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"It was winter that finished Gierek's government" – climate narratives of two generations of women

The aim of this article is to analyse the climate narratives of women representing the eighty and fifteen year old generations. The category of climate narratives of two generations of women was invoked as a proposal for analyses of the climate crisis in a lifeworld.

It seems that knowledge is an important pedagogical issue – what people know about climate change and the consequences of climate change. However, the empirical project in question has been embedded in the paradigm of the emotionalisation of climate change, which raises – in my opinion – more relevant questions concerning how people feel about the changes experienced in the world of their own lives.

This empirical project in question is part of the discussion on how to study, describe and interpret climate phenomena from a pedagogical perspective: whether to approach the climate crisis as a problem of knowledge and the consequent need for climate protection awareness, or rather to reach out to the lifeworld and grassroots practices of caring about the relationship between people and the world.

The theoretical choices made are not free of weaknesses. The paradigm of emotionalisation in which the climate narratives of the female participants in the study are embedded is not a record of the history of climate change, but a biographical account whose lives are intertwined with weather and climate.

Therefore, weather and climate are not considered as physical phenomena, states of the atmosphere, but as co-creative aspects of the lifeworld. Weather is understood as one of the important factors that form the foundation of social experiences such as change, order, normality, and predictability (Szwejkowski 2004). Weather forms the foundation for experiencing change and makes change an obvious part of the lifeworld. Linking the components of the weather in repeating patterns creates a foundation of experience of order – weather changes are not chaotic,

directionless, and unclear. These changes make sense as part of larger wholes and, as such, create a sense of normal weather patterns for a given season. Thanks to structured weather patterns, we are able to recognise the seasons in the climate zone and place where we live. In turn, the notion of climate is linked to the experience of the predictability of the lifeworld – the idea of reproducing regulated cycles of change in a certain order and harmony.

The climate crisis in a generational perspective

The climate crisis is presented as a generational issue – an important axis of generational conflict. Younger and older generations are – allegedly – divided by an axis of cultural and political dispute. The younger generation is described in the literature as being sensitised to climate issues and aware of their rights to own the future, while older generations are usually described as being passive towards the issue or even denying its political and social significance (Boykoff, Raian 2007).

Pedagogical research most accurately describes the state of children and young people's knowledge concerning environmental issues (Daniel, Stanisstreet, Boyes 2004; Lee, Bernett 2020; Morote, Hernández 2022). Child and youth climate activism is also relatively well described (Kowalik-Olubińska 2020; 2021; Ojala 2013). Moreover, the role of schools in shaping children's and young people's knowledge concerning climate change, the causes and consequences of global warming, undermining the impact of catastrophic media discourses on the mental condition of the youngest generation is analysed (Monroe et al. 2017).

Research concerning climate issues with adults appears in several perspectives. Most often, studies document attitudes of climate denialism by politicians, adults defending consumerist (high-energy) lifestyles in rich Western societies, attitudes of indifference or hostility displayed by communities associated with the oil industry, attitudes of irony towards observed climate change (Doherty, Clayton 2011). Analyses of educational attitudes (parenting, teaching) in relation to the mental health crisis of the youngest generation caused by climate uncertainty also place adults at the centre (Cunsolo, Ellis 2018; Sanson, Burke, Hoorn van 2018; Baker, Clayton, Bragg 2020).

The outlined composition of the research field shows that the interest in adulthood in the perspective of the climate crisis has to do with the key position of adults as decision-makers, professionals, researchers, knowledge creators, educators, counsellors, or therapists.

The discussed project concerns two generational groups that do not fit into the identified research trends. The oldest participants in the study do not hold key positions – they are not socially or politically influential in relation to the climate crisis. Whereas the teenage female participants in the study do not represent activist attitudes and are not climate movement activists.

The paradigm of the emotionalisation of climate crisis change

Environmental and climate issues are not a new research topic in the social sciences. Research of this type intensified after 2000: the research have studied public perceptions of the climate crisis, the problem of knowledge about the causes and potential consequences of global warming, the production of media representations of the climate crisis, the ideologization of the climate crisis, and climate denialism (Macnaghten, Urry 2005; Bińczyk 2018). In the following years of the 21st century, the issue of climate emotion as a response of societies to the global warming crisis emerged in research. Initially, only climate anxiety was analysed (Neckel, Hasenfratz 2021). Over time, research undertaken by climate change psychologists has included complex emotions: anger, powerlessness, apathy, and despair. Adaptive emotional responses and pathological emotions associated with the climate crisis have begun to be studied (Gulla, Tucholska, Ziernicka-Wojtaszek 2020; Gawrych 2021). The climate change emotionalisation paradigm has been used mainly in studies concerning adolescent and youth climate activism, although it has also emerged in analyses of the affective dimensions of scientific research concerning global warming (McMichael 2014; Clayton 2018; Wu, Snell, Samji 2020).

A milestone in developing the paradigm of emotionalizing the climate crisis was Glenn Albrecht's research on solastalgia – complex emotional states that can, in some simplistic terms, be called climate sadness. Solastalgia has been defined as a longing for a place to live – to settle. Home signifies "my place on Earth", in which a person's attachment to the environment, connection to nature, and people's belonging to a particular "piece of the world" is expressed. Solastalgia, according to the author, manifests itself in the form of profound stress and suffering of groups or individuals as a result of environmental changes in their surroundings. People suffer from displacement, gentrification processes, wars, and environmental disasters. In their narratives, it is possible to perceive not only sadness over material losses – possessions and home, loss of loved ones – but also sadness and a longing for a specific place – for nature, climate, and landscape (Albrecht 2007).

Methodological framework for own research

The discussed research constitutes part of a project on climate change analysed through gender and generational perspectives. The main intention in the part of the project discussed in this article is to reconstruct an image of climate change from thirty-five narratives of the oldest generational group (women aged 75–87) and the youngest group (girls aged 14–16). The empirical research were conducted in December 2019 and January 2020 and in December 2022 and January 2023.

The research problems were contained in the formulation of the following questions:

What retrospective image of winter as a season emerges from the narratives of the female participants in the empirical research?

What image of possible climate change emerges from the narratives of the women participating in the study?

In planning the research procedure, it was important not to confront female research participants with questions concerning climate change, the climate crisis or global warming, so as not to highlight the issue of change as the issue around which their narrative should be constructed (Silverman 2016). One question was formulated about how the research participants remembered winter from their own childhood, without specifying the time frame. Subsequent questions were designed to complement, concretise, or deepen the narratives. The question initiating the interview was sufficiently general so that the research participants were able to determine for themselves the scope, the framework of their answers, the length of their statements, or the number of events they considered relevant to the constructed narrative.

The empirical material was collected in the form of a recorded narrative interview (Nowak-Dziemianowicz 2006), the content of which was subject to transcription. The collected transcriptions have been anonymised – information that could contribute to the identification of persons, places, or institutions has been removed.

The snowball technique was used in constructing the sample, which resulted in a high degree of diversity in social experience: women from large cities, small towns, and rural areas, women of high, average, and low material status, women with higher, secondary, vocational, and primary education participated in the study.

The research procedure was partly conducted collectively – male and female students at the Institute of Pedagogy in Gdańsk participated in the empirical data collection and transcription process.

In the process of analysing the empirical material, the following questions were important dispositions:

Are defining elements present in the climate narratives: temporal boundaries, specificity, particularities of the weather phenomena, of the childhood winters of the female participants in the study?

What meanings are given to the described weather phenomena?

What categories of description concerning weather phenomena appear in the narratives?

Are elements of valuation, comparisons, and assessment related to weather phenomena in the past and present included in the narratives?

Excerpts from the women's narratives are labelled to indicate being part of generational group (e.g. p. 80 – generation of 80-year-old women, p. 15 – generation of 15-year-old women) and the interview number from which the narrative excerpt was taken. The original categories referred to by the research participants are also

referenced in the analyses. These categories as elements of the analysis are marked with inverted commas.

„There are no real winters anymore" – outcome space

The narratives of the female participants in the study were analysed from the point of view of the emerging lifeworld images of the past (the 80-year-old generation) and the present (the teenage generation). The starting point for all narratives, regardless of the generational group, are statements about climate change, even though the content of the questions did not address the climate crisis. The collected narratives within the generational group are characterised by a high degree of consistency, with the older group referring to descriptions of a "real winter" that is now gone, while the teenage group referred to descriptions of climatic losses that are part of a contemporary "just a gist of winter".

The narratives of women from the older generational group suggest that winter was a very long ("the longest") season in Poland. The older women relate this observation to the present, where winter – if it occurs at all – is very short. Statements about winter being a "very long" season and winter lasting "a few days" constitute the result of climate experience, which is constructed independently of the truth of the calendar[1], according to which the seasons in our climate zone last three months.

Women from the older generational group pointed out the clear boundaries that separated this time of year from the others. They contrasted the climatic situation of their own childhood with the present, in which the boundaries of the seasons are "blurred", "there are actually no seasons", "new seasons have appeared – an extended autumn", "neither autumn nor winter". As a result, older women have a sense of climatic disorientation:

> I don't know what season we live in (p. 80, v. 12).

A significant category that appears in the narratives of this generational group is that of "real winter", as illustrated by the example narrative extract:

> In order to state that the winter is a "true winter", there would have to be at least 20 degrees below zero and a lot of snow – at least a metre, two metres. This would resemble winter. There must be a big blizzard and snowstorm (p. 80, v. 9).

The onset of "true winter" is, according to the women, linked to important events in the liturgical year (the periodisation of the seasons is embedded in the religious order). The older women referred to either 1 November (All Saints' Day) or late November/early December (the beginning of Advent). Christmas was a time of

[1] Astronomical winter, calendar winter, meteorological winter are not identical concepts. The individual types of winter are linked by their duration: approximately three months.

"white winter", "full winter". Whereas, the months of January and February were a period of "harsh winter". The months of March and April were only referred to in the context of the long duration of winter and were not associated with any specific categories of description in the collected narratives:

> All Saints Day was a l w a y s the beginning of winter. One would pull out woollen jumpers, sheepskins, and warm boots so as not to freeze while visiting the cemetery. Mostly there was snow. Well and it was a l w a y s very cold (p. 80, v. 31).

> Winter lasted from November even sometimes until April. And now? It's December and what's up? It's already Spring. Flowers bloom at the neighbours (p. 80, v. 10).

> Winter started in November and ended in April. It was a l w a y s white and cold. It often came as early as All Saints Day. There was snow. There has not been a winter without snow during my entire childhood. Christmas and New Year's Day were a l w a y s white (p. 80, v. 2).

Indications in the following excerpts from the older women's narratives lead to a different beginning of winter:

> Back then, it was winter from December up to March, and sometimes winter lasted even as late as April. We went to church during Easter, and it was still snowing or so cold. Those winters were quite different (p. 80, v. 22).

> Winter a l w a y s began during Advent (p. 80, v. 1).

In the narratives of the older women, the accentuating participle – always – is emphasised. Its role in the narratives is to highlight the idea of order in nature and climate predictability. These ideas are juxtaposed with the current chaos and uncertainty.

The narratives of the teenagers demonstrate that winter is essentially a short-lived winter episode – it is a calendar season that is not grounded in corresponding weather phenomena:

> Winter is virtually non-existent. The climate is changing and everything is changing (p. 15, v. 30).

> Everything got complicated, mixed up. Today there is no summer or real winter (p. 15, v. 22).

> I don't know winter as a season, because nowadays winter is like an extended colder autumn. Winter lasts for a few days (p. 15, v. 3).

The narratives of teenagers indicate an experience of climate loss – they do not specify the beginning or end of winter, the only "winter" event they refer to is Christmas. Teenagers describe the difference in climatic conditions they know from intergenerational communication (family photographs, stories, films) or school information, they describe it in the context of a lifeworld characterised as ugly, boring, unattractive, and depressing:

> I don't like winter. Everywhere is wet, grey, dirty, and slippery. This snow, which doesn't have time to melt, turns grey and changes to mud, making the shoes dirty. Cars driving down the street splash this mud and annoy everyone. Wet sand or salt is spread everywhere and yet it is still slippery and you can fall over in the lanes on the carriageway or on steps (p. 15, v. 19).

> Winter is basically non-existent because there is no snow. And when there is snow, it immediately melts or disappears with rain. Recently four centimetres of snow fell, but when I was away [in the mountains] there was about ten centimetres. I don't like winter in my town because there are no hills to go down, and when there are, it's full of drunks and it smells like beer. There is also a lot of trash on the hills, cans and beer bottles (p. 15, v. 29).

> I don't like winter in my village because there is no snow, there is mud everywhere, it rains and there is a strong wind. The sun doesn't come out from behind the clouds and it's gloomy. In my opinion, it is not winter but autumn. You can't go sledding or make a snowman. There is not much to do. It would be different if there was snow. Then you could go outside (v. 15, v. 32).

Using the collected empirical material, it is possible to reconstruct the differences in the duration of calendar winter and the winter described in the narratives of the older and younger female research participants.

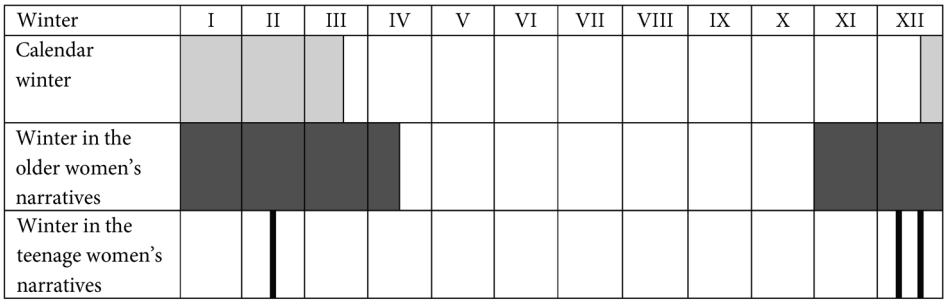

Diagram 1. The duration of the calendar winter and that remembered by women

Own elaboration

The narratives of the older women show that in the mid-20th century winter lasted longer than the three months of calendar, astronomical, and meteorological winter. Winter lasted a minimum of four months (December to March) and a maximum of five and a half months a year (November to April). Whereas the narratives of teenagers suggest that winter appears episodically in December.

Meanings given to winter by an older generation of women

A significant dimension of the reconstruction of the lifeworld image consists of the meanings given to winter. These meanings emerge only in the narratives of older women. The women explained and justified what winter is in terms of the

structure of the seasons, the functions of winter as a season, and how they have experienced it in the past century. These findings are important because they reveal which dimensions of women's lifeworlds have been altered or eroded by perceived perturbations in the normal course of the seasons. Four diverse conceptions of winter were reconstructed from the women's narratives, three of which are represented throughout the research material and one of which is marginally revealed.

Winter as beauty

The concept is developed from an anthropocentric perspective. Winter was the subject of the aesthetic experience of the study's female participants. Winter provided positive emotions from the pleasure of experiencing beauty: "white", "pristine", "fairy-tale-like", and "magic". In an aesthetic sense, winter is described as a unique and unusual season. It was a time of complete transformation of a well-known world. Winter aestheticized everyday life in a democratic way, offering universal access to tangible beauty in its pure form. This significance is illustrated by passages in the narrative:

> When there was snow then it was beautiful. As you drove through the forest, well it was wonderful. The snow on the trees and all that… it's indescribable, how beautiful (p. 80, v. 1).

> Everything was white, beautiful, and just like in a fairy tale. I miss the white view outside the window (p. 80, v. 4).

> And the winters were just beautiful because they were, not only white, but somehow so cheerful (p. 80, v. 2).

> I liked it most when the trees were frosted. The road was planted with old ash trees. There were ash trees and when it was frosty like this, these trees were as if you've painted them, so white, snowy. And the snow was there, it was sparkling, and as you walked it was crunchy. I loved it (p. 80, v. 13).

The narratives of teenagers confirm the relevance of this category, indicating that the experienced climate clash is linked to the ugliness of modern winter:

> The winter is mild and very ugly. There is very little snow, practically zero snow in Pomerania. Temperature is up to two degrees Celsius below zero (p. 15, v. 35).

Winter as a force

Winter is conceptualised from an anthropocentric perspective as a strong and "harsh" season. Winter was a serious climatic opponent that people had to reckon with, to be treated with seriousness and even fear:

> The winters back then were harsh, even though everyone was waiting to just make a snowman, everyone was dreading it (p. 80, v. 25).

It is noteworthy that the essence of this concept is to emphasise the inseparable connection of physical and spiritual human life with nature. In the older women's narratives, winter was a transformative force in people's lives. As a difficult but predictable season, it forced people to prepare and protect themselves against the cold:

> Securing windows. In our basement we used to make straw rolls and secure the windows. There have been winters where this had to be done. Also, the supply of clothing. When the children grew out of clothes then there were problems. And, above all, parents converted clothes from the older ones to the younger ones because there was no money. Those were tough times. Now one turns the furnace on, and the entire house is warm. back then, the entire house didn't get warm, only the kitchen, because that's where the fire was (p. 80, v. 17).

In the older women's minds, the difficulties concerning schools, communication etc., were perpetuated. Winter constituted a serious impediment to people's daily lives. Childhood memories also include interruptions concerning schools due to breakdowns caused by very cold temperatures:

> There was a winter where there was so much snow that bread was delivered by sledge from the main road, it was impossible to get to the shop. To water the animals, the water had to be heated because it froze when poured into the trough, and the same to water the birds. Tunnels were dug in the backyard to reach the farm buildings. The snowdrifts were enormous. I am currently having a hard time getting used to a winter without snow (p. 80, v. 31).

> The snowdrifts were so high that they were at the level of the roofs of buildings. There were times when it was freezing – 30 degrees, we sat by the tiled furnace because there was no heating. There were no buses running, the children had to get there themselves, or their parents took the children by horse-drawn sleigh. We skated, skied on frozen floodplains. Schools were closed during such high frosts. Children were able to play outside and make snowmen. It was a lot of fun. No one seemed to mind that the winter was so harsh. At the time, no one imagined a winter like the present one (p. 80, v. 23).

The essential memories of the winter in the middle of the last century consist of the remembered bodily sensations: the inability to breathe freely during a blizzard, the penetrating cold irritating the hands, clothes restricting movement, limited mobility – wading through snowdrifts:

> There came such snowstorms, such wind, that everything was blown away. I remember it was snowing so hard, and I had to walk and couldn't catch my breath (p. 80, v. 16).

> The cold was piercing every possible nook and cranny of the body, even if we were only sticking our noses out from underneath. But no wonder, the temperature in my childhood days reached 25 degrees below zero! Until now, chills go through me at the very thought! (p. 80, v. 5).

> When I was ten, eleven years old, as I remember, well it was freezing cold. But it was fun. Legs were freezing, hands were irritated (p. 80, v. 9).

From a child's point of view, the winter of the middle of the last century was a time full of opportunities for action, a time of joy, passing through dangerous explorations and games in snowdrifts or on frozen lake surfaces. The women were aware that some activities, from the point of view of current standards of safe play, might seem very controversial. However, they highlighted the health benefits of children being outside in sub-zero temperatures. Therefore, winter was a force of nature hardening the strength of a child's body:

> An ice rink was being made near the school, so everyone who knew how to skate did it. Those brave enough skated on frozen lakes (p. 80, v. 4).

> There was so much snow that it reached almost up to the waist. We walked along such special corridors, but for us kids it was incredible fun. There were hills and you could go sledding. We had fun until the night came. Children were not afraid even if they were without their parents (p. 80, v. 9).

> We also used to have a better immunity. We were able to spend half a day outside, in the cold, chasing each other in the snow. And if you were now to let your child out for half a day with an unbuttoned jacket, without a scarf or hat, they would immediately get sick. And they would end up taking antibiotics or other medication (p. 80, v. 5).

Teenagers refer indirectly to this conception of winter, pointing out that its nuisance is minor – winter has lost its power to transform people's lives. It requires only minor adjustments:

> On the plus side, it's not slippery on the road, the bus isn't late, I'm at school on time. I also don't get cold while waiting for the bus. I only like it in the sense that I don't have to dress up as much. My grandmother probably freezes fruit for the winter. Because we have a piece of land and when there are a lot of strawberries or other blueberries, my grandmother takes half of them and freezes them for later, supposedly for the winter. Although I don't know. Maybe to avoid going to the store later. When it's winter and it's so grey, it makes you want to do less. That's what I think (p. 15, v. 30).

> I know from my grandmother that it used to be necessary to prepare for winter. Today we are preparing for Christmas, not winter – buying a Christmas tree, ornaments and, of course, gifts (p. 15, v. 24).

> Winter is no longer harsh, it's actually mild and people don't have to prepare as they used to. They don't have to buy thick jackets, clothes, tighten the windows because the weather is more or less the same as in autumn and spring. The only household member who prepares for the winter is my dog. It has a thicker coat (p. 15, v. 21).

> Dad prepares the car for winter as he has to change the tyres from summer tyres and changes the windscreen washer fluid, from summer to winter, so it doesn't freeze. Generally, summer clothes are already put into the wardrobe. One has to dress warmer, because if it's a bit colder we can catch a cold (p. 15, v. 16).

Winter as protection

This concept was formulated by older women from a partly deanthropocentric perspective. Participants representing the older generation highlighted the natural benefits of cold and snowy winters. They drew attention to the state of balance in nature, which is currently disturbed. In this conceptualisation of winter, nature is understood by the older generation of women as a living organism that needs rest after its work. Therefore, winter was understood as a time of "pause" and "sleep" in nature, which are necessary for maintaining the normal rhythm of nature's reproduction. The protective effect of winters consisted, according to the older women, in a specific ordering of nature, mainly through mechanisms of killing ("freezing) the excess of superfluous organisms that burden humans and nature:

> The soil rests under the snow, the soil needs this water from the snow, and also various vermin die due to the snow, slugs and all that ails us during summer (p. 80, v.13).

People also benefited from the protective effect of winter. The predictable and orderly climate – snowy, cold, and long winter – has been beneficial in terms of people's health and ensuring food security. The health benefits referred not so much to the beneficial effects of low temperatures on the human body, but to the killing of potential threats: "viruses", "bacteria", and "pests":

> All sorts of pests like ticks, mosquitoes froze, which was very good for crops, among other things (p. 80, v. 19).

> Temperatures below zero are necessary to freeze out viruses and bad bacteria, for example (p. 80, v. 23).

The narratives of teenagers do not include references to this concept.

Winter as an ideologically appropriated force

The final concept marginally represented in the older women's narratives is evoking the image of winter as an ideologically and politically appropriated force. In communist propaganda in Poland, winter was portrayed as a force hostile to man that causes damage to agriculture and the economy. The women were aware of the manipulation carried out by the communist authorities distorting the true essence of the season:

> When [the communists] didn't manage, they blamed it on the winter. But it was not the harshest winter. The most severe winter was at the turn of '62 to '63. This really has been a harsh winter. And then in '74 they said it was the winter of the century, because it was an excuse for economic inefficiency (p. 80, v. 17).

> In fact, it was winter that finished Gierek. Back then it was the winter of the century. The entire Poland stood still. And everyone could see for themselves that this Gierek-era paradise was just a scam (p. 80, v. 35).

Winter was also a time of enforced community service, performing socially useful work or clearing up breakdowns in very difficult weather conditions:

> When the bus bogged down, people from the village had to come. There was a so-called tax – it was called a szarwark. It was a tax that had to be worked off in kind during the winter. All farmers. They had so many hours to work off. Like 5 or 10 days a year. During winter, when the roads were blocked, well, people would walk 2–4 kilometres with shovels to dig up the bus and help it out (p. 80, v. 8).

The narratives of teenagers do not relate to the meanings contained in this concept.

Concern for others, concern for self? Dimensions of climate sadness. Seeking solutions

Procedures of contrasting past and present are present in the older women's narratives: the past was a time of normality, order and predictability, while the present constitutes its negation. This narrative construction allows women to reveal their emotions concerning perceived changes. Older women are concerned with the disappearance of winter as a season:

> Now we don't have snow. Snow will soon be an attraction (p. 80, v. 3).

> Today I miss the snow and such a real winter especially during Christmas. it's no longer the same without snow, no longer as enjoyable as it once was (p. 80, v. 12).

> The winter today constitutes just a gist of winter, as there is no real winter in our area. It lasts a short time, begins late. It doesn't have that charm (p. 80, v. 9).

Analyses of the narratives show that the reasons for anxiety vary – sometimes it is the loss of a particular aesthetic, sometimes it is a certain version of the landscape and the emotions that are associated with it.

Sometimes at this stage of the analyses there are references to emotions that are revealed indirectly and impersonally – in the form of categories of description of the world: "it is sad":

> And now it's so grey. It's raining, it's raining, it's windy.… A person feels worse because of it. Sad or depressed. I really miss true winter (p. 80, v. 9).

An important narrative convention that the older women resorted to is to juxtapose past and present and to compare the climatic experiences of their own childhood with those of contemporary children, as illustrated by the sample narrative excerpts:

> And even now, children mostly sit in front of computers at home. They also have the Internet on their mobile phones and sit in front of them. And it used to be that we didn't sit, there was just constant playing outside, or something had to be done. Now there are no more children playing outside. It was fun in the snow! We returned with red noses and cold legs (p. 80, v. 4)

> Today it is definitely worse for the children, for the grandchildren. They can't take full advantage of a true winter, sledging, skating on frozen ponds. I dream of those times from my childhood. At the moment, the children don't know what it is to play in such heavy snow and a hard frost (p. 80, v. 11).

> Now when you go to the Christmas Midnight Mass, it's muddy, it's raining. In the past, the snow creaked under your feet. We were chasing each other, throwing snowballs. Now the children can throw mud, at most (p. 80, v. 33).

In the older women's narratives, contemporary childhood is devoid of experiences of "enjoying the world", of play associated with climatic conditions specific to winter: snowfall, sub-zero air temperatures, etc.

Using comparisons and assessments of one's own childhood and that of generations of grandchildren and great-grandchildren argues that the victims of climate change are today's children. Old women recall their own childhoods as a closed chapter to which there is no return. Their narratives attest to the fact that the order of the predictable world has disintegrated, and with it a certain range of climatic experiences:

> Everyone liked winter. One liked what one had, and everyone had the same. People didn't have much. We didn't have much, but everyone had a lot of fun with winter. Now it is the other way around. People have everything, only joy is absent. Well, and winter is gone (p. 80, v. 9).

Older women realise that their climate experiences will not appear in the biographies of their grandchildren and great-grandchildren ("children don't understand", "worse for the children", "children don't know", etc.). The study's participants express sadness, grief, and compassion for generations of children who have been irretrievably robbed of a version of the world they themselves had the chance to experience.

In the narratives of the granddaughters, there are references to the intergenerational transmission of climate narratives as a reference point for their own "climate dreams":

> I would like to experience strong sub-zero temperatures to feel the winter, but unfortunately winter is around zero. And then there's the mud! Now they are saying that it will be ten degrees above zero during Christmas. Winter is no longer a distinctive season. It looks bland, like the others. Sometimes a light dusting of snow. Recently, my mum came up with the idea of going to the mountains for the holidays, because there we are sure it will be winter – snowy and cold. Winter in the city is terrible. There is rarely any snow, or it is non-existent. The only attraction is an artificial ice rink, where the temperature is maintained for the ice. I have a dream to try skating on a lake one day. I hope the ice will be thick enough some day and I will succeed. My mom said that she and her friends always skated on the lake when she was my age (p. 15, v. 24).

> Grandma often talks about winter, especially during Christmas time. I know what the winter of the century was, and this is the winter I dream of. That's the kind of winter I'd like to experience, as people did in those days (p. 15, v. 16).

The intergenerational transmission of climate narratives is helpful in constructing an image of real winter as an attraction to be experienced, rather than as a climatic peculiarity of a place of life. It is probably for this reason that the narratives of teenagers feature the "towards winter" travel projects:

> I don't like winter without snow. Winter and Christmas without snow is not cool. I really like the winter cold and snow. I would be willing to move to the mountains for the winter, as snow is definitely my favourite part of winter. When I was in Finland, I remember there was snow up to my knees (p. 15, v. 26).

Winter in the narratives of the younger generation is mainly a landscape accessible in specific enclaves (e.g. in the mountains). Winter is becoming a climatic asset to be enjoyed during short winter holidays. The teenagers are positive that winter is not "completely lost" – it can be experienced in other places. The categories of choice, mobility (free movement), tourism and consumerism meet the desire to "experience winter as it was in the old days". Teenagers seem to follow the formula: "there's no winter in my city, then buy a trip to somewhere that has winter". They look at the winter landscape through the eyes of tourists (Urry 2007) eager for excitement and attractions. This perspective can lead to superficial framings of the problem: "it's a pity it's not so pretty, white, fairy-tale-like". Presumably, a liberal remedy for climate loss at the point of living may constitute one strategy for adapting to climate change. Climate tourism as a practice for coping with climate loss can at the same time exacerbate the problem (emphasis on low-cost travel, on converting new areas to tourism development, emphasis on developing tourism services, turning nature into an attraction accessible to the mass public, etc.):

> During winter, you have to go to the mountains. Besides, they make snow on the slopes there, so you can ski without any problems. I love skiing. There is only one ice rink in our town, but I rarely go there (p. 15, v. 22).

> We live in such times that travel is cheap, so there really is no problem. Winter aficionados can go to Norway, while those who prefer warm climates can go to Australia. Everyone can have what they like (p. 15, v. 18).

Conclusion

Usually, the conclusions of climate research are concerned with outlining a pedagogical response: demands for reliable education, the awakening of critical consciousness, the transmission of knowledge concerning the causes and effects of

global warming as a basis for the formation of attitudes and values such as empathy, responsibility for the planet, and solidarity with those experiencing the effects of the climate crisis. The aim of climate education would therefore be to shape sensitivity to the needs of the planet and the capacity to act effectively and address the global challenge of the climate crisis.

With the perspective defined in such a way, a doubt arises concerning the substance of the educational measures advocated: whether they are not part of a project of sham actions that in no way translate into people addressing the global challenges of this crisis. Another highly debatable issue is human agency: whether people are able to challenge global processes, whether ecologically reformed lifestyles can effectively transform the ways in which energy is produced and used, challenge global capitalism, change global transport networks – the flow of goods, people, and services.

Climate narratives derived from lived knowledge appear as an alternative to the postulated educational measures. Climate narratives are linked to biographical learning, knowledge, and care as practices actually occurring in the lifeworld. These narratives grow out of locality and address the close relationship between climate and life. Analysing them is helpful in identifying and describing the effects that a changing climate has on people's lives, health, emotions, work activities, and family life (Terry 2009; Walters 2018; Du Bray, Wutich, Larson 2019). Analysing climate narratives has made it possible to describe variations related to gender, life stage, wealth level, place of living (Karlovic, Partick 2003), which is important in the perspective of adapting to climate change and strengthening people's capacity to cope with the course and effects of global warming (Griswold 2017). These narratives do not address the logic of appearances – the necessity of bringing knowledge, because this knowledge is already present in life experience. Women notice climate change in the lifeworld and are convinced about the impossibility of stopping it or restoring the climatic equilibrium. These narratives indicate possible remedies – the logic of degrowth. These narratives also document a critical awareness – no remedies will be taken.

Climate narratives indicate how people come to terms with and adapt to inevitable climate change, how they accept climate loss, what they fear, what they regret, who they sympathise with, where they seek comfort or hope.

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Summary

"It was winter that finished Gierek's government" – two generations of women's climate narratives

The aim of the article is to discuss the results of empirical research concerning climate narratives. The research involved 35 women representing the oldest generation (75–87 years old) and 35 girls representing the generation of fifteen-year-olds. The qualitative research procedure used – interview, enabled the collection of narratives. The research problems included the following questions: What retrospective image of winter as a season emerges from the narratives of the participants of empirical research? What image of possible climate change emerges from the narratives of the women participating in the study? The theoretical framework of the project is the paradigm of emotionalization of climate change. The research results include the identified meanings of winter as a season, an analysis of the emerging significant description categories, and an analysis of the climatic emotions of the study participants.

Keywords

winter climate narratives, climate change, women, generation, Poland

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