

IN THE INTERFACES OF OXYGEN DEPLETION

A case study of the environmentalities of Carsten from Hjarbæk Fjord and the
Danish Society for Nature Conservation in *The Green Tripartite*

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ABSTRACT: This article explores biosocial frictions unfolding in the interfaces of oxygen depletion. The Green Tripartite (*Den Grønne Trepert*), a national Danish agreement aiming to reduce nitrogen, create more ‘nature’ and lower CO₂, through agricultural restructuring, signals new forms of collaboration and combat. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork and recent environmental scholarship, I analyze how Carsten, a daily visitor of Hjarbæk Fjord, and the Danish Society for Nature Conservation (*Danmarks Naturfredningsforening*) engage with oxygen depletion through divergent environmentalities. A central point is that these divergent ways of knowing, responding to, and being shaped by oxygen depletion reveal embodied political disagreements between urban, scientific bureaucrats and rural, anti-elitist populations, and their more-than-human relations.

KEY WORDS: *Den Grønne Trepert*, multiplicity, environmentality, governance, the Green Tripartite.



Murky waters and the Green Tripartite

Eelgrass, eel rushes, eel fishing. No eels. Data production, discussions and daily evening visits with four dogs. A tar pot used for eel traps, once upon a time. A new political deal, a tripartite. On a July afternoon in the summer of 2024, Adrian and I met Carsten¹ and his four dogs by the sea kayak club by Hjarbæk Fjord. As the sun moved closer to the horizon of corn fields and common reeds, Adrian, Carsten, and I talked. We had many good ideas for how to create life in the fjords again, and with his daily visits to Hjarbæk Fjord, Carsten had a lot to share. He told us about the efforts he engages and believes in. About how politicians have been unable to live up to their responsibilities. About the histories of Hjarbæk Fjord. When Carsten was a 'knejt' (a term for big boys or young men particularly used by working class men from Jutland) there were many eels. Since the middle ages, Hjarbæk Fjord's abundance of eels and herring has attracted and fed the people, among others, living there, Carsten told us. In the sixties, a dam was built to improve car infrastructure. This transformed the fjord from saltwater to freshwater, cutting Hjarbæk Fjord off from Limfjorden and creating excellent conditions for algae growth. Eels and fish disappeared, and fishermen had no fish to fish. In the nineties, the dam was removed, and saltwater entered Hjarbæk Fjord. But the conditions in the fjord did not improve.

After meeting Carsten, a lot of things happened. 2024 marked the year with the highest levels of oxygen depletion recorded in 22 years in Denmark². Meanwhile, a national deal to "benefit both the climate, water environment, nature and biodiversity"³ was agreed upon, with a strategy of "a historically large restructuring of agriculture"⁴ (DN 2024; Aftale om et Grønt Danmark 2024: 2, 8). Oxygen depletion and the practices creating it were to be stopped. Out of the seven official stakeholders in the deal, one of them specializes in topics about nature, biodiversity, climate and environments. This is the Danish Society for

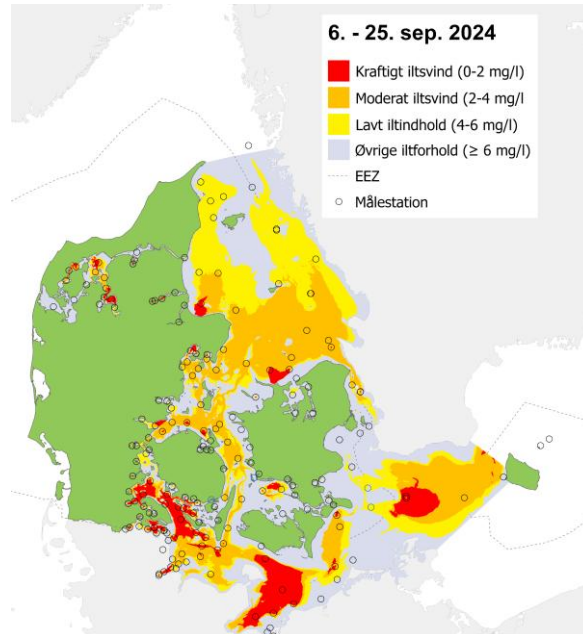
¹ Carsten is a pseudonym. I used internet groups to get in touch with him again. I asked permission to quote him and read aloud his quotes from the summer of 2024, which he elaborated on, and, once again, he asked important questions: "But what will it become?" (with it referring to the exam paper I wanted to write about him) "What concerns me most is pollution of the fjord. In Danish: Men hvad skal det blive til? Det, der optager mig allermost, er forurening af fjorden."

² The high levels of oxygen depletion has been the subject of a large number of news articles (see e.g. Meeseburg 2024; Sølvsten 2024; Elkjær 2025).

³ In Danish: "vil gavne både klima, vandmiljø, natur og biodiversitet".

⁴ In Danish: "en historisk stor omlægning af landbruget".

Nature Conservation (DN). Through scientific knowledge about “nature”⁵ and the management thereof, DN provided both guidance and requirements for the national agreement.



Map over recorded amounts of oxygen depletion in coastal waters in Denmark. The total area with oxygen depletion has increased significantly since 2010. The total amount of oxygen depleted waters was 80% larger in 2024 than in 2023 (Nationalt Center for Miljø og Energi 2024).

As I learned more about the agency and causes of oxygen depletion, something else struck me. In the interfaces of oxygen depletion, agreement and disagreement is interwoven, on different governance scales and with different embodied practices. Journalists, scientists, environmental activists, national and municipal politicians from both left- and right-wing parties, officials from the Danish Society for Nature Conservation, Adrian, Carsten and I, among others, agreed: Oxygen depletion must be stopped. But when it came to explanations of causes and proposed solutions, disagreements announced their arrivals, saturated with situated practices of knowledge, governance and power, along with the shaping of new subjectivities. And this is what I wish to explore in this article: *How do the two divergent environmentalities of Carsten and the Danish Society for Nature Conservation shape and take shape in the interfaces of oxygen depletion?*

Exploring this question is important, since the divergent relations with oxygen depletion tell stories of two almost mythological narratives. First, the narrative of a powerful state enforcing certain ways of living on

⁵ I write “nature” with quotation marks to signal the situatedness and boundaries of the specific nature that concerns DN.

local more-than-human populations, despite the humans in those entities vocalize strong opposition to the ways of living imposed by the state (de la Cadena 2015). Second, the narrative of the battle between effective agriculture and nature conservation (Pedersen 2010), sometimes formulated as *techno-optimist visions* against *eco-pessimist visions* (Cusworth et. al 2021). Besides that, the question is important since 70% of nitrogen in the Danish coastal waters, which is a major player in creating oxygen depletion (more on this later), is considered to derive from fertilizer-use in agriculture (Aarhus Universitet 2021). Moreover, production of animals and animal feed constitutes about 68,2% of Denmark's landmass, plus an area corresponding to 14% of Denmark's total landmass from imported animal feed (Odgaard et. al 2021). Oxygen depletion is thus deeply entangled in the reproduction of landscapes that are friendly towards effective production of animals and animal feed, while being hostile towards an array of different worldmaking practices and species, including but not limited to, species that thrive in nutrient poor environments. In the intersections of Green Tripartite, this relationship is being challenged. Through an ethnographic approach, I wish to bring forward some of the more-than-human frictions that are currently unfolding in the interfaces of oxygen depletion – between national governance, local belongingness, and the Green Tripartite's goals of transforming agricultural lands into both nature and even more productive agricultural lands. My main claim is that the divergent ways of knowing, relating to, shaping and being shaped by oxygen depletion can be a key to understanding some of the broader political disagreements between often urban bureaucratic-believers and anti-elitist often rural populations. And this is a more-than-human matter. I thus wish to draw attention to the separated spheres of political action, or political alliances (de la Cadena 2015), as well as the strikingly different tools for communication and democratic involvement which are of great importance to the making and understanding of governance practices, oxygen depletion and environmentalities, whether human or non-human.

Material and analytical approach

For this case study I wish to juxtapose ethnographic material from an encounter with Carsten at Hjarbæk Fjord in July, 2024, with material from an internal meeting at The Danish Society for Nature Conservation (DN) which I attended on November 4th, 2024. Carsten is born and raised in Knudby, a village neighboring Hjarbæk Fjord. During the daytime, Carsten works at a factory that produces *tegl*, clay-based

bricks and roof tiles, some 40 kilometers away from his home. Every night, on weekends, and vacations, Carsten visits the fjord with his four dogs. He enjoys the visits, and he sees the fjord's seasonal changes - and other changes, too (I will elaborate on this later). Carsten is a person who truly cares about Hjarbæk Fjord, and is deeply saddened by the bad conditions that the fjord is in. The Danish Society for Nature Conservation truly cares about the bad condition of Hjarbæk Fjord, too. But this organization, Denmark's biggest green NGO, also cares about the bad conditions of other waters and many other issues of 'nature', 'environment' and 'access to nature' (DN 2024). The association was founded in 1911, and since then DN has played a crucial role in hearings when laws are being drafted. DN has a special legal right that allows them to appeal against decisions made by public authorities, pursuant to eg. the Nature Protection Act and the Environmental Protection Act. DN is considered the fifth most influential civil society organization (Løppenthin 2017). DN thus has an influential position in governance where they work on local, national and international scales in distinct ways. Importantly, DN is currently an official stakeholder in the Green Tripartite (GT), the national deal striving for a "historical restructuring and conversion of Denmark's land areas and production of food and agriculture in Denmark"⁶ (Aftale om et Grønt Danmark 2024: 2).

To analyze these issues, I wish to draw on the concepts of *uncommonalities* (de la Cadena 2015), *scales of governance* (Kimura and Kinchey 2019) and *environmentality* (Green 2014). The different world-making practices unfolding along with oxygen depletion hint at heterogeneous ways of engaging with the troubles of our time; troubles of ecological destruction that are entangled with divergent ways of knowing and engaging with power institutions in a more-than-human world. These troubles are by many referred to as the Anthropocene. As many critical scholars have pointed out, the challenges of the Anthropocene are not solely technical issues to be dealt with or fixed by the natural sciences (Yates-Doerr 2014; Green 2014). Rather, our time's environmental problems are issues that require collaboration of different kinds; bringing ontological disagreement into the alliances (de la Cadena 2015), on different scales of governance (Kimura & Kinchey 2019), and with attention to the relations of power and care emerging between state governance, scientific knowledge and local ways of nurturing and living in a shared world (Green 2014).

⁶ Original Danish text: "en historisk omlægning og omstilling af Danmarks arealer og af fødevarer- og landbrugsproduktionen i Danmark".

Marisol de la Cadena works with the interactions and struggles that occur between divergent practices as they connect across constitutive differences (de la Cadena 2015). Drawing on events of indigenous resistance against the expansion of markets for minerals, oil, and energy in Bolivia, Peru and Argentina, de la Cadena addresses the violence against local worlds enacted from nation-state governance in the name of progress. With the term *uncommonalities* she calls for a practice of politics that brings ontological disagreement into alliances and inaugurates multiple worldings. De la Cadena criticizes the idea of a universal nature: “what is enacted as humans and nature is *not only* enacted as such” (ibid.), and she thereby advocates for ontological multiplicity. This perspective has inspired me to scrutinize how oxygen depletion is *not only* the same thing, as Carsten, DN and oxygen depletion take part in a relational alliance with ontological differences.

Many of today’s environmental problems are unfolding not only at local scales, but on national and global scales, too. When dealing with the realities of ecological destruction, Kimura and Kinchey draw attention to the importance of *scales of governance* when participants want to solve environmental problems (2014). They argue that environmental problems unfolding at regional, national and/or global scales may necessitate state- or nationwide struggles, in order to stop the problems. While national scales of governance may be useful to create efficient shifts in governance practices, the standardized methods often used here may limit locals’ knowledge and participants’ attachments to a certain issue. Conversely, local scales of governance may facilitate local community empowerment, but without collaboration with larger governance scales, the local actions may not be effective. Attention to scale thus enables consideration of the qualitative, affective and infrastructural conditions of different strategies, where certain networks, skills and access to powerful stakeholders can be important components for struggles to be effective.

Lesley Green uses the term *environmentality* to discuss how environmental management practices, whether state or home based, navigate and transform power-embedded landscapes (2014). Environmentality, as explained by Green, emphasizes that intellectual heritages and biosocial technologies are crucial for *how* environmental publics engage with environmental politics. Green draws attention to the violence at the core of compliance-based environmental management “in which science and governance operate to control a relation with a nature that is defined by its capital value” (Green 2014: 4). Echoing Bruno Latour, Green

draws attention to the values of efficiency, profitability and objectivity as essential principles in establishing governance practices that are true to the modernist imaginary of separating subjects and objects (Green 2014). This is important in relation to the categories of experts and non-experts which are generated through objectification where scientific knowledge about ‘nature’, as DN has and uses, creates subjects with capacities to decide and influence national governance practices. Entities that do not live up to the knowledge economy’s values, eg. Carsten, do not have agency to take part in the national politics of environmental management, and are thus rendered as objects in that particular governance setting. Green’s text is, however, not only that of critique. Inspired by Rachel Carson, Green, too, calls for a revolutionary environmentalism; an environmentalism that begins with the ecologies of households, called oikos, where nurturing and attending cycles that support fertility and responsiveness are central. This is thus a call for an affective and relational approach to generating non-elitist environmental management and publics. In relation to Denmark’s current governance plans to reduce nitrogen nationally, I have found Green’s perspectives fruitful, since these decisions, too, are examples of environmental politics, guided by natural scientists who place faith in centralized political institutions. In this article, the term environmentalism has been useful to explore how the entities of Carsten and DN shape and take shape through institutional arrangements, knowledge practices, and decision-making in relation to environmental governance of different scales – and contributed with attention for how oikos and ecologies can be nurtured.

What is oxygen depletion?

Soft winds, warmth, summer, rain. Nutrient rich water rushes from fertilized fields through straightened streams. From the South, Fiskbæk Å runs through wetlands and what today are farm fields, but were once wetlands (and once upon a time, in the stone age, were covered by the Littorina sea). From the Southwest, the narrower Jordbro Å runs through a lake made in 2016 to decrease the amounts of nitrogen reaching Hjarbæk Fjord. From the East, Skals Å runs containing EU-protected Natura 2000 nature. From the Northeast, Simstedt Å, known as one of the cleanest rivers in Denmark, flows with sea trout populations. These four streams’ large catchment area lead nitrogen- and phosphorus-rich drain- and river water to the shallow Hjarbæk Fjord. Here, the brackish water meets saltwater, creating two layers, with cold saltwater at the bottom and warmer brackish water at the top – a relationship that creates good conditions for algae

growth. With these excessive cycles of algae eating, living and dying light is prevented from penetrating the water, and the water plants are thus deterred from living and releasing oxygen to the water (Hansen 2025; SEGES 2020). This reinforces the release of hydrogen sulfide, ammonia, and phosphate from the fjord bottom, caused by the good conditions for algae growth, which reinforces the process even more. Furthermore, in order to decompose the great amounts of dead algae, bacteria uses oxygen, which thus can lead to oxygen depletion. This process, caused by nutrient enrichment in water bodies, is called eutrophication (Hunding 2024).

But the release of nitrate through rain water is not the only significant way that nitrogen compounds morph the life that they meet. When farm fields are added more nutrients than the amount of nutrients that the crops can absorb, the excess amount of nitrogen is discharged, either as nitrate through watercourses, or as ammonia or nitrous oxide to the atmosphere (Miljø- og Ligestillingsministeriet 2025). And as these specific nitrogen compounds move through air and water in large amounts, they change the livability of ecologies for certain species (ibid).

The environmentalty of the Danish Society for Nature Conservation

The descriptions of nitrogen, nitrate, ammonium and phosphorus as essential partakers in the enabling of oxygen depletion are also presented by the Danish Society for Nature Conservation (DN). In their article “Oxygen Depletion in the Sea”⁷ and at their internal meeting held to discuss the Green Tripartite (the GT), DN reference a national study from Aarhus University, explaining that approximately 70% of nitrogen emissions from land to sea comes from agriculture (Aarhus Universitet 2021). The study uses data from 210 water flow measuring stations, which have a catchment area amounting to 59% of Denmark’s total landmass (NOVANA 2022). The study highlights the connections between agricultural practices’ use of nitrogen fertilizers and the fertilizers’ agencies in soils, seas and groundwater. This national (and in some ways also local and global) conjuncture between policy, nitrogen, agriculture, and water environment, among others, serves as an argument for creating an “effective” policy. The policy thus strives for effectiveness in both nitrogen reductions, implementation processes and agriculture production (Aftale

⁷ Original Danish title: “Iltsvind i havet” (DN, <https://www.dn.dk/vi-arbejder-for/vand/hav/iltsvind-i-havet/>).

om et Grønt Danmark 2024), on a national scale through top-down institutional technologies using scientific data.

Initially, as one might perhaps guess, the political agreement was not established from the outset. It developed through negotiations – a commons emerging through the interplay of heterogeneous worldmaking practices unfolding qualitatively as some practices became lively while others (were made to) disappear. The government, in this case, was not in favor of nitrogen reductions at the beginning of the negotiations. However, this did not last forever. This was something that Maria Gjerding, the president of DN, addressed at an internal meeting:

Nitrogen was the only thing the government had written into its terms of reference that we were NOT allowed to talk about. There was a specific sentence that said ‘nitrogen is not part of these negotiations’ – and what is a bit paradoxical, when you look at the agreement now, is that nitrogen has become the main focus of the GT.⁸

The GT shifted from not being *allowed* to deal with nitrogen to a deal *focusing* on nitrogen, hence creating space for a new question: How much should nitrogen be reduced? According to Gjerding nitrogen was such an integral part of the deterioration of climate, biodiversity, and the aquatic environment that a political agreement not regulating agriculture’s release of nitrogen “would not be something DN could vouch for,” as she said at the internal meeting. Calling for nitrogen reductions, DN required that the SVM-government⁹ stepped away from protecting “effective agriculture production,” (a phrase used by both Gjerding at the internal meeting; DN 2024; Aftale om et Grønt Danmark 2024). These political negotiations can be understood as the desire of reducing nitrogen meeting another desire of *not* reducing nitrogen; a political alliance where practices connect across constitutive differences. If DN, as the only

⁸ Original Danish quote, from the internal meeting of The Danish Society for Nature Conservation on November 4th, 2024: “Kvælstof var det eneste, regeringen havde skrevet ind i sit kommissorie, at vi IKKE måtte tale om. Der stod en decideret sætning, hvor der stod ‘kvælstof er ikke en del af de her forhandlinger’. Og det, der jo er lidt paradoksalt, når man nu står og kigger på aftalen, er, at det er kvælstof, der er blevet hovedomdrejningspunktet for den grønne trepartsafale.”

⁹ The Danish SVM government, formed in December 2022, is a coalition government consisting of the Social Democrats (S), the Liberal Party (Venstre, V), and the Moderates (M). This is a rare coalition that includes both right-wing and left-wing parties, marking the first time in over 40 years that traditional rivals govern together in Denmark. Over time, this coalition has become increasingly unpopular. A recent survey shows that voters believe that this coalition is the worst at implementing favorable politics (Epinion 2024).

stakeholder with specialized knowledge of “nature”, stepped away from the agreement, the agreement would both lose its expertise about aquatic environments, and perhaps its democratic support, as 89% of Danes are worried about the state of the seas (WWF 2022) and 57% believe that political decisions are made without a proper scientific/professional basis (Mandag Morgen 2024). Divergent ontologies are met in the GT, signaling a shift in (environ)mentality, but, of course, kept at bay with scientific data, visions of compromise and effective agricultural world-making practices.

The GT marks a shift away from the previous agricultural policy of voluntary schemes as these, by DN among others, were deemed ineffective at reducing agriculture’s use of nitrogen (DN 2024). While targets for nitrogen reductions existed before the GT, the data that guided national policies for nitrogen reductions were based on farmers’ own reports. In 2022, authorities on average supervised 3,7% of Danish farms, and 35% of those farms “had an overuse of nitrogen” (Statsrevisorerne 2024) which was not detectable through the data created by the farms themselves. The wishes to make ends with the ineffective voluntary schemes thus makes an environmentality underpinned by efficiency, compliance and centralized control. While efficiency, along with profit and objectivity, function as essentials in compliance-based capitalist governance, efficiency can also be linked to desires and dedication to reducing environmental problems unfolding on larger scales than the local. The environmentality in the GT also creates subjectivities that come into being through coercion, even though the Danish government and official stakeholders in the GT uphold compromise as the ideal. This ideal of compromise, somewhat akin to de la Cadena’s concept, emphasizes the specific embodied practices and technologies at play in environmental politics, thereby revealing the relationality between environmental organizations, current policy frameworks, and perceptions of agriculture.

In the Green Tripartite, entities that do not reduce nitrogen or “benefit nature” are rendered as obstacles, as something that compliance-based politics can and should change through financial incentives. On their website, DN write:

So far, there have been no consequences for the voluntary schemes not working. With the GT it will become costly not to convert your land. The CO₂ tax on livestock, a tax on low-lying soil and increased regulation on nitrogen will ensure this.¹⁰

Farmers producing livestock are here understood as obstructive objects emerging in tandem with economic overrides, rendering fertilizers, the environment and (friends of) agriculture, among others, as entities to be controlled and managed through financial regulation. This establishes an environmentality where matters of nature, fertilizers, and caring for the environment are rendered as something outside the oikos (management of households), in the realms of the polis (state governance), thus creating a sphere of responsibility grounded in state control with clear ambitions in improving the conditions for nature and environment. At the core of this new policy runs an environmentality which does not care for the dependencies that have been created between farmers and fertilizers, for farmers to continue their jobs. Furthermore, it has little practice in bringing actual farmers and concerned citizens into the policy-creation rooms due to the alliance's top-down, scientific approach.

Carsten's environmentality

Carsten does not connect agriculture's use of fertilizers with oxygen depletion. In fact, he is not interested in oxygen depletion at all. Or at least the phrasing of it. Rather, he is interested in the spatial conditions and changes that he experiences in Hjarbæk Fjord. As we speak, Carsten sheds attention to several things that worsen the conditions in the fjord. He calculates how many kilograms of fish seals eat per day and how many seals live in the Limfjord. He counts the amount of fish that cormorants eat – a bird species he despises about as much as the law protecting it. Although Carsten's observations of Hjarbæk Fjord are not conducted according to scientific standards, his observations reveal a truth that the scientific observations

¹⁰ Original Danish quote: "Hvor det hidtil ikke har haft konsekvenser at de frivillige ordninger ikke virkede, vil det med treparten blive omkostningsfuldt ikke at omlægge sin jord. Det vil CO₂-afgiften på husdyr, en afgift på lavbundsjord og en øget regulering på kvælstof sørge for (DN 2024)".

do not. Seals and cormorants live and take shape in the oxygen depleted waters in Hjarbæk Fjord while being protected by bureaucratic international and national laws. And unlike particles of nitrogen and phosphorus, they are rather visible to Carsten. These two species are well-known competitors of fishermen due to their high fish consumption, and the history of fishery in Hjarbæk Fjord is very dear to Carsten. The nitrogen-rich fertilizers, on the other hand, that scientists point to as central factors in creating oxygen depletion and “bad ecological conditions” in coastal waters are determined through scientific measuring methods, such as measuring stations and chemical analyses (NOVANA 2023). So, what happens when someone who is highly critical of city elites and feels a cultural bond to agriculture is met with perspectives fueled by scientific knowledge which emphasize that agriculture plays a big role in creating bad ecological conditions in the fjord?

Standing in the evening sun, looking at the fjord, I ask Carsten if I can swim there. Along the shore, the seabed looks mushy. I see green algae on the top of stagnant water. Carsten replies: “it’s not the best, but you can swim there. Just don’t swallow the water”.¹¹ Carsten explains that the bad conditions in the fjord are caused by sewage, seals, cormorants, and the municipality. Adrian says that agriculture plays a significant role too. Carsten replies:

Agriculture isn’t as bad as those over in the cities want it to be. It’s the EU that’s the problem. They’re the ones who decide that the French can still fish for eels when they’re small. That’s before they come up here, where it’s illegal.¹²

As this quote indicates, Carsten is not fond of both the way that the EU manages eels and the connections that are made between agriculture and bad conditions in the fjord. As mentioned in the start, eel fishing, and the fishing of herring and other animals, has been of great importance for the people living with Limfjorden. In 2022, the amount of eels measured was only 0,6% of the number measured back in 1980 (WWF 2023). While the drastic reduction of eels has given rise to regional conservation and ecological displacements, it has also given rise to frustration for people who feel connected to various species of eels

¹¹ Original Danish quote: “Det’ ik’ det bedste, men du kan godt svømme i det. Bare ik’ drik’ vandet.”

¹² Original Danish quote: “Landbruget er altså ikke så slemt som dem ovre i byerne gerne vil have. Det er EU, den er gal med. Det er dem, der gør sådan, at franskmændene stadig kan fiske ålene mens de er små, inden de kommer herop, hvor det’ ulovligt.”

and the historical practices of fishing and eating them. While Carsten's statement can both be seen as a rejection of scientific knowledge, it can also be seen as an environmentality with an overall critical approach to forms of governance that are not local; expressing resistance to the ways in which regional and national governance practices create standardized practices of environmental governance, with attention to protecting endangered species, but without involvement with local connections, eg. practices of eel fishing.

Carsten's environmentality focuses on the local place, fish, and historical narratives of the people of Salling's connections to Limfjorden. Carsten tells us that it is our task to take care of nature, but as he sees it, the politicians are not taking on their responsibility. As we speak, anger becomes prominent in his voice. He takes out his phone, presses start on a video, and says:

Now I'm gonna show you who's destroying the life here in the fjord. I have it all on my phone. You can see it here.¹³

Carsten shows us a video of a yellow dump truck loading off huge amounts of grass into a small river:

It was the municipality that dumped all this grass into Skals Å, which flows directly out here.¹⁴

While Carsten's experience reveals something about the infrastructures through which he cares for Hjarbæk Fjord, it simultaneously reveals something about an environmentality present in the municipality's practice, and hence the mutual shapings of and by oxygen depletion.

For Carsten, bureaucratic practices, on both EU and municipal scales of governance, are leading practices that don't fully take responsibility for creating abundant nature. After the incident with the grass dumping, Carsten called the municipality, asking them to clean up the mess. They did not accommodate his suggestions. With the dumping of grass into Skals Å, for whatever the many reasons, and not responding to Carsten's call for help, Carsten, once again, fraught with disappointment, experienced that a state initiative contributed to bad conditions in the fjord. Hjarbæk Fjord, a place Carsten shares time with and tries to nurture, emerges from the conjunctures of multiple actors: Grass, seals, cormorants, mushy waters,

¹³ Original Danish quote: "Nu skal jeg vise jer hvem det er, der ødelægger livet her i fjorden. Jeg har det hele på min mobil. I kan se det her."

¹⁴ Original Danish quote: "Det var kommunen, der læssede alt det græs ud i Skals Å. Den løber herud."

a truck driver from the municipality, and national governance practices. These all shape the Fjord in situated ways, showing the various relationalities emerging in the interfaces of oxygen depletion.

Conclusion

This article explores how divergent shapings emerge in the interfaces of oxygen depletion. Drawing on the concept of environmentality, I explore how the Danish Society for Nature Conservation and Carsten, a local dweller at Hjarbæk Fjord, engage with oxygen depletion. They do so on different scales of governance, through diverse embodiments and ways of relating to and shaping oxygen depletion. These diverse interactions with oxygen depletion or “bad conditions in the fjord”, as Carsten puts it, tell stories of how constitutive divergence (de la Cadena 2025) emerges along with oxygen depletion in (un)formulated political alliances. And this is a story about the multiplicity of nitrogen. Effectiveness, scientific methods, and a mixture of visions of compromise and compliance in national politics characterize the environmentality of the Danish Society for Nature Conservation. Carsten’s environmentality is characterized by a feeling of local belongingness, fostered through everyday walks by the fjord, and histories about the abundant of fish and fishing in Limfjorden, along with experiences of politicians, on EU and municipal scales, failing to protect the life in the fjord. By exploring these different environmentalities and their positionalities, this article pushes for a deeper examination of how political disagreements and the knowledge practices engaged with environmental management take shape in a more-than-human world.



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