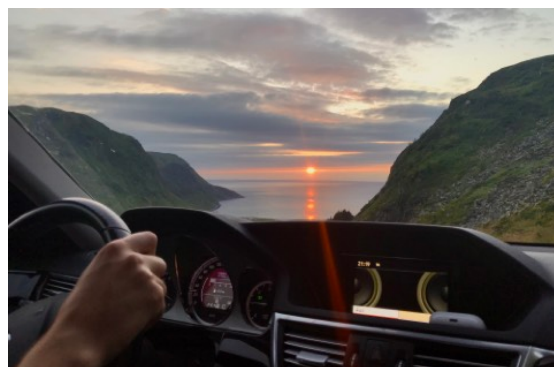

2.1 Partaking in the climate debate

“The bushfires during the Australian summer illustrated climate change in the most heartbreaking way. Most would find it impossible to forget the images – burned koalas sitting on blackened earth, firefighters driving directly into raging infernos and terrified holidaymakers stumbling through that eerie red dawn. While many still quarrel over the facts, no one can deny that we are living in a hotter, more unpredictable and politically destabilized world.” (Sheppard-Simms, 2021, p. 1).

Last year, the world was witness to massive wildfires and forest fire news from around the world. Depicted by Sheppard-Simms, the Australian 2019-2020 wildfires ended up labelling that season for “the black summer”. According to Landscape News, nearly 19 million hectares burned, and the wildfires destroyed over 3,000 homes, killing 33 people. Quoting climate scientist Sarah Perkins-Kirkpatrick; *“even though most bushfires (in Australia) are caused by lightning or by accident, scientists have argued that an increasingly hot climate will provide the conditions necessary for extreme fires to happen more frequently”* (Landscape News; Hess, 2020). The same summer half a million of people were evacuated from their homes in the state of Oregon in the USA, because of forest fires (Nrk; Wernersen & Myhrer, 2020), as well as devastating reports from Brazil uncovering that deforestation in the Amazonian rain forest increased by 10% from 2019-2020 (Nrk; Honningsøy, 2020).

Meanwhile in Norway, we enjoyed a delightfully hot and sunny summer. Like me and my picture from Stadlandet in september illustrate, a lot of Norwegians preserved pleasant summer-night memories with magical pink sunsets in september. Sunsets



stemming from smoke clouds from the forest fires at the west coast in the USA (Nrk; Hafsaas, Sommerfeldt & Bolstad, 2020). My point is to underscore how lucky we are in terms of the effects that climate change will have on Norway as a country, and on the

Norwegian individual. In fact, a recent report from the consultancy firm Verisk Maplecroft shows that Oslo is rated the penultimate city in the world, with the lowest risk of being affected by climate- and environmental changes like pollution, water scarcity, extreme heat, natural disasters and vulnerability to climate change (Nrk; Elster, 2021). With this in mind, seeing Norway as a country with both the economical resources and political stability, a country who can expect less dramatical consequences of climate change in the near future, when is it time for us to act? Do we feel the need, the urgency, or enough pressure to act? Are we really threatened by climate change?

I have a notion that the average Norwegian individual can find it difficult to partake in, or form an opinion of, the climate debate, because it is difficult to relate to the actual consequences. We read about climate change through news and social media, a lot of us educate us about it, but all in all - life is good, and the “problem” of climate change feels kind of distanced when we mostly just experience a relaxed and safe way of living. Not to say we don't care about climate-related crises on ecosystems, animals or humans affected by it, because most of us sympathise and feel alert of the potential danger. As I see it, the average educated Norwegian do not doubt that climate change is real. In my social circle I see a lot of will to implement some lifestyle changes in terms of partaking in the transition to a more sustainable society; eating less meat, buying fairtrade, organic and “consciously”, driving electric or through public transport, considering to lease instead of buying new (sharing-economy) and much more. What I do notice, however, is that the average Norwegian does not feel super comfortable to implement radical changes in their everyday life, unless it comes from the authority. I believe that a distanced relationship to nature, and to climate-related consequences, and a high trust in the authorities to do the right thing and make the difficult decisions, people find it difficult to properly engage in and feel connected to the climate debate. This concern is what have sparked my interest in looking at how interactivity and visual installations can contribute to increase visitors climate consciousness, or even climate activism, in a museum context, as part of the bigger societal transition towards a more sustainable future.

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