essential factor in the motivation to join, join again, or seek out similar events. In my understanding, the setting is the prerequisite or foundation for enabling IRs (see 5.2).

5.2. Interaction ritual ingredients

5.2.1. Group assembly (bodily co-presence)

The first condition for an IR to take place is the need for a group to assemble for creating a communication situation in which its participants can be affected by the bodily presence of the others (Wellman et al. 2014).

All interviewees describe how this co-presence in the FCs allowed them to observe the emotions of others. P6 understands verbal and non-verbal communication as indicators of others' emotions and thoughts, although these observations are subjective interpretations.

> (…) when people start talking over each other, so then you could also tell like, this person feels really strongly about whatever was mentioned before, or whatever the topic is. But that's my own interpretation of how I interpret feelings. But for me, this was an indicator (…). And then it's really a little bit kind of reading the room and also reading the tonality and and how it is said, and maybe with a little bit of a louder voice, or also with the choice of words. I find that really interesting (…) this is something that is important to you.

Most interviewees make similar observations, adding that these reactions happen both – on a conscious and subconscious – level and impact how they perceive the film. As the common focus of the interaction, the interviewees agree that the films in the events triggered and fueled most reactions, *"reactions have an effect on you"* (P1). All interviewees see meeting in person as something beneficial for discussing an issue but also for their well-being, *"I think there is a power in that, like meeting and really discussing it"* (P2). P1 describes how she felt, *"fulfilled in the end, because you had a great discussion about something that interests you, and you're in this together"*. Meeting in person seems to foster a sense of community.

5.2.2. Barrier to outsiders

The second condition that can enable an IR is the barriers to outsiders, which can establish boundaries that may generate a feeling of homogeneity (Wellman et al. 2014). In the interviews, I could detect several potential barriers. P6 describes a supposedly more informal event organised at work.

> I think it's impossible to sort of get rid of this researchers´ heads in that in that setting, because that's kind of what we want, what the setting is, we are sort of researchers coming together in that practice, but still, I think the focus was really more on these personal experience. (P6)

Here, access is limited as this event takes place at work and is not open to the public. However, the quote interestingly shows the power of roles. The same participant discussed the same movie with friends in her free time. Both settings were intended to enable informal gatherings, but I think in which role one enters a discussion or in which overall context it is embedded strongly influences how a discussion develops and is experienced. Maybe here one´s ability to adapt one's role to a setting is important. For instance, being at work, therefore being in a `professional´ role could be a barrier as it might feel like a more informal gathering could become too personal. It may also be difficult to adapt roles in other settings if they are strongly intertwined with one's identity. Having an academic background

can function as a barrier to outsiders in demonstrating a certain [1]*habitus* connected to academic culture.

Another barrier indicated in the interviews is pre-existing group affiliation through one's social group, for instance, through studying together or being in the same activist group. P1 often feels like *"the only one who really worries about the environmental crisis and in that surrounding* [the FC] *everyone was worried"*. One´s perceived concern for the environment can become exclusive and feed into the idea that there is an `us´ and a `them´, which was not discussed at the gathering but becomes transparent in the interview transcripts of P1 and P2.

5.2.3. Mutual focus of attention

In the FCs, the films were the mutual focus of attention and served as a frame for the interactions. The majority of interviewees state that watching and discussing a movie together triggered deeper conversations about the movie itself, but also broader topics and issues not explicitly shown in the movies. Hence, the movie functioned as a discussion starter that *"led us to really develop our thoughts and our discussion. So, it became broader, I would say we brought in more aspects"* (P4).

P1 discusses the movie's ability to contextualise complex issues *"it gives you a feasible and tangible example of climate change and how we're acting"* (P1). P1 and P2 see a movie as something *"concrete"* that lifted everyone *"on the same level of knowledge"* (P5, *authors translation*). This contextualisation can include experiences and meanings.

> If I asked you, how do you make meaning of your world? What the heck do you want, right? So, it's really abstract, and movies, kind of put it in a context […] they create a story and make it in one way or another, relatable to us. (P6)

All interviews indicate that it is not that important whether they like the movie or think it is `good´ but rather that its content provokes a discussion. For instance, P3.1 and P4 are undecided if they liked the movie, but it still caused strong emotions and many reflections, making it a seemingly valuable medium for discussing the CC. When the interviews speak about fictional movies, they generally seem to appreciate how the genre plays with the audience's perception of reality. Three FCs chose the fictional movie *Don´t Look Up* where P4 highlights the use of *"analogy or metaphor"*, so using a comet as a metaphor for climate change. P1 and P2 enjoyed *"decoding"*, meaning comparing fictional characters and situations with real-life people and situations. P3.1 describes these distortions of reality when

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[1] *"Habitus*, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles of the generation and structuring of practices and representations which can be objectively "regulated" and "regular" without in any way being the product of obedience to rules" (Bourdieu 1977:72–95)

watching *Don´t Look Up* as *"bizarre"*, *"little too extreme"*, leaving them *"confused"* and with *"mixed feelings"*.

When watching the movies, the interviewees were attentive to different aspects, depending on their interests. *"You ask people, what were the moments in the story that really stood out to you, you're gonna probably get as many answers as people around that"* (P4).

> The reason why I personally really like the idea of discussing movies about issues, not only related to climate change, but also other problematic issues because we all when we see movies […] come with our own experiences and with our individual lens, and we see certain things and we pay attention to certain things and not as much to others. And also, we interpret things differently than others. (P6)

Connecting to this, P3.2 talks about how a movie opened a relevant issue *"So, it actually sparked a really good conversation for us as a as an activist group"*. Reading the transcripts, it seems that a movie can be an easier way to facilitate discussions that can be difficult to have. Also, I would argue that a concern for the environment and the CC is a mutual focus for attention that brought the people in the FCs together in the first place.

5.2.4. Shared mood

From the interviews alone, it is difficult to know how the participants of the different film events shared moods, emotions, and feelings. Because I, unfortunately, fell ill (ch. 4.3.2), I only participated in one event and had the other ones described and reflected upon in the interviews. In the interviews, it seemed to me as if it was easier for the participants to talk about what they thought than what they felt. Unfortunately, most interviews took place weeks after the events, which I noticed impacted the participant's memory. Because of that, I have the impression that the interviewees already had a lot of reflections and opinions. To learn more about the interactions and emotional experience, I would have preferred to have had the interviews taking place shortly after the event. For instance, P1 describes her emotional experiences from the FC but every time I tried to ask follow-up questions she would deflect from these or contradict herself by saying she did not experience any emotions.

In general, I find that the interviewees seem to have the most satisfying experiences when the discussions enabled them to channel the feelings and emotions emerging from watching the movie. Here, the decisive variable seems whether participants watched a movie together and then discussed it or if they watched the movie outside the event and just discussed it. In one instance, the group consisted of a mix of people who had seen the movie outside the event, at the event, and not at all. The subsequent discussion, described by P3.1 and P4, seemed least intense and memorable in comparison. For P3.1, not having this mutual focus

impacted the discussion, which seemed frustrating. The film caused strong emotions that apparently were not processed in that moment causing discomfort *"I would have really liked [...] to have had a proper discussion about it. I felt like I really needed to talk about it"* (P3.1). Without having a proper channel (such as a discussion) for the negative emotions arising from watching the movie the experience seems to only add on to the anxiety related to the CC.

Apart from that, immediacy between watching a film and discussing it with others seems to influence if the participants share a mood. P2 describes how the movie gave the group the possibility to *"gather around a feeling"*. P4 notes that the more time that would pass between watching and discussing caused a loss of the *"catalytic effect"*, meaning the excitement to want to talk about the experience which is necessary for a strong shared experience. P6 describes the importance of the affective aspect of having a discussion right after watching *"having the emotions really in the body"* (P6).

Overall, the groups that watched and discussed the movie together describe considerably more reactions and expressions of moods, emotions, and feelings than the groups that only discussed, which indicates the importance of having the entertainment experience together.

Summary: Investigating FCs as IRs is my entry into a better understanding of what a FC can mean for people´s individually felt eco-anxiety. Before conducting the interviews, I thought that FCs fulfil the four conditions for enabling IRs. After two rounds of coding, I chose the heading *Interaction rituals ingredients* because I found that indeed these conditions are met and affect each other to varying degrees in the different FCs. I think this is relevant for investigating the relationship between the ritual ingredients and the generation of collective effervescence to observe if a successful ritual took place and what the outcomes are. Investigating FCs as IRs is my entry into a better understanding of what a FC can mean for people´s individually felt eco-anxiety.

5.3. Meanings

5.3.1. Inspiration and demotivation

Inspiration and *demotivation* are reoccurring topics in the interviews. My impression is that CC related content is often coupled with action imperatives (as it is a collective problem affecting all people) that are closely linked with inspiration and demotivation, which influence the willingness to confront these issues.

The reasons to watch a movie can always differ between people but I find that cli-fi movies can be perceived as confusing by their viewers when they expect but cannot find, a clear message. P3.1 discusses the potential message in the cli-fi

movie they watched. After trying out a few explanations, they end, saying, *"I´m very confused"* (P3.1). The majority of the interviewees watched a cli-fi movie at the events and seem to have enjoyed discussing different angles to the issues raised without finding clear conclusions. However, a few responses indicate frustration about not knowing what to do after watching the movie due to a lack of guide to action, *"What can you actually do? Because now I know, okay, great, I should look up and I already look up. And it gives me nothing"* (P1).

However, whether the interviewees experience a FC as inspiring, or demotivating does not only depend on the movie itself but on how the stories conveyed fit or can be integrated into the viewer´s everyday life and identity. P3.1 compares the problems raised in the movie with her real-life and reflects on their agency. It seems like they managed to shift their emotions in a constructive way leaving them feeling inspired.

> The main feeling it gave me was anxiety. And yeah, feeling like, it [*combatting the climate crisis*] wasn't gonna work anyway. But I suppose I sort of had to actually remind myself like, that's a film about a big thing that hasn't actually happened or isn't actually going to happen. And what I'm doing here is trying to actually go in and […] stop the felling of the trees. I can actually do that. You know, I can't stand in front of an asteroid, but I can stand in front of a tree. Yeah. So, I guess I had to sort of make that distinction in my head (P3.1)

P5 also confirms that consuming CC-related content is easier to digest in her activist group because she feels like she is *"on the move"*. She feels inspired by watching a movie about CC because she is among inspiring people who are trying to make a change. The group and discussion alone do not determine whether people get inspired or demotivated, because individuals perceive movies quite differently, which is difficult to predict, *"I've seen that in various situations. People react to these things differently [...] Sometimes I see something, and it makes me want to give up and it makes someone else wanting to keep going"* (P3).

5.3.2. Truth-seeking and self-reflection

A strong theme reoccurring in all interviews is the desire to attend FCs to learn from the movies but primarily from other participants´ perspectives through discussing the movie. The movie seems to function as a dialogical tool that can start deeper conversations about CC related topics but also how different issues connect to each other. P4 explains that he enjoys attending events like the FC because the resulting discussions reflected his interest in *"the intersection science and politics, and you know, public engagement or social change"*. Another visible motive for all interviewees is enriching one's own knowledge and perspective through discussing with others. P4 already watched the movie a few weeks before the discussion at the event. He states that he formulated strong opinions in the meantime but had the urge to discuss those to further develop his own thoughts.

I think I had some reflections and reactions to the movie that seems a bit different from most people within the climate movement. So, I was kind of thinking about how to sort of formulate those reflections. (P4)

P5 feels like the movie they watched in their activist group enabled a conversation about fundamental issues that should guide their work but can be neglected when being busy with practical tasks.

We certainly all have a very strong position on it [*climate change*], but in concrete terms, I have the feeling that we don't name it so strongly, so we don't talk that much about the thing that we are actually working on all the time and that it is somehow strange. (P5, *authors translation*)

Another component of searching for truth through discussing movies can be training how to think critically about a topic.

I have the feeling that I want to strengthen having these kind of discussion a bit more and formulate things and perhaps looking more critically at certain aspects and how to link them differently or take up other thoughts and process them further. I find that very enriching. (P5, *authors´ translation*)

Movies also seem to facilitate the learning of how other participants perceive the world through having a movie as a mutual focus. Most interviewees mention the FC as being a less pressured environment to learn.

There's so much into understanding how people think and how people make sense of and make meaning of their environment around them. And there's so much potential and really putting emphasis into understanding what is happening there, rather than just bombarding people with what they should do and how they should think. So, I find it really interesting to explore this. And through discussing the movies, this is a sort of informal way of bringing this forward. (P6)

The movies themselves and the resulting discussions seem to challenge the interviewees to reflect on their taken-for-granted beliefs, but also their norms and values. Such meaningful engagement with media content could be an indicator of self-reflection and personal growth, especially in moments of friction with other participants.

[*The discussions*] sometimes lead to these moments where you´re like, how can you think like that, you know, where it's like saying, we expect people to react in a certain way and then we're confused and irritated that they don't sometimes. And I think that's (…) where it comes to, okay, so this makes me aware of how I think and how my worldview is. (P6)

P6 experiences from the film events also show that meanings are co-created. Processes of self-reflection and personal growth might seem rather individualistic, but P6 stresses the potential of challenging one´s assumptions collectively.

I think a movie can really support this conversation about what are my assumptions? What are your assumptions? How do you see the world, how do I see the world but then not only related

to watching the movie, but that also needs then the conversation about the movie because otherwise, we're again, we have our own interpretation of what we saw and how we process it. But then getting this input from others how they process it, this is really the way how we kind of open up for other perspectives. (P6)

5.3.3. Emotional regulation

The movies and the interactions with their content triggered and amplified the emotions of the FC participants. Almost all interviewees express that watching a movie can be an emotionally intense experience depending on the movie. P2 and P6 stress that in the discussions people´s reactions and their intensity indicate what is close to them. When a movie draws comparisons to real-life problems that are difficult to deal with, all participants describe moments of comic relief, *"we laughed about it too about this scary scenario that is actually a mirror to us really"* (P1). Most participants reported that they were able to shift negative emotions through being in a group in a way that made them feel better: *"It was emotionally difficult. And I think I could have come away feeling quite depressed. But knowing that I was in a room of people who was also there to care […] was definitely very powerful."* (P3.2). Sharing emotions seems cathartic for wicked problems that cannot be easily fixed: *"And like that it´s just a tension that exists and talking about the fact that we can't fix that was quite useful."* (P3.2). P2 expressed this relief similarly: *"I think to do it together you use it to actually talk about it, then you get the feelings out"*.

5.3.4. Community and belonging

Feeling a sense of community and belonging was a frequent theme I saw in the interviews. One view that surfaces a lot in relation to that is likemindedness. For instance, P1 mentions that she enjoyed the *"group dynamic"* and *"feeling kind of that you´re part of this group that thinks that way"* referring here to environmental consciousness. Likemindedness also seems to allow authenticity.

> (…) since this is a group of people that are all like environmentally engaged, I could feel that I could express more thoughts and maybe also more emotions then maybe I would have expressed if it were people that are not that like environmentally engaged because then you're more scared of how the people will react. (P2)

From reading through the transcripts, I also understand likemindedness as helpful to orient oneself in social situations through knowing what to expect from interactions, *"I honestly don't have the time to talk about it with everyone. And it's nice that I know with whom I can talk about it"* (P1). A sense of community can also provide orientation through emotional support, *"that it makes me feel better about dealing with bad news"* (P5).

Belonging to a group is also experienced as reassuring, for instance, by P5:

It's definitely a good feeling when I'm sitting somewhere thinking about something and I don't show any reaction and then a comment comes from the right and I'm like, yeah, nice. It's good that we're on the same side. We definitely have the same enemy in the film, that's definitely kind of cool. *(authors´ translation)*

P4 also sees seeking out collective experiences as a universal human desire:

There's something in that format [FC], that is maybe something quite human, maybe not even culturally specific. In some sense there's something even deeper in that sort of shared experience and then talking about it.

Summary: The meanings I identified in the interviews arose directly from the FCs or the participants´ comparing them to past experiences. When I structured my analysis, I chose the heading *meanings* as the last part because for me they are the outcome resulting from and depending on the conditions provided (or not) by the setting and/or IR ingredients. I will discuss these meanings in relation to the generation of collective effervescence and the ritual outcomes in Collin´s (2005).

6.   Discussion

In this chapter, I will discuss my analysis to answer my research questions, for which I will use the conceptual framework based on Collins (2005) and Bartsch & Hartmann (2017) together with supplementary literature. I will end by reflecting if I fulfilled my study´s aim.

My first research question is: **What is the motivation and driver to engage with the climate crisis through climate film clubs?** As presented in section 3.1, Collins (2005) argues that using an IR lens shows how IRs influence individuals´ decisions to become group members. In Collins´s (2005) terms, individuals´ motivation to join groups is the opportunity to experience collective effervescence to collect and exchange EE. Therefore, I will examine if and to which degree the conditions for collective effervescence and the exchange of EE were fulfilled. Collins names these conditions ritual ingredients, and these are *group assembly (bodily co-presence), barrier to outsiders, mutual focus of attention, and shared mood* (2005:48). Further, I will use Bartsch & Hartmann (2017) to explore what distinguishes the FC from other interactions first by examining if climate movies can classify as eudaimonic entertainment and, second, which role these films play in motivating participants to engage with the CC.

All interviewees describe the experience in the filmclubs as positive despite experiencing a mix of positive and negative emotions and thoughts. The interviewees explain this positive experience by being in a group and handling these emotions together. In Collins's (2005) work, the mutual focus of attention is the crucial factor catalysing an IR. In the FCs, the mutual focus is watching a climate movie, which can be further developed by becoming *"entrained in each other´s bodily micro-rhythms and emotions"* (Collins 2005:47) by viewers reacting to each and in the subsequent discussion that can lead to a shared mood. I think the event P3.1 and P4 attended constituted a low mutual focus because not all participants watched the movie, and most did not watch it together, creating a less focused discussion that seemed to have impeded a strong shared mood. While I think the work lunch seminar was able to create a shared mood, it might have been less strong as the movie was not watched together, and the discussion took place weeks after watching it, which caused the participants to have a less emotional experience. In the other cases, watching the movie together established a stronger shared mood,

where the subsequent discussion heightened this mutual focus, creating, sustaining, and focussing a shared mood.

From my data, it is difficult to assess to which degree a shared mood had been established, leading to collective effervescence and the creation of EE, as it was primarily based on interviews conducted when the participants´ memory of the events had noticeably faded. Collins (2005) explains that collective effervescence and EE are at their highest levels immediately after a successful IR since they attenuate over time. However, Greve (2013) criticises that Collins is not clear about how to measure EE. Wellman et al. (2014) explains this shortcoming by applying recent research in cognitive science and neuroscience to understand EE in their study on megachurches. According to this research, trust, generosity, attachment and cooperation can be influenced by the amount of oxytocin (Wellman et al. 2014). High oxytocin levels, therefore, lead to stress reduction and the experience of feelings such as love, trust, calmness, and motivation to interact. Wellman et al. (2014) link these results to the first condition of IRs – group assembly, promoting oxytocin production. Applying this learning to my study, even if I might not be able to assess the experience of collective effervescence or EE, I can derive that the group assembly in the FCs led to an increase in oxytocin levels among the participants, which leads to positive feelings such as the motivation to interact, which might be one explanation why the participants joined the FCs.

The last condition of IRs is the barriers to outsiders, which can lead to a sense of homogeneity that can strengthen the mutual focus of attention and shared mood (Collins 2005). These barriers are difficult to generalise for FCs as they depend on the setting. In my study, the different FC had varying access barriers depending on if they were public or private. Apart from that, I find FCs to have few barriers to participation, which might be facilitated by the main functions I identified in section 2.3. There I explain that FCs make use of *collective and visual references*, *dialogical tools*, *liminal spaces*, and provide opportunities for *social bonding*. To me, these functions lower the barriers to becoming a member of a FC, which I see, contrary to Collins (2005), as advantageous. I find that FCs require less cultural capital, i.e., internalised social assets that are unequally distributed and function as codes of distinction that signal people's socio-economic background (Bourdieu 2002). This does not mean that FCs do not have any barriers. While they may require less cultural capital, they may use other `cognitive boundaries´ (Wellman et al. 2014:669), for instance, identifying as an environmentalist, thus excluding others based on whether they are considered `sustainable´ and being linked to higher education institutions that are barriers themselves.

Overall, it seems to me that the different ingredients can be lower or higher depending on the context. Collective effervescence may develop even when the barriers to outsiders are lower if other ingredients are higher. Here, the active engagement with the movies as an emotional stimulus might have heightened the

mutual focus of attention, enabling a stronger shared mood. Additionally, as eudaimonic (truth-seeking) entertainment, the climate movies could have increased the participant´s motivation to join as confronting and resolving negative feelings creates meaning (Anderson et al. 1996; Park 2010). Whether a movie belongs to this type of entertainment depends on the level of cognitive and affective challenge often linked to complex, dissonant, and uncertain issues (Bartsch & Hartmann 2017), characteristics present in the movies chosen for the FC.

Moving on now from why the participants joined to what they gained from the FCs, I will attempt to answer RQ 2: **How do film clubs guide thoughts, emotions, and feelings?** In the following, I will compare the meanings I derived from analysing the interviews with Collins´s (2005) proposed ritual outcomes to explore where they are similar and interrelated and where they differ. Bartsch and Hartmann (2017) will further my understanding of how the movies influenced this meaning-making.

The first ritual outcome is *group solidarity* or *feeling of membership* (Collins 2005:49). This aligns with *community and belonging* (ch. 5.3.4), created through experiences of likemindedness, authenticity, and emotional support in the FCs. Second, *EE in the individual* is expressed through *"a feeling of confidence, elation, strength, enthusiasm, and initiative in taking action"* (Collins 2005:49). This concept of EE can be applied to the meaning of *Inspiration and demotivation*, for instance, through FCs enabling reflections on agency. On the contrary, Boyns & Luery (2015) critique Collins's assumption that EE produced in IRs is positive as too one-dimensional. Their research tries to expand Collins´s work by exploring what they call `negative emotional energy´, meaning the dynamics of negative experiences (Boyns & Luery 2015:148). In the context of the FCs, it may be more comprehensive to expand EE with the meaning *emotional regulation,* by which I mean not only to experience strong emotions but also being able to shift them. For instance, talking about emotions that come up about the CC in a FC was described as a release of feelings of tension, which can be a more motivating outcome than feeling enthusiastic. However, I do not see the outcome of emotion regulation as always feeling `better´. For instance, feeling angry about injustice can be a reasonable feeling that does not need to `go away´ but can be used constructively, e.g., through political engagement.

Third, an IR can lead to *symbols of social relationships* representing the group, strengthening group solidarity (Collins 2005:49). This can be connected to the meaning of *Truth-seeking and self-reflection* (ch. 5.3.2) and the FCs' functions as *collective and visual references* (ch. 2.3). Collins describes how conversations are made of a `repertoire of cultural symbols´ (2005:74). In the context of the FCs, the movies showed how the CC is handled by different actors from politics, the economy, science, and civil society. I noticed that talking or complaining about these (in)actions in real life or laughing out of the same sense of frustration could

constitute shared group symbols that were charged with emotional significance, intensifying other outcomes such as solidarity in the group.

Fourth, IRs may lead to *standards of morality*, which Collins describes as a *"sense of rightness in adhering to the group, respecting its symbols, and defending both against transgressors"* (2005:49). In the FCs, this outcome links to *truth-seeking and self-reflection* (ch. 5.3.2) and *community and belonging* (ch. 5.3.4). I see these characteristics in the FCs present, e.g., all participants shared standards of morality towards the CC, primarily through common enemy stereotypes, which seems to endow a sense of belonging. All the participants also assigned high values to truth-seeking (as a collective action) and self-reflection by stressing the importance of learning from others, taking perspectives, challenging their assumptions, and potentially challenging these standards of morality.

Turning to the climate movies' role in guiding participants' experience, Bartsch & Hartmann (2017) provide valuable insights. When consuming eudaimonic entertainment – such as the climate movies – overcoming affective challenges such as cognitive dissonance may lead to `emotional mastery´, meaning the ability to process difficult emotions (2017:45). This effect is especially strong in movies covering human hardship, controversial topics, justice violations or moral dilemmas (Oliver & Raney 2011; Tamborini et al. 2011). While these movie effects are measured individually, I think they had a noticeable effect on the meanings through the interactions in the FCs (ch. 5.3) and the generation of collective effervescence. This can be supported by Rimé´s (2007) study on individual emotional experiences commonly followed by social sharing. This sharing *"reactivates emotional arousal"* in the interacting participants and fosters social bonding (Rime 2007:307).

As Collins´s theory is new to me, and I assume other people, too, I spent quite some space explaining its concepts to myself and the reader to evaluate if applying it was worthwhile or not. This enables me to briefly discuss if I was able to reach my thesis´ **aim** to explore if and how engaging with movies thematising the climate crisis (CC) can facilitate its collective processing.

Even though the experiences of my interviewees in the FCs were diverse, they suggest that they can make a small contribution to processing negative feelings about the CC. Collins (2005) states that IRs can vary in intensity and success. The IRs in the FCs may not have led to strong collective effervescence, but overall, they increased the participants' sense of well-being and group belonging. Since people tend to conclude the state of the world based on local circumstances (Pihkala 2018), I think regular participation in FCs or similar formats could help deal with eco-anxiety. Thus, regular participation could help to learn to live with the CC or `bearing worlds´ (Verlie 2019:751) by providing settings to process and create `hope in the midst of tragedy´ (Pihkala 2018:545). Eudaimonic films about the CC

facilitate this processing by causing and resolving emotions and helping reflect on values and goals (Bartsch & Hartmann 2017; Dill-Shackleford & Vinney 2020).

Lastly, it is important to keep the limitations of this study in mind. In sections 4.3 and 4.5, I pointed out some of the weaknesses of my research design. The analysis confirmed that even though I could not conduct more participant observations, they would have been very helpful in learning more about the participants' emotional experiences. Regarding the use of films, as valuable and helpful as they may be, they communicate and represent perspectives and principles of the interest group responsible for its production. When stories and movies express certain values, it implies that many people share these (Dill-Shackleford & Vinney 2020), which I think can negatively impact how the CC is discussed.

Further, Horn (2014) criticises that climate movies are often catastrophic & apocalyptic through which viewers have seen the end of the world so many times that they become numb to those pictures. In her opinion, the CC has to be represented on screen as the present, not the future, and in new ways that grasp the viewer´s attention (Horn 2014). Further, what makes a FC and the interactions therein meaningful depends on many factors and is subjective.

7.   Conclusion and future explorations

Based on an urgent need to address the emotional challenges connected to the CC, my study contributed to the debate on how to process difficult emotions in everyday life situations and the contributing role of being in a collective. I approached this topic by zooming in on small-scale bottom-up FCs in Sweden, exploring individuals´ experiences focussing on the interactions taking place in these settings. Through a qualitative interview study, I could investigate the meanings the participants derived in the FCs, which I analysed by using an IR lens combined with recent research on eudaimonic (truth-seeking) entertainment experiences. My study hereby shows the relevance to research emotions as collective experiences, rather than only individual phenomena.

I found that the FC participants generally considered their experience meaningful, enabling helpful discussions and reflections about the CC. All participants find that interactions in FCs contribute to their well-being and expressed the desire to attend such events regularly. Movies were seen as a valuable frame opening up discussions and more informal and imaginative accesses to the CC facilitating social bonding. Can these FCs lift people´s eco-anxiety in counteracting individualisation in high-income countries like Sweden or Germany? Probably not. They can however be a step towards recognising the importance of emotions and dealing with them collectively. Highlighting the importance of emotions for social relationships and thus society itself in this thesis might contribute to showing that this topic is not only relevant for psychological but also environmental communication scholarship.

Future research could include long-term studies to see how FCs may establish `emotional climates´ of mutual confidence and solidarity through sharing emotional experiences (Rime 2007:308) and the implications for the creation of hope in the CC. Lastly, a wider range of participants, especially non-academic, could help to generalise the benefits of such small-scale bottom-up formats.

8.   References

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Appendix 1: Interview guide

This is the last version of my interview guide (07.04.22), which I adapted after each interview.

Part 1: Practicalities

- Briefly present the aim of the research project
- Inform about the interview process, 30-45 min, will be recorded, material will be transcribed and analysed
- Start recording
- Ethical considerations. Has/have s/he/they read information sheet? It will be anonymous. Does interviewee prefer to check the transcript?
- Do you have any questions before we start the interview?
- Demographic facts:
    o Pronouns
    o Age
    o Nationality + Location
    o Profession/discipline
    o Education
    o Single, couple, family, living with friends etc.

Part 2: Introduction

- Why did you **organise** the screening?
- Can you describe the **lunch** in a few sentences?
- What was your **overall** impression of the gathering?
    o Did you talk about it afterwards with other people?
    o What did you then say?
- Was that the first time you went/organised something like this?

- Do you seek out similar types of gathering/ events?
- Will you in the future? Why (not)?

Part 3: Interactions

- How did watching the movie make you **feel**?
  - How do you think it made the others feel?
  - Were you limited in expressing your emotions? Any particular?
- Did that **feeling change** because of the discussion?
  - What happened to that feeling of X?
  - How did it feel to talk about the movie with others?
  - How do you think the others felt about the discussion?
  - Can you tell me about a scene or topic from the movie that you felt strongly about. Why?
    - Did you bring it up in the discussion? Why (not)?
    - How did the others react and how did their reaction make you feel?
- Did you watch the movie **alone** or **collectively**?
  - Did you notice something?
  - Did you notice how the others reacted during the movie? (making sounds of approval/disapproval, body language etc)
  - Did people react to each other?
  - Did you react to the others?
  - Did it change through out the movie?
  - Did the reactions change the experience (vs. watching alone)?
- How did you **experience the discussion**?
  - How did the discussion develop?
  - How did people react to each other in the discussion? (sounds of approval etc)
  - Did you notice changes in the mood of people/overall mood?
  - Did you notice any changes in your mood?
  - How did make you feel discussing vs. watching alone?

- Did you **know the people** at the event? How was it doing sth like this with colleagues?
  - Did that have an influence on the conversation you had, expected, or wanted?
  - What do you think you have in common with the other people in the event?
  - Do you feel like you could be open and share your thoughts, opinions, and feelings?
    - Were you comfortable disagreeing?
- What did you **think** about the movie in general?
  - Could you tell me about a scene/topic that pops into your head when thinking about the movie? You can pick the first one you think of.
  - Did you bring it up in the discussion? Why (not)?
    - What did the others think about the same scene/topic?
- Do you think the movie was a **useful frame** for starting a conversation/ discussion about CC?
  - Would it have been a different discussion with a documentary?
  - Is a fictional movie a suitable tool to discuss CC?
- What would you say you **gained** from joining the event?
  - Was it different from your expectation?
- Do you think it is important to **share your experiences** with others when discussing CC? Why (not)?
  - Emotions?
- Do you think such a gathering can influence how you think and feel about CC in your **everyday life**?

Part 4: General Questions on Interaction Spaces

- Why do you spend **your freetime** watching movies with such difficult topics?
- Do you often discuss unpleasant/ difficult topics like the climate crisis or environmental degradation in your **everyday life** with others?

- o Why? Why not?
  - o With whom?
  - o Where?
- How do you **deal with** the thoughts and **emotions** arising from CC in your everyday life?
- What do you gain from such **interactions in comparison to individual consumption** (eg reading the news, watching a movie alone or listening to a podcast)?
- Do you feel like you have enough **opportunities/ spaces** to discuss such topics in your everyday life? (school, work, family maybe limited)
- Do you want to talk about these difficult issues more?
  - o How do you want to talk about them?
  - o What would help you discuss more with others?
- **What kind of spaces/events** would you like to have such discussions in?
  - o Describe!
  - o Who should be there?
  - o What kind of spaces/events excite or inspire you?
  - o What would you like to talk about?
  - o Is **frequency/ continuity** important?
- Escapism seems like a common mechanism for personal well-being. Isn´t there a way to not avoid but still feel better doing it?

Part 6: Reflections

- How did you **feel on your way home** from the event?
- Have your feelings about the movie and event changed since then?
- What would you say is the main thing you took away from this experience?
- Would you go to an event like this again?

Part 7: At the End

- Thank you for your time and openness.
- Would you like to add something?

- Are there any questions I forgot to ask? Would you like to ask me something?

Extra Questions: Part 5: The film + fiction

- Why do you spend your freetime watching a movie about the end of the world?
    - Do you often consume media (films, books, plays etc) that cover unpleasent topics like CC?
        - How do you feel afterwards? Do you discuss it with others?
    - Why do you think so many movies about CC are apocalyptic or dystopian?
        - How do those movies make you feel?
- Why do you choose to watch a fictional movie on CC (and not a documentary)?
    - Would the discussion have been different if you would have watched a documentary?
    - Have you heard about climate fiction?
        - What do you think of it? Do you watch it/ read it?
    - Do you generally think fiction is a useful genre to tell a story about CC?
        - Do you think it is necessary to have fictional movies when we already have documentaries on CC?
- Do you generally think a movie is a useful tool to facilitate a conversation on CC?
    - Do you think there exist good movies about the CC?
    - Do you think it´s possible to learn something from a movie?
    - What do you think about a platform like Netflix producing a movie like "Don´t Look Up"?
        - Does it contribute to discourses on CC?
- Can a movie help to deal with difficult issues?
    - What was the last movie you saw that made a lasting impact on you?

- o Did you discuss it with others?
  - ■ How did it feel to discuss it with others?
- o Do you think (pop)cultural artifacts or art in general are useful tools to discuss the CC? Why (not)?

Appendix 2: Summaries of analysis (ch. 5)

Overview analysis: Setting		
Theme	**Sub-themes**	**Main points**
Setting	Intention & motivation	- Curiosity, novelty, fun - Expectation of recreational entertainment - Relatability - Social reasons - Entry point for CC-related topics - Informal exchange - Access different kind of knowledge
	Flexibility & facilitation/organisation	- Loose organisation, mostly free-flowing - Clear intention/purpose - Adaptable to group´s needs - Comfortable atmosphere - Institutionalisation
	Time	- Limited ressource, constraining factor - Film: less time-consuming - Convenience - Pre-defined time frame
	Timing	- Unpredictability how factors interplay - Headspace
	Vulnerability & openness	- Facilitate meaningful discussions - Choice, decision, willingness - Responsibility for other´s experience - Intersubjectivity (e.g., trust, empathy) - Background, personality
	General state & entry mood	- Freshness of experience - Current state or well-being - Personality traits - Current global events/issues
	Unconditionality & accessibility	- Ground rules - Personal resources (time, knowledge etc)

| | | • Adapt to different needs |
| | | • Free of performance pressure |

Overview analysis: Interaction ritual ingredients		
Theme	**Sub-themes**	**Main points**
Interaction ritual ingredients	Group assembly (bodily co-presence)	• Non-verbal & verbal communication • Indicators for emotions & thoughts • Subjective interpretations: conscious & unconscious • Benefit of meeting in person
	Barrier to outsiders	• Legitimacy to access • The power of roles and context • Group affiliation • Identity and background
	Mutual focus of attention	• Communication tool • Facilitate focussed discussion • Contextualise complex issues • Intensifies & challenges experience • Art bridges fiction & non-fiction
	Shared mood	• Immediacy & rationalisation • Mutual focus essential

Overview analysis: Meanings		
Theme	**Sub-themes**	**Main points**
Meanings	Inspiration & demotivation	• Foster or prevent confrontation with CC • Ability to decode the message • Depends everyday life & identity • Reflections on agency • Group presence
	Truth-seeking & self-reflection	• Link different topics and issues • Facilitate deep conversation • Dialogical tool • Learning & perspective taking • Critical thinking & challenging assumptions
	Emotional regulation	• Trigger & amplify emotions depending on identification • Vicarious release of emotions • Depends on needs, setting & people • Talking releases tensions

	Community & belonging	- Likemindedness - Authenticity - Emotional support - Universal human desire

Appendix 3: Flyer Cemus Film club: `Just Look Up´ Party