

Competing climate spectacles in the amplified public space

Eleanor Johnson 

Sustainability Lab and Department of Informatics, University of Oslo, Oslo, Norway

Håvard Haarstad

Department of Geography and Centre for Climate and Energy Transformation, University of Bergen, Bergen, Norway

EPC: Politics and Space
2022, Vol. 40(7) 1437–1454
© The Author(s) 2022



Article reuse guidelines:

sagepub.com/journals-permissions

DOI: 10.1177/23996544221082406

journals.sagepub.com/home/epc



Abstract

The climate change debate is finding new expressions through political protests and demonstrations, during which a plurality of climate narratives emerges. While protests such as Extinction Rebellion have had a strong physical manifestation, involving many people showing up in concrete locations, they have also been facilitated and mediated virtually. In this paper, we examine the spectacle generated when divergent discourses on climate change compete for attention in spaces that are simultaneously urban and virtual. The paper is based on empirical evidence from events surrounding London Fashion Week 2019, focusing on the political mobilization by Extinction Rebellion Boycott Fashion (XRBF) and other groups. Discussing this changing nature of urban protest spectacle, we point to the emergence of an ‘amplified public space’ shaped at the intersection of material and virtual spaces of the city. Both the fashion industry and XRBF employ techniques of spectacle in their strategies to advance their respective climate change and sustainability narratives. We argue that XRBF, in particular, has managed to influence the climate change debate by strategically staging spectacular protest events that are both facilitated and played out in virtual space.

Keywords

Social media, climate change, activism, Extinction Rebellion, social movements

Introduction

Over the past couple of years, a proliferation of people around the world, many new to activism, has begun to take issue with the lack of political action on climate change. A plurality of social movements or climate (counter) publics have taken shape at surprising speed and scale (McCann, 2020). While millenarian, apocalyptic imaginaries have provided the impetus for the public staging of climate governance for some time (Swyngedouw, 2010), a new politics of catastrophe is

Corresponding author:

Eleanor Johnson, Sustainability Lab and Department of Informatics, University of Oslo, Gaustadalléen 23B, 0373, Oslo 0316, Norway.

Email: eleanor@ifi.uio.no

emerging beyond traditional spaces of climate governance (Beuret, 2021). Notable among these movements are groups such as the Fridays for Future school strikers, as well as the global uprisings and non-violent civil disobedience actions from Extinction Rebellion (XR). Most famously, school striker Greta Thunberg captured new climate imaginaries on a global scale. Common narratives around climate activism, from Fridays for Future to XR, have emerged at the fringes of mainstream sustainability discourses around the world. These activists and cultural influencers, these counterpublics, leverage their bodies in space to forge a new moment of storytelling that challenges the status quo of mainstream climate policy. Our focus in this paper is on one of these moments, namely, what we call the ‘amplified public space’ of London Fashion Week.

While activist narrators use powerful plotlines to redirect minds to address climate change as the climate crisis and emergency, scholars have pointed to the need to understand the *processes* of narration and framing of these narratives (Bevan et al., 2020). These processes are increasingly mediated by the accelerated development of media technologies, so the ability for activists to communicate novel narratives to the media is *new*. This points to novel political behaviours and new modes of debate and consent which cater to engagement with performativity – an act of public display using and disrupting hegemonic cultural norms (Diamond, 1996).

Social media facilitates novel ways of performing politics, but a key question is what the implications are. In *Society of the Spectacle*, Debord (1967) argued for the impossibility of spectacle to deliver fundamental political transformation in the context of consumer capitalism. However, he did identify several loopholes, clauses, in which art could declare itself independent from capitalism’s glossy exteriors. He distinguished spectacles of continuation, the type of spectacle he wrote to critique, from spectacles of discontinuation – theatrical dissent that open paths for proper negotiation. It is important to understand how dissent and popular discourse play out in the protests witnessed in recent years.

In his extensive ethnography of direct action, Graeber (2009) describes how only a decade ago, communicating messages to the media was near to impossible for activists. The decade following has seen a regeneration of activists, both young and old, who use social media to educate, re-educate, organize and amplify their political values. This can be expected to have significant but uncertain outcomes, as media technologies spur new dynamics of messaging, coalition building, misinformation and conflict in relation to climate (Marlow et al., 2020). We can expect that the fate of presently emerging political movements will in large part be determined by how they manoeuvre at the intersection of physical and virtual space. Climate counterpublics are typically skilled storytellers – this is in part due to a population now marked by over two decades of using social media, as well as to a finely tuned cultural sensibility to public relations techniques. We know already that these protests are intertwined with virtual information networks, and that interesting dynamics emerge as physical and digital infrastructures coalesce in informal settings. Indeed, a growing body of research is beginning to demonstrate how political concerns gain traction outside of formal institutions via the affordances of social media (Pearson and Trevisan, 2015; Scaramuzzino and Scaramuzzino, 2017).

In this paper, we examine how climate debates are transformed in the space-time where the physical and the digital meet. It draws on empirical evidence from events surrounding London Fashion Week (LWF) 2019, focusing on the political mobilization by Extinction Rebellion Fashion Boycott (XRBF) and other groups. The paper examines how both the fashion industry and XRBF employ techniques of spectacle in their strategies to advance their respective climate change and sustainability narratives. We find that XRBF, in particular, has managed to influence the climate change debate by strategically staging spectacular protest events that are both facilitated and played out in virtual space.

On this basis, we develop the notion of ‘amplified public space’ – spaces in which protest is amplified not only because of digital information infrastructures but also where the techniques of

protest are in turn amplified for the purposes of penetrating information infrastructures. Drawing on Warner's (2002) distinction between publics and counterpublics, we distinguish the amplified public space as an urban site where publics and counterpublics meet ephemerally and compete for attention. The amplified public space provides the setting for (counter) publics which, by theatricality, circulation of imagery and texts, are articulated through contemporary tropes of marketing on physical and on virtual platforms.

Our aim with this paper, therefore, is to highlight how counterpublics make use of amplified public space to stretch or transmute imaginaries and notions of political possibility in the climate debate. We do so by bringing attention to the interplay between collective political imaginaries, how bodies are organized in crowded spaces, and the techniques of amplification brought into play with the affordances of (social) media. These elements are important for understanding the contemporary nature of public political debate. In the following, we show how heterogeneous groups congregate at LFW to voice their protests and to gather followers in a bid to gain political and cultural traction in amplified public space.

The paper proceeds as follows: we begin by framing 'amplified public space' theoretically, taking the opportunity to highlight the relationship with spectacle, political resistance and recent scholarship on the digitization of social movements. This is followed by a summary of the methods used for this study and a presentation of the empirical evidence for climate publics, climate counterpublics and the practical interactions between the two. We will elaborate how spectacles appropriate mighty city spaces to establish climate narratives which find their way onto social media and into the public press – using an amplified public space. We use empirical evidence to show how performativity is leveraged within the city to communicate persuasive climate narratives to digital and traditional media actors. In closing, we argue that the activists have managed to influence the climate change debate by strategically staging spectacular protest events that are both facilitated and played out in virtual space.

Amplified public space: A theoretical outline

Public space in cities has taken on a key role in the new climate protests, as sites of spectacular displays of climate related dissent and activism. Recent literature has highlighted this in various ways. Studies of mega-events (notably sporting), festivals and fairs have shown how such occasions facilitate political performativity (Horne and Whannel, 2010; McGillivray and Frew, 2015) or (re) negotiate public perceptions of city image (Richards and Wilson, 2004) which might hinge upon sustainability narratives. Research has also focused on how spectacular events magnify the commodification of public space (Gotham, 2002; Weller, 2013) and simultaneously become sites of citizen struggle and resistance (Gotham, 2011).

Writing more specifically on the interplay between theatrical environmental activism, urban mega-events and political action, Miller (2016) describes how Greenpeace activists levy public-relations techniques to challenge greenwashing at Formula 1 and the Men's Football World Cup. Miller regrets that environmental activism's lack of 'dark irony, sarcasm, and cartoonish stereotypes' (2016: 728) is a lost opportunity for mocking industrial polluters. Scholars of climate communication have published compelling arguments for confronting climate change through the medium of comedy (Anderson and Becker, 2018; Boykoff and Osnes, 2019), especially in informal spaces where people might not readily engage with an IPCC report. At LFW 2019, dark irony abounds, as XRBF mobilize to demand that fashion week is cancelled in light of the climate crisis. As we discuss below, activist interventions toe the line between grief and laughter, for instance, through costume, music and the theatrical staging of a funeral. Similarly, PETA cover themselves in 'toxic slime' to protest against leather as a 'dirty business', highlighting the environmental degradation and greenhouse gases emitted from leather.

By observing these spectacular techniques of narrative building, we can draw new understandings of the relation between virtually mediated urban space and contemporary methods of resistance. Scholarly and activist attention is increasingly paid to the potential for social media to facilitate collective action, for example, to counter the propaganda efforts of the fossil fuel industry. In a study of environmental protests in the United Kingdom and Romania, Mercea (2012) demonstrates the significance of ‘digital prefigurative participation’ where digital communication technologies facilitate large scale collective action in the streets, echoed by scholars elsewhere (Tremayne, 2014). Using a case study of an activist artist collective, Landau (2019) points to the political potential of affective politics in urban spaces to counter the ‘post-political’ condition.

Less, however, has been made of the capacity for more traditional public relations and localized techniques to support climate narratives which challenge the status quo. The role has, however, been noted in other contexts of social resistance (Sassen, 2011) with recent studies pointing to the growing importance of citizens’ political public relations outside of formal, namely corporate, institutions (Dutta and Elers, 2020; Krishna et al., 2020).

In addition to a renewed interest in engaging journalists and communities through public relations mechanisms which requires a physical, as well as a virtual, presence, recent social protests are notable for their performative elements. Mass performance is as much an approach for winning the ears of journalists as it is a mode of unifying and sustaining groups with common public concerns toward a perceived authority (Arora, 2015; Bennett and Segerberg, 2012). Radical play – dressing up, dancing and blasting music – is central to appealing to people’s political sensibilities. Despite playful outputs, it is possible for the gravity of the intended message to be translated fairly directly by journalists into the mainstream media – although this depends on a media outlet’s political leanings. As young activists themselves have set forward, it is never as simple as launching a social media campaign (Taylor, 2020). Playfulness, situated in the city centre as a mediator between multifarious media, takes on new significance as evidence emerges that social media is just as capable of eroding trust between members of social movements as it is of building it (Rone, 2019). In other words, the place makes the story.

But this performed playfulness has implications for the politics it engenders. In everyday life, climate discussions can be nuanced and multi-layered. Social media campaigns, in contrast, only allow for soundbites and condensed messaging to be copied and pasted into newspapers and social media feeds. As such, soundbites and slogans take centre stage (Arora-Jonsson, 2011) and greyscale discussions are left for more intimate spaces (such as, for instance, semi-structured research interviews). Because social media debates often leave little room for nuance, it is necessary to condense one’s political position, if only temporarily. Performing climate narratives in order to amplify messages serves not only the function of disseminating a message but makes it possible to embody a more pronounced political message.

The fashion industry has often been less visible in research and policy making around climate change, compared to industry, transport and food consumption. Arguably, there is a significant potential for the fashion industry to become much more central to climate discourses. While consumption practices tied to urban energy and transport infrastructure work politically by being relationally embedded and transparent and therefore invisible (Star and Ruhleder, 2012), the fashion industry’s contemporary existence depends on its ability to be seen and engaged with on a much shorter time scale. It is a sort of anti-infrastructure characterized by crafted visibility. Mechanisms of crafted controlled visibility are increasingly recognized by research as important advocacy process in the digital era which can be translated to concrete changes in policy (Johansson and Scaramuzzino, 2019). This is not to over-emphasize how productive visibility is for change here, but we wish to underscore how political behaviours are modified precisely *because* of this faith in the visible.

The lack of attention from climate behaviour research to the fashion industry is an oversight, given what theorists know about the force of fashion and trends to compel large groups to adopt political behaviours quickly. As Georg Simmel comments in his 1957 article *Fashion*:

‘It may almost be considered a sign of the increased power of fashion, that it has overstepped the bounds of its original domain, which comprised only personal externals, and has acquired an increasing influence over taste, over theoretical conviction, and even over the moral convictions of life’ (Simmel 1957: 548).

Celebritisation of climate science, therefore, may have the potential to amplify the voices of credible scientific evidence in the public sphere. This ‘make the climate famous/fashionable’ approach, however, is not without its challenges, and risks exacerbating individualism and emphasizing ideas from privileged political actors (Abidin et al., 2020). A study by Boykoff and Goodman (2009) considers the contradictions of investigative climate journalism published by *Vanity Fair* Magazine amidst adverts for clothing and watches. The authors weigh up the pitfalls of performative activism hinged upon a consumer paradigm saturated with celebrity advocacy. Nonetheless, the authors attribute significant cultural weight to celebrity environmentalism, in recognition of the complex interactions between science, policy and media. They question whether it would ‘be more effective to “plant” celebrities instead of trees’ (Boykoff and Goodman, 2009: 404). Similar work has been done showing that celebrity environmentalism does affect discourses and trade actions on environmentalism, if not in the public domain, then amongst tradespeople (Goodman et al., 2016). However, a later paper by Boykoff and Olson (2013) highlights how this celebritisation of the climate offers ‘climate-contrarians’ the opportunity to gain recognition in the public sphere, with these contributions often being framed as a ‘balanced’ contribution to climate media debates.

What is missing is an understanding of the spatial dimensions of this contestation (Landau, 2019). In particular, we need to examine how these discourses emerge from concerted protest actions in the city and what this might contribute to an wider transformative change, where the ‘contemporary rules of the game are eroded; in which the status quo is called into question’ (Shove, 2010: 1278). If adequate climate action is a question of reconsidering what cultures and individuals deem valuable (O’Brien and Wolf, 2010), then it follows that elite trade spaces such as LFW, where social and economic value are generated should be imagined to be sites for such renegotiation. Just as it is a question of holding wealth and power to account, it is an opportunity to expose social norms and values considered to be out of step with sustainability goals.

Drawing on these accounts, we understand amplified public space in terms of corporeal and visual rituals performed by activist networks, such as, for instance, a ‘die-in’. These rituals take place near a site or centre of political or cultural power, soft or hard, present or past, such as a government building in a city or a conference, where protests typically violate formal or informal terms of access. The in-place protests become a messaging epicentre (hence the term ‘amplified’), a site where core, pre-negotiated messages/narratives are released in a semi-controlled fashion to both traditional and social media channels. This also generates competing narratives which are virtually siloed into corresponding political media factions. These techniques of political amplification are limited neither to XR, nor to the climate problem. We argue that the notion of amplified public space captures the new dynamics of counterpublic contestation at the intersection of urban space, traditional press outlets and social media.

Arguably, the notion of amplified public space goes some way to explaining current physical and virtual forms of spectacle, protest and influence taking place in climate and sustainability debates. We aim to show in this article that techniques of building new narratives in amplified public

spaces – which both the fashion industry and the protest movement attempt – are key components of contemporary political debate and urban protest.

The context of London Fashion Week

We discuss London Fashion Week (elsewhere referred to as LFW) as a site to enquire into contemporary methods for influencing the climate discourse. Spectacle has long been the prize product of the fashion industry, and is, in many ways, the bi-annual trade shows' *raison d'être*. Fashion production is often cited as contributing as much as 5–10% to global carbon emissions (Quantis, 2018), 'more than all international flights and maritime shipping combined' (UN Alliance for Sustainable Fashion, 2019). The fashion industry straddles an unusual combination of (hidden) high energy use, large environmental impact (Siegle, 2008), slavery (House of Commons, 2019), legacy of colonialism, and (much celebrated) artistry, engineering innovation, communications, liberalist social transformation and *influence*. As such, these weeks, when targeted by activists, not only Extinction Rebellion, but the People for Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), as well as diversity campaigners, have something to teach us about how climate counterpublics emerge via unexpected cultural expressions. Since its establishment under Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in 1980, LFW has been a champion for the capital city's creativity and success of the British fashion industry, which today employs 890,000 (House of Commons, 2019) in the United Kingdom. While fashion weeks are celebrated in cities around the world, the 'big four' are demarcated as Paris, London, Milan and New York. The weeks are a contemporary iteration of a long imperial tradition of trade exhibitions in capital cities.

Methods and empirical scope

A range of qualitative data source was collected for this study. The lead author attended a series of rallies, swarms and roadblocks organized by Extinction Rebellion Boycott Fashion during London Fashion Week in September 2019. Notable was the funeral procession through the city centre to declare the death of London Fashion Week as well as a silent protest outside of the British Foreign Office. She also attended city-wide shows, presentations and exhibitions surrounding London Fashion Week, organized by the British Fashion Council in conjunction with corporate sponsors and the UK Department for Trade. During these events, the lead author collected a cast of characters of those we encountered during ethnographic fieldwork and subsequently conducted 13 semi-structured follow up interviews with those designers, celebrities, politicians, activists, academics, fashion week ticket-holders, journalists and photographers she had met during the week.

The authors also consulted documents such as meeting minutes from the All Parliamentary Group for Textiles and Fashion as well as documents from, the BFC and relevant consultancies. We count among our data collection news articles produced during the rallies we observed from such outlets as the *BBC*, *The New York Times* and *The Guardian*, as well as other related news and social media coverage of to the call for XRBF's call to cancel the week-long event. This study is not representative of the British Fashion Industry as a whole nor of the entire decentralized Extinction Rebellion movement, which is of course disparate and complex. We focus on the production of narratives and attempts to recode social norms in relation to fashion.

Because of the high visibility of the industry, communications professionals closely monitor narratives that emerge from the space of LFW and it is established to be difficult to gain access to spokespersons and data (Rocamora and Entwistle, 2006) from the industry. It is, however, this safeguarding and expert crafting of sustainability narratives, which forms part of our dataset and we include refusals to partake in interviews as evidence in itself (for instance, a participant not wishing to take part due to the political nature of the subject).

Exclusive publics

London, as a global metropolis and epicentre for commerce, is a site for spectacle, contest and re-crafting of dominant cultural stories and social norms. Framing LFW as an institution is essential for appreciating the underpinnings of these social processes in the city. LFW signifies a plurality of values to those who take part: at once a celebration of British creativity, globalized trade, liberalism, beauty and/or over-consumption and the industry's problematic representations of bodies – particularly female ones.

The British Fashion Council estimates that orders of over £100 million are placed each season and the event is thought to be important for the national textile industry which contributes around £32 billion ([British Fashion Council, 2018](#)) annually to the British economy, as well as cementing London's reputation as a culturally vibrant and diverse city. Official Supporters of LFW are The Department for International Trade, The European Regional Development Fund and The Mayor of London. In September 2019, LFW hosted roughly 77 catwalk shows and trade presentations, 35 events (such as panels), six public catwalks, and over 100 city wide events at department and high street stores (e.g. Microsoft, Topshop and John Lewis), hotels and restaurants.

Trade and fashion events like LFW assert a certain relation to resource accumulation. Writing over a century ago on the Berlin Trade Exhibition, [Simmel \(1896\)](#) discusses how cyclical urban events, which in the case of fashion weeks mimic the harvest and spring seasons, appear temporary but are in fact permanent and predominant structures, at once visible and yet often underestimated as political forces. In contemporary London, and in capital cities around the world, the cyclical event is increasingly meeting criticism with the media as awareness of the industry's environmental impact grows ([Paton, 2020](#)), and evidence of the industry's environmental footprints threatens to expose the 'resource fiction' ([Fletcher and Tham, 2019](#)) of the industry.

While the ritualized trade events have launched the careers of some of the most revered designers in the world, many outside of the industry might disregard the events as nonsensical and irrelevant to everyday life. A closer analysis, however, reveals the usual traits of institutionalized spectacle. [Mary Douglas \(1986\)](#) shows us that rituals 'confer' identities through conventions. The hullabaloo of LFW can be so distracting it is easy to overlook the ritualization and repetition itself which sets in motion institutionalized approaches to trade and resource use. Spectacles demand labour, time and group commitment: the work behind the shows is often painstaking, exhausting and even boring. Using the example of being bored in a church, Douglas demonstrates how social processes evolve to make institutions which, despite grandiose and emotive appearances, work to maintain the values of a social order through convention ([Douglas, 1986](#)). Of course, the weeks can be equally exciting and inspiring, especially for newcomers to the industry. This celebratory imaginary extends to the city of London and even the United Kingdom itself. As one study participant, a senior policy maker in the industry, told us:

'London Fashion Week is extremely important for the UK fashion industry internationally. Fast fashion appears to be the main culprit and I felt that London Fashion Week was being targeted as it is a high profile event rather than being the main source of environmental damage in the industry. Much of the excellent work of sustainable design is showcased there and must be showcased there to protect LFW in the future'.

In looking at the climate and sustainability debates around LFW in the amplified public space that surrounds it, we distinguish between narratives of reform, which often centre on technical solutions to environmental challenges, and narratives of revolution or at least more pronounced dissent, which revolve around refusal. The events we examined took place outside of LFW and addressed systemic issues of energy consumption, the industry's legacy of colonialism, slavery and labour/resource

exploitation. While the discourses vary, there was a consensus amongst participants that the space of LFW is a powerful cultural space for leveraging cultural identities. As one interviewee stated: ‘if fashion week’s gone completely, where can people go to spread their ideas?’

Sustainability narratives at LFW, therefore, often reflected market rationale and technically optimistic solutions for tackling sustainability issues, in particular plastic pollution (since fieldwork, discussions around carbon emissions are increasingly present in documents from the BFC ([British Fashion Council, 2020](#))). As such, cultural change in this space operates within the parameters of growth and it is difficult, though by no means impossible, for sustainability efforts to escape commodification. Contemporary spectacle-making at LFW often carries these marketable characteristics (notably visual spectacle), even when the calls for re-structuring and re-envisioning the industry contest many of the values touted by neoliberalism. As a result, the space becomes an easy trap for political agency.

On the other hand, it is this very ‘fast and heavy traffic’ ([Appadurai, 2013: 69](#)) of entrepreneurship that characterizes the globalization of ideas and culture. The fashion industry and industry events are therefore particularly porous to shifts in cultural thinking and presentation, functioning as central sites of cultural knowledge creation ([Weller, 2008](#)). Indeed, fashion in the metropolis has a history as ‘an extremely powerful and highly developed form of propaganda’ ([Pouillard, 2013: 158](#)). We begin to see here how ideas about climate and sustainability might emerge in conjunction with spaces of commerce and afford participants in the weeks the opportunity to push climate agendas. Narratives in these spaces are expertly crafted and communicated with press editors and social media influencers in mind. Bloggers and digital influencers must have a minimum of 35,000 followers to be considered for entry into LFW shows; thus, consumer hegemony and ideas about social norms are readily established and amplified here. Editors are powerful interlocutors who can make or break reputations. One particularly influential editor was described by a participant as royalty. As recent discussions and studies of journalism show, journalists’ role are increasingly perceived to exist to co-produce cultural truths ([Boyer and Hannerz, 2006](#); [Boyer, 2013](#); [Cody, 2011](#)).

While LFW is largely a closed trade event, in 2019, the British Fashion Council opened the sale of tickets to the public, beginning at £135. For those able to afford the ticket, or with the social means to spread the message, the British Fashion Council organized a Positive Fashion exhibition to demonstrate industry innovations in sustainability. Examples included recycling plastic into an extensive range of yarns, or digital body scanners to minimize material waste during the design process.

As cultural messages are emitted from LFW via editors, celebrities, cultural figureheads and social media influencers, interest from onlookers and outsiders is palpable and people are drawn to the entrance in the hopes of being admitted. *Per* Foucault, to be invited into a space like fashion week, a person must ‘have a certain permission and make certain gestures’ ([Foucault, 1986: 7](#)). People, particularly those outsiders (albeit people with the means to pay for expensive tickets) who must pay for the public ticketed event, are invited to the space of LFW and yet are ‘by the very fact that [they] enter, excluded’ ([Foucault, 1986: 8](#)). Some groups are all together excluded by the ticket price and instead pose on the pavement outside shows. As a result, the crowds of hopefuls gathered at the entrance of the event along with the proliferation of paparazzi and social media users transform the city centre in a stage for climate narratives to be widely publicized and embodied.

The emergence of amplified counterpublics at LFW

The fashion industry straddles a complex and contradictory role of social influence and leadership whilst simultaneously becoming a target for critics of fashion’s carbon footprint. An interesting cultural phenomenon to emerge from LFW, this exclusive space where messaging is amplified, is

the way that publics are organized in the street space outside the event. To the counterpublics, these physical spaces are important to craft and amplify their own messages in order to embed their stories in media networks. This is not limited to an exercise in public relations: such climate narratives presented by activists physically present in urban public space, who transform the public space into a sort of ephemeral ‘learning infrastructure’ (Facer and Buchczyk, 2019). What we mean by this is that these interactions between narrative creation and coordinated movements through the city space induce a process of cultivating learning about living with and adapting cultures to a changed climate. Again, it is the place that makes the story.

The protests described here consisted of a series of ‘swarms’ outside of prominent shows and exhibitions, as well as ‘die ins’, roadblocks and silent rallies. Rebels marked the opening of LFW by gluing themselves to the main entrance of the tradeshow at 180 Strand while buckets of fake blood were poured on the pavements around them. Speeches made during these actions make sentimental appeals to industry leaders and call on fashion to use its influence to ‘tell the truth’. Actions also included a darkly comic funeral procession from Trafalgar Square to 180 Strand to ‘lay the old system to rest’, during which participants dressed up in mourning wear with black veils over their faces and top hats. A brass band played well-known, usually cheerful, harvest festival children’s songs transposed into a minor key – another expression of dissent occupying the space between grief and play.

One participant expressed excitement when the group of ‘Red Rebels’ turned up for the event (Figure 1), having never seen them at an action before.

The photograph in Figure 2 was taken during an XRBF ‘swarm’ outside the British Foreign Office building in London. On 15 September 2019, the building doubled as a venue for the Victoria Beckham show as part of LFW. It is significant that the building was formerly the colonial office, given that activist critiques often point to fashion’s colonial roots. Similarly, rebels gathered, prior to



Figure 1. Funeral procession in Trafalgar Square.



Figure 2. Swarming action outside the British Foreign Office Building.

the swarming, at the foot of the Gandhi statue in parliament square having notified the mainstream media through *WhatsApp*, a platform explicitly used in Extinction Rebellion's media communications (Farrell et al., 2019). We return to this triangulation of fashion, environment and colonial resistance in the following section, when we discuss the idea of climate counterpublics as systems thinking in action.

On the left in the photo in Figure 2 are the invited guests (editors, buyers and influencers) attending the show. Opposite, XRBF rebels stand silently with signs reading 'the ugly truth about fashion'. They are dressed in 'corporate rebel wear', ironic commentaries-as-clothing made from upcycled suits with sewn on patches that read 'fuck consumerism'. In the middle, between the guests and the rebels, is the press area, where photographers from media outlets such as *The Daily Mail* and the *Evening Standard* are stationed. When the activists arrive, attention from the paparazzi is diverted from the celebrated guests and infrastructure, and onto the climate counterpublics.

The signs and spectacular outfits, which one interviewee described as carefully chosen to counter accusations from Prime Minister Boris Johnson that Extinction Rebellion activists are 'crusties', are cited by one activist as tools used to thwart negative messaging. This technique of navigating the movement's image is what we describe as peppering, following an interviewee who described how they 'peppered' their social media with ideas about the climate, so as not to overwhelm or alienate followers who may be professional contacts in the industry. Other industry practitioners we spoke to described using their social media platforms as a powerful tool to communicate concerns about the environment through the visual affordances of the fashion industry. A priority for sustainability advocates online was to pepper messages about the environment with care. As one participant explained during interviews: 'I don't agree with guilt tripping, I agree with inspiring people'.

Often techniques used are emotionally compelling and overwhelming for participants, one of whom described crying during rallies and relief at having found a community where they feel can express concerns about the climate freely. Emotional confrontations often alternate between

moments of grief and irony. After the show at the British Foreign Office, as celebrity faces appear to be photographed in their outfits, activists stage photo bombings and jump into the photo frame with their protest placards (see Figure 3). What ensues is a darkly comic moment of competing narratives. While many of the LFW guests appear to largely ignore the activists, the clashing of spectacles in public spaces reveals the extent to which climate discourses have become polarized. For instance, we witnessed the angry revving of car engines during roadblocks orchestrated by XRBF. One argument erupted during the silent swarming and was subsequently photographed and published by the *Daily Mail*. Similarly, much was made of the LFW as an important platform for supporting young designers and, as cited previously, it was often said that activism should be targeted against the fast-fashion sector of the industry – given that LFW is considered so important for supporting young talent. The spaces of protest are filled with social tensions between groups and their conflicting attempts to stage political narratives, and these tensions spill over into political polarization online and in the print/radio media.

At the same time, fieldwork did reveal that many of the guests we approached at LFW largely agreed with the messages presented by XRBF but cited the maintenance of industry jobs as a key concern. In conversations with participants of LFW, many expressed this conflicted duality of being attached to the industry but at the same time, sympathizing with its critics. Likewise, some activists we spoke to expressed regret at being dependent on the industry for a livelihood, though many of them were experimenting with new solutions in the industry such as upcycling, establishing business models for clothing rentals and digital, augmented reality clothing collections for Instagram users.

While the performativity of the virtual public space requires a strong positioning, we saw that *in the street*, many people's positioning was more fluid and evolving. New experiences and exposure to new ideas can quickly draw people into political narratives. During the funeral procession,



Figure 3. Photobombing celebrity photo opportunities.

onlookers readily accepted flyers declaring a climate emergency. One young person part of a group we approached outside of LFW provides an example of this. We initially asked if they knew of the planned protests from XRBF and what their thoughts were. They responded negatively and commented that they were already doing their share for the environment by shopping at charity shops and upcycling clothes. We later met the same participant and friends at the funeral procession in Trafalgar Square, the group were excited and quickly joined in with roadblocks and photo opportunities.

‘We were just obviously holding up the banner cos we were wanting to block the roads... when some guy in an Audi tried to run me over, that was fun and eventful, I don’t know, I just... I do agree with them with climate change and stuff... me personally I’m not going to be affected by it, but if I have kids like they’re going to be affected by it, it does need to change, I can’t believe it’s actually taken so long for governments to start recognizing it so.. It was just actually a crazy day out and like the experience was just amazing, I loved it’.

The person, who days before had been sceptical to the climate protests ended up being photographed for *Vogue.com* as a poster child for the protesters, and was featured on the site’s homepage.

As they said later:

‘like I can’t remember who it was that tagged me in it, someone tagged me in it and that was how I found it, I didn’t know, I mean there was loads of people taking pictures, so I was like, it’s normal, people been taking pictures all week and then I just got it, no way, I need to share that, I need to share that I’m in *Vogue*’.

There is an easy interplay between the mainstream media and personal social media accounts, so that messages are quickly echoed across different platforms, and climate politics attached to photographs. The mainstream media is just as vital to the campaign, and this is where space comes into play. During the funeral procession, speeches are delivered outside of Hennes & Mauritz on the high street, in conjunction with a tableau, wherein protestors assembled for a photograph opportunity and videos of the actions are livestreamed onto social media pages. What results is a multi-layered amplification, with platforms interlinking and crossing to produce linear climate narratives.

The main challenge for activists is the distraction of the spectacle itself, which sometimes eclipses the message. As one person describes an interaction with an editor:

‘she was interested because it made a story, “oh they wanna cancel fashion week, woah” but at the same time she was all for it like Extinction Rebellion is the great thing, when the article actually came out it was more about the drama – What are Extinction Rebellion gonna do next? They’re gonna try close down fashion week, they’re gonna do processions through the street, they’re gonna block the doors and glue themselves blah blah, rather than saying, fashion week is incredibly bad guys [...]’

Again, focus is averted to the spectacle itself, and the activist is left frustrated, feeling that the message has been overshadowed by its delivery.

From the experiences recounted above, we can outline four distinct empirical findings that underscore how urban protests operate in amplified public space. The first is that spectacular political protest makes creative use of street space at the peripheries of mainstream institutions and events. Secondly, it is possible for onlookers to be quickly drawn into counterpublics in physical spaces, especially if they feel excluded from exclusive public spaces. Third, though people are divided in the amplified space by their political stances, their personal political affiliations are often

more complex and refined than both the physical and virtual elements of the amplified space allow for. Fourth, while spectacle can sometimes be self-defeating and obscure the intended message, it nonetheless functions to create imaginaries which penetrate multiple layers of information infrastructures. The actions generated considerable media attention, with one journalist questioning whether Extinction Rebellion was ‘outmarketing’ fashion (Kent, 2019).

Discussion and conclusion

In this paper, we have examined the spectacle generated when divergent discourses on climate change compete for attention in spaces that are simultaneously urban and virtual – what we have here labelled an ‘amplified public space’. We have discussed informal yet highly visible arenas of influence and debate which may escape the formal scrutiny of policy analysis but which nonetheless point to important processes of formation for contemporary climate imaginaries. Recognizing techniques of staging dissent which emerge from complex interrelations between the built city and virtual tools will be vital for understanding shifts in values, political discourse and dissent.

Looking at London Fashion Week 2019, and in particular at the political mobilization by Extinction Rebellion Fashion Boycott (XRBF), we have investigated forms of narrativization in this amplified public space. Further to the empirical findings outlined above, the analysis drawn from this is that these techniques of generating clear and condensed renderings of the climate crisis, are conducive to extending the boundaries of what is perceived to be politically possible. As Judith Butler writes, civil disobedience is not a ‘simple “opting-out”, but [...] makes public a judgement that a legal system is not just’ (2020: 202). While this study examines the transformation of trade and media, rather than legal systems, establishing stretched political imaginaries in the staged city requires an opting-out and, crucially, for such an opting-out to be public. In other words, the process of publicizing these ideas through compounds of virtual and physical spaces is used to challenge more diluted projections of climate action. These processes hinge upon rich visual components and the ability for the body to be used in ways that subvert expectations for behaviour in institutionalized spaces. The spectacular element is not new – this is already a corner of society marked by spectacular trade and consumption.

What is novel is the theatricality and emotive discourse deployed in the powerful city space, which contributes to establishing consensus and unity among activists that might be more successfully and clearly levied against competing narratives. Publically ‘opting-out’, may be only one example of how social practices and urban rituals are collectively called into question, the public declaration being of significance to the process of questioning urban routines, norms and mercantile rituals. It is the very publicness which is conducive to acting, or setting new political possibilities into motion (Arendt, 1958). While the function of spectacle is often to maintain the status-quo, to *work*, spectacle can equally be leveraged to reach for ‘sensuous potentials’ (Mazzarella, 2019). This public opting-out must cater to an imagined collective visual memory, gathered on social media and in the press. With the advent of social media, such a countering of sustainability narratives is difficult for the industry to co-opt ‘without risking the humiliating exposure of inauthenticity’ (Warner, 2002: 73).

Plausibly, these processes of virtual amplification increasingly characterize the very rules of the political game, and present practical challenges for dissenting groups to maintain visibility. This means we may need to readdress the role of spectacle in shaping politics and creating political change.

Little is understood about the role of new spectacle for contesting the status quo and the extent to which it shapes ideas at the level of the individual and the collective. Further, we need to understand how spectacular politics shape affiliations to political groups and how the modes espoused by

counterpublics to register dissent and garner agency are recalibrating techniques of democratic engagement.

At the same time, spectacular climate discourses risk eclipsing a plurality of citizen voices. There is a growing body of evidence demonstrating that discourses which draw on scientific necessity for change, such as, for instance, nature-based solutions, can be too easily instrumentalized to reinforce existing power inequalities (Arora-Jonsson and Ågren, 2019; Kotsila et al., 2020; Pearsall and Anguelovski, 2016). Also, it has been argued that despite a plurality of voices in the climate debate, post-political depoliticization is a problem for the climate movement (Kenis, 2019; Swyngedouw, 2010). Further, Extinction Rebellion's motion for local and national governments to declare climate emergencies has been met with criticism from academics, warning of the danger of declaring state emergencies (Hulme, 2019) and from commentators who challenge XR's privileged relations with the police and terms of activism (Josette, 2019; Slaven and Heydon, 2020). The task is to ask which groups' narratives may be eclipsed (see, e.g. Checker, 2011) and which actors have the resources to run time-consuming social media campaigns (Scaramuzzino and Scaramuzzino, 2017).

Regardless, it is so that consumer spectacles are deemed an appropriate acme of power for establishing climate discourses driven by moral outrage and for contextualizing current trade practices within neo-colonial expansion. XRBF adopts a systems thinking in action approach and levies multifarious criticisms against the industry, highlighting both the historically colonial and current injustices of the industry. The go-to cultural assumption is that amplification is the locus of power, and that emancipation is only possible if the invisible is made visible.

It is easy to characterize competing narratives along the margins of deadlock between climate science on the one hand and economic necessity on the other, and the discourses produced in the amplified space often appear to indicate this. This is often the problem with institutions, which distinguish themselves along the parameters of binary differences, as Douglas writes: 'a person cannot be divided, cannot be in two places at one' (1986: 65). Moreover, when narratives are transposed to virtual and print worlds, they further lose their shades of nuance, particularly when they are attached to photos and videos of bodies and faces. A person cannot be two ideas in the amplified space. It may be, however, that the division between ideologies is in fact less pronounced, with actors across the board seeking to navigate the terrain between pragmatism and radicalism, assimilating and internalizing these contradictions whilst seeking modes of accepting or flouting accountability for what is now understood to be an emergency.

Academic researchers can position themselves to ascertain the nuances of political spectacles which may escape translation through processes of amplification. We can employ various methods to listen to what people have to say both within in the amplified public space and without. We should be able to develop understandings of transformed political behaviours, both through and beyond the final messages which emanate from these spaces, and ask always: who or what, did we not hear? This will be important for contributing an understanding of polarization to wider discussions and for following the role of media in shaping public responses to climate change. Though the price of amplification may be subtlety, the cost of not being publicly seen and remembered, however, may be perceived to be greater.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to those activists and industry professionals who supported and contributed to this study, many of whom have made sustainability their life's work and have paved the way for current discussions around climate and sustainability, including this paper.

Declaration of conflicting interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: This work was supported by the Trond Mohn Foundation, through the project European Cities as Actors in Climate and Energy Transformations (BFS2016REK04), and the Research Council of Norway, through the project DEMOCLIM.

ORCID iD

Eleanor Johnson  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5643-4639>

References

- Abidin C, Brockington D, Goodman MK, et al. (2020) The tropes of celebrity environmentalism. *Annual Review of Environment and Resources* 45(1): 1–24.
- Anderson AA and Becker AB (2018) Not just funny after all: sarcasm as a catalyst for public engagement with climate change. *Science Communication* 40(4): 524–540.
- Appadurai A (2013) *The Future as Cultural Fact*. New York: Verso Books.
- Arendt H (1958) *The Human Condition*. 2nd edition. London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Arora P (2015) Usurping public leisure space for protest: social activism in the digital and material commons. *Space and Culture* 18(1): 55–68.
- Arora-Jonsson S (2011) Virtue and vulnerability: discourses on women, gender and climate change. *Global Environmental Change* 21(2): 744–751.
- Arora-Jonsson S and Ågren M (2019) Bringing diversity to nature: politicizing gender, race and class in environmental organizations? *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space* 2(4): 874–898.
- Beuret N (2021) Containing climate change: the new governmental strategies of catastrophic environments. *Environment and planning E: Nature and Space* 4(3): 818–837.
- Bevan LD, Colley T and Workman M (2020) Climate change strategic narratives in the United Kingdom: emergency, extinction, effectiveness. *Energy Research & Social Science* 69: 101580.
- Boyer D (2013) *The Life Informatic: Newsmaking in the Digital Era*. New York: Cornell University Press.
- Boyer D and Hannerz U (2006) Introduction: Worlds of journalism. *Ethnography* 7(1): 5–17.
- Boykoff MT and Olson SK (2013) “Wise contrarians”: a keystone species in contemporary climate science, politics and policy. *Celebrity Studies* 4(3): 276–291.
- Boykoff MT and Goodman MK (2009) Conspicuous redemption? reflections on the promises and perils of the ‘Celebritization’ of climate change. *Geoforum* 40(3): 395–406.
- Boykoff MT and Osnes B (2019) A laughing matter? confronting climate change through humor. *Political Geography* 68: 154–163.
- British Fashion Council (2018) London Fashion Week september 2018 facts and figures. Available at: <https://www.britishfashioncouncil.co.uk/pressreleases/London-Fashion-Week-September-2018-Facts-and-Figures> (accessed 31 August 2020).
- British Fashion Council (2020) London Fashion Week june 2020. (accessed 1 September 2020).
- Butler J (2020) *The Force of Nonviolence: The Ethical in the Political*. Brooklyn. Verso Books.
- Checker M (2011) Wiped out by the “greenwave”: environmental gentrification and the paradoxical politics of urban sustainability. *City & Society* 23: 210–229.
- Cody F (2011) Publics and politics. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 40: 37–52.
- Debord G (1994) [1967] *The Society of the Spectacle*. New York: Zone Books.

- Diamond E (1996) Introduction. In: Diamond E (ed) *Performance and Cultural Politics*. Oxfordshire, UK: Routledge, 1–14.
- Douglas M (1986) *How Institutions Think*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd.
- Dutta MJ and Elers S (2020) Public relations, indigeneity and colonization: indigenous resistance as dialogic anchor. *Public Relations Review* 46(1): 101852.
- Facer K and Buchczyk M (2019) Understanding learning cities as discursive, material and affective infrastructures. *Oxford Review of Education* 45(2): 168–187.
- Farrell C, Green A, Knights S, et al (eds), (2019) *This is not a Drill: An Extinction Rebellion Handbook*. London: Random House/Penguin.
- Fletcher K and Tham M (2019) *Earth Logic Fashion Action Research Plan*. London: The J J Charitable Trust.
- Foucault M and Miskowicz J (1986) Of other spaces. *Diacritics* 16: 22–27.
- Graeber D (2009) *Direct Action: An Ethnography*. California. AK Press.
- Goodman MK, Littler J, Brockington D, et al. (2016) Spectacular environmentalisms: media, knowledge and the framing of ecological politics. *Environmental Communication* 10(6): 677–688.
- Gotham KF (2002) Marketing mardi gras: commodification, spectacle and the political economy of tourism in New Orleans. *Urban Studies* 39(10): 1735–1756.
- Gotham KF (2011) Resisting urban spectacle: the 1984 Louisiana world exposition and the contradictions of mega events. *Urban Studies* 48(1): 197–214.
- Horne J and Whannel G (2010) The ‘caged torch procession’: celebrities, protesters and the 2008 Olympic torch relay in London, Paris and San Francisco. *Sport in Society* 13(5): 760–770.
- House of Commons (2019) *Fixing Fashion: Clothing Consumption and Sustainability*. Report No. 16. London: Dandy Booksellers Limited.
- Hulme M (2019) Climate emergency politics is dangerous. *Issues in Science and Technology* 36(1): 23–25.
- Johansson H and Scaramuzzino G (2019) The logics of digital advocacy: between acts of political influence and presence. *New Media & Society* 21(7): 1528–1545.
- Josette N (2019, April 21) *People of Colour are the Most Impacted by Climate Change, Yet Extinction Rebellion is Erasing Them From the Conversation*. London, UK: The Independent.
- Kenis A (2019) Post-politics contested: why multiple voices on climate change do not equal politicisation. *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space* 37(5): 831–848.
- Kent S (2019) *London, is Extinction Rebellion Outmarketing Fashion?* London, UK: Business of Fashion.
- Kotsila P, Anguelovski I, Baró F, et al. (2020) Nature-based solutions as discursive tools and contested practices in urban nature’s neoliberalisation processes. *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space* 4(2): 252–274.
- Krishna A, Connaughton SL and Linabary JR (2020) Citizens’ political public relations: unpacking choices, and emergent and deliberate strategies in building trust and relations among groups in conflict. *Public Relations Review* 46(1): 101853.
- Bennett WL and Segerberg A (2012) The logic of connective action. *Information, Communication & Society* 15(5): 739–768.
- Landau F (2019) Exploring the affective politics of political beauty. *Conjunctions Transdisciplinary Journal of Cultural Participation* 6(1).
- Marlow T, Miller S and Roberts JT (2020) Twitter discourses on climate change: exploring topics and the presence of bots. *SocArXiv*.
- Mazzarella W (2019) The anthropology of populism: beyond the liberal settlement. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 48: 45–60.
- Mercea D (2012) Digital prefigurative participation: the entwinement of online communication and offline participation in protest events. *New Media & Society* 14(1): 153–169.
- McCann E (2020) *Spaces of Publicness and the World After the Coronavirus Crisis*. London, UK: Society & Space. Available at: <https://www.societyandspace.org/articles/spaces-of-publicness> (accessed 18 August 2020).

- McGillivray D and Frew M (2015) From fan parks to live sites: mega events and the territorialisation of urban space. *Urban Studies* 52(14): 2649–2663.
- Miller T (2016) Greenwashed sports and environmental activism: formula 1 and FIFA. *Environmental Communication* 10(6): 719–733.
- O'Brien KL and Wolf J (2010) A values-based approach to vulnerability and adaptation to climate change. *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change* 1(2): 232–242.
- Paton E (2020, February 12) *Figuring Out Fashion Week's Carbon Problem*. New York: The New York Times.
- Pearson C and Trevisan F (2015) Disability activism in the new media ecology: campaigning strategies in the digital era. *Disability & Society* 30(6): 924–940.
- Pearsall H and Anguelovski I (2016) Contesting and resisting environmental gentrification: responses to new paradoxes and challenges for urban environmental justice. *Sociological Research Online* 21(3): 1–7.
- Pouillard V (2013) The rise of fashion forecasting and fashion public relations, 1920–1940: the history of Tobe and Bernays. In: Berghoff H and Thomas K (eds) *Globalizing Beauty. Consumerism and body aesthetics in the twentieth century*. Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 151–169.
- Quantis (2018) Measuring fashion: environmental impact of the global apparel and footwear industries study.
- Richards G and Wilson J (2004) The impact of cultural events on city image: rotterdam, cultural capital of Europe 2001. *Urban Studies* 41(10): 1931–1951.
- Rocamora A and Entwistle J (2006) The field of fashion, materialized: a study of London Fashion Week. *Sociology* 40(4): 735–751.
- Rone J (2019) Fake profiles, trolls, and digital paranoia: digital media practices in breaking the Indignados movement. *Social Movement Studies* 21: 25–41. DOI: [10.1080/14742837.2019.1679108](https://doi.org/10.1080/14742837.2019.1679108)
- Sassen S (2011) The global street: making the political. *Globalizations* 8(5): 573–579.
- Scaramuzzino G and Scaramuzzino R (2017) The weapon of a new generation?—Swedish civil society Organizations' use of social media to influence politics. *Journal of Information Technology & Politics* 14(1): 46–61.
- Shove E (2010) Beyond the ABC: climate change policy and theories of social change. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 42(6): 1273–1285.
- Siegle L (2008) *To Die for: Is Fashion Wearing Out the World?* London: HarperCollins Publishers.
- Simmel G (1957) Fashion. *American Journal of Sociology* 62(6): 541–558.
- Simmel G (1991) [1896] The Berlin trade exhibition. translation by Whimster, S. *Theory, Culture & Society* 8(3): 119–123.
- Slaven M and Heydon J (2020) Crisis, deliberation, and extinction rebellion. *Critical Studies* 8: 59–62.
- Star SL and Ruhleder K (2012) Steps toward an ecology of infrastructure: design and access for large information spaces. *Information Systems Research* 7(1): 305–346.
- Swyngedouw E (2010) Apocalypse forever? post-political populism and the spectre of climate change. *Theory, Culture & Society* 27(2–3): 213–232.
- Taylor M (2020, August 4) *The Evolution of Extinction Rebellion*. London, UK: The Guardian.
- Tremayne M (2014) Anatomy of protest in the digital era: a network analysis of Twitter and occupy wall street. *Social Movement Studies* 13(1): 110–126.
- UN Alliance for Sustainable Fashion (2019) UN alliance for sustainable fashion addresses damage of 'fast fashion'. Available at: <https://www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/press-release/un-alliance-sustainable-fashion-addresses-damage-fast-fashion> (accessed 13 September 2020).
- Weller S (2008) Beyond “global production networks”: Australian Fashion Week's trans-sectoral synergies. *Growth and Change* 39(1): 104–122.
- Weller S (2013) Consuming the city: public fashion festivals and the participatory economies of urban spaces in Melbourne, Australia. *Urban Studies* 50(14): 2853–2868.
- Warner M (2002) Publics and counterpublics. *Public Culture* 14(1): 49–90.

Eleanor Johnson is researcher at the Sustainability Lab, Department of Informatics, University of Oslo, Norway. She studied her masters in Digital Anthropology at University College London and worked in the creative and media industries prior to beginning in research. Her research interests include societal transformations in relation to climate, digital media, design cultures and cities.

Håvard Haarstad is Professor at the Department of Geography, and Director for the Centre for Climate and Energy Transformation, University of Bergen, Norway. In his research, he is broadly interested in sustainability, climate change and energy, particularly in relation to cities. Among other projects, he currently leads the project 'European Cities as Actors in Climate and Energy Transformations', funded by the Trond Mohn Foundation.