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[SPEAKER_00]

You are now listening to a podcast from the University of Stavanger.

[SPEAKER_03]

Hello and welcome back to the newest episode of Challenging Nordic Innocence, which is a podcast that critically interrogates the idea of the Nordic region as particularly benevolent, egalitarian or green.

Through a series of conversations, we aim to make an online archive that compiles a catalogue of critical scholarships with activist accounts that seeks to undo this master narrative.

So my name is Anders Riel Müller, or Song Yeon-Jun in Korean, and I'm Associate Professor of Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Stavanger in Norway.

And with me today, and as usual, I have Sebastian Lundsteen Nielsen, who is a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Copenhagen in Denmark.

This podcast is a collaboration between the Social and Spatial Justice Research Group at the University of Stavanger, and the Center for Sustainable Futures at the University of Copenhagen.

And today we are excited to have with us Bjørk Tørnqvist, who is a PhD fellow at Roskilde University, and you and your colleague Bregje, who couldn't be with us today, recently published an article about petroleumscapes in Stavanger.

And so this is a particularly fun podcast for all of us since Sebastian did his PhD in Stavanger I am currently living and working in Stavanger and Bjørk is from the Stavanger region so

We also apologize in advance if we get very, very into the nitty-gritty of living in Stavanger.

But welcome, Bjørk, to the podcast.

[SPEAKER_01]

Thanks.

Thank you.

Yeah, thanks for inviting me.

It's quite an unexpected invitation, but I'm very glad to be here.

[SPEAKER_03]

No, I think we both really love the article.

So maybe you could just present yourself and your research work interest.

[SPEAKER_01]

Yeah, so my name is Bjørk.

I am, like you said, a PhD student at Roskilde University in Denmark.

And my research now centers on research

kind of the political economy around rare earth mineral extraction in South Greenland.

I'm still trying to figure out what exactly it is that I'm doing.

It's very, you know, I'm kind of in the stage of the PhD where everything seems possible and impossible at the same time.

So it's a bit of a scary moment to ask me what my research is.

But that's broadly.

yeah my my topic and area of interest and then the article that um we're discussing today that's based on my master's thesis um so that's kind of yeah how that article came about um and yeah it's about oil in Stavanger thank you so much so

[SPEAKER_03]

So now you've already revealed a little bit of why you were interested in Stavanger.

Maybe you can just explain a little bit about Stavanger for the audience, because not everybody will know where Stavanger is and what Stavanger is famous for necessarily.

[SPEAKER_01]

Yes, so Stavanger is on the southwestern coast of Norway and is quite often referred to as the oil capital of Norway.

And it's kind of the beating heart of the Norwegian petroleum industry.

And growing up there it was, or in the region anyways,

You were just kind of used to like a lot of classmates having their fathers gone for two weeks at a time because they're out on the platforms.

And, you know, everyone had some number of engineers in their family.

And, you know, the industry that hired them was, of course, the petroleum industry.

So it's been something that's kind of filled a lot in my life growing up.

And then during my master's education, we started talking about like,

What happens to an area when a big industry kind of collapses or disappears?

And I started thinking like, well, that's kind of probably where we're headed at some point in Stavanger.

And of course, it's been a conversation for years now.

What are we going to live off after the oil?

And what's going to be the new oil is often...

a topic of conversation in Norway and in particular in Stavanger and I think also to give a bit of context of Stavanger I think there's a sense that people in the Stavanger region are quite annoyed at that conversation and like or maybe more annoyed with the things that are proposed as the quote unquote new oil because there's kind of this sentiment that people

People in Norway who don't live in that region don't understand how big oil actually is.

So that was kind of my personal motivation for exploring oil's position in Stavanger and how people in the city feel about it.

And then I think it's also...

It's a special case in relation to other places in the world because Norway is so often brought out as the example of the country that somehow escaped the resource curse and have transformed this resource richness into public goods and it's quite often celebrated for the

the oil fund that we call it.

And yeah, so I think that Stavanger in that case too is a bit different from maybe other heavy like oil producing regions or cities where that part of the oil industry is maybe not as present.

[SPEAKER_00]

Thanks.

[SPEAKER_03]

So maybe we should introduce because you're engaging with a particular part of sort of research and I think one of the essential concepts is petroleumscapes.

Could you maybe just explain a little bit about petroleum scapes and how you sort of try to frame the article?

[SPEAKER_01]

Yes, so petroleumscapes is a concept that was coined by Carola Hein and it kind of is supposed to capture how petroleum gets spatially embedded and creates like a landscape but a petroleum landscape and the ways that there's you know different particular geographical areas that have something to do with oil and oil production and petroleum but that these are also connected to each other and that it becomes like a web of nodes that are all

Yeah, interconnected, but interconnected through the petroleum industry.

I hope that makes sense.

[SPEAKER_03]

It does.

So maybe we can start because I think what I think you do very well in the article is like it's a very rich description of like how oil permeates almost everything, both physically and mentally.

So maybe you could take us through some of those things.

[SPEAKER_01]

So I think the kind of, yeah, the mental and physical frames that I think Petroleum somehow creates in Stavanger is like physically you can kind of you see it everywhere.

Like, and now when I say it, I mean kind of the industry, like you see the big cranes, uh, you see the ships coming in.

Um, you have the Rosenberg shipyard, I think it's called in English.

Yes.

Um, that you can see from, from the city center.

Um, and then also of course the more, uh,

Yeah, like the airport with the helicopters going to the North Sea.

So it's very physically present.

But I think it also becomes more mentally framing because some of the participants that I talked to

also had this idea of like, well, everything, like every time I look at the ocean, I think of oil because it's also the North Sea and it's so connected to like the coastline.

So I think it's hard for people to also differentiate, like when is it not oil?

When is it no longer connected to it?

And I think also because so much of our

our transportation in and out of the region is kind of in a way mediated through oil, like both in the actual transportation modes that are of course dependent on fossil fuels.

But then also even if like some of the participants pointed out, if you sail a sailboat, which is not something you associate normally with the petroleum industry, you can't sail to Stavanger and not in some way be confronted by the industry.

[SPEAKER_03]

Yeah, I think I moved to Stavanger seven years ago, and I think that's... And maybe, Sebastian, you can chip in here also.

It's really interesting, both...

I think first of all, I also noticed that oil physically is present everywhere.

I'm sitting in a university building that was built with oil, what do you call it, offshore concrete technology.

I'm sitting next to colleagues who are working with research on oil technologies, petroleum technologies.

Yeah, whenever you look out on the ocean, you see

oil supply ships going in and out.

When you go to the airport, you hear the helicopters, as you said.

But also, there's the Norwegian Petroleum Museum, centered right in the middle of the harbor.

And I think also the central library has also been constructed to somehow resemble an oil platform, as far as I know.

So it's just really physically present in everything I've seen.

I don't know if you agree on that, Sebastian.

But I think you're struck particularly when you come from the outside into the city.

[SPEAKER_04]

Yeah, I think, well, yes and no in many ways.

I mean, in my sense, you know, I had this idea of, as you say, Bjørk, like the oil capital of Norway.

And I expected to some extent,

extend to see more you know large-scale infrastructure and so on but also as you say like there's this absent weird ass absence presence going on especially because of the offshore and i think this is also what makes it really really distinct um from from other um nations that there's both this kind of like offshore thing going on but there's also like a a specific um i

It's a little bit unnerving for me, a little bit difficult to explain what like a national mood or attitude is.

But there's also like this kind of like constant modesty thing going on and kind of like this kind of, oh, we don't want to splash our wealth.

But also in other ways, like they also do that.

So it becomes like this weird funneling of petro money culture and so on.

And I thought that was like really, really interesting because also, as you say, like everywhere you go, you either know someone who is directly affiliated with the oil industry or you know somebody who is related or has like a direct relationship to people in the oil industry.

But if I can ask one question that I thought was really, really interesting that kind of picks up on this.

In your article, you riff on Gramsci's notion of the hegemonic, kind of like this idea that everything is natural and everything is order.

It is as it's supposed to be, and thus it becomes unquestioned.

So it's like this massive and it's culturally produced, especially produced, as you also say.

But I found it really, really interesting that you also like going, because I haven't really thought about people putting it in this way, but like the idea of consent.

So consent in this way, kind of like the relationship between the hegemony, the petrol hegemony and the consent.

Maybe you can elaborate a little bit on that.

[SPEAKER_01]

Yeah, that's a big question.

But I think it is also very interesting, the idea of if you participate in something, do you consent to it?

And it's kind of... I think it's often...

used as kind of a deflection a lot of times.

Like, oh, how can you criticize capitalism if you also go and buy bread?

And that kind of just gets very reductive.

That's not a productive conversation.

But I do think that it's an interesting point to pick up on because I do think that there's this...

sense of kind of wanting to challenge this hegemony and this like idea that oil has become so naturalized and that you know it's of course we need to still keep the industry going because look at everything that it's given to us and like look at all these goods that are only possible because of it um but i think i think it speaks to this uh feeling of

somehow being stuck at like an impasse or some sort of inertia and not really knowing where to channel some sort of critiques when everything around you is so built up by this industry because there's like no way to then escape it and then I think I think that the question of consent then becomes like

That maybe it's... How do I say this?

Maybe less so an active consent, but that it feels like you're consenting to something because you're unable to escape it or unable to do otherwise.

I don't know if that really answered the question, but...

[SPEAKER_04]

No, it did.

As you say, it's also a big question.

And if I can also build on this, because I think it had strong resonances with what you also draw on a good friend of ours, Andy's dissertation on generation carbon, where they kind of use this complicity as also a framing device.

Which was also very interesting for me to think about with these ideas of consent and complicity and so on.

[SPEAKER_01]

Was I supposed to comment on that?

Sorry.

[SPEAKER_03]

Well, yeah, I think I agree.

And I think that's something I also noticed sort of like...

I think it's this complicity, consent, hegemony, all of these framings just show how difficult it is to actually describe or explain what's going on.

But maybe to move back to some of the more... Because what I think I really like about the article is also that you're not only looking at industrial, physical...

elements and infrastructure, but you're also looking at cultural production or leisure activities in Stavanger.

So maybe could you talk a little bit about that, especially the Folke Haller and so on?

[SPEAKER_01]

Yeah, so that is also connected to this concept of petroleum scape, because Hein talks directly about how it's not only these industrial parts, but it's also

Yeah, the more cultural manifestations.

of petroleum.

And at first, I found it quite hard to incorporate this cultural aspect into the mapping exercise.

I found it quite like some of her categories didn't really fit with the making of those maps.

But I think it's still something that I wanted to keep this cultural dimension.

Because that's also what I kind of wanted to explore, like how is the city affected or how does oil permeate the city in more ways than just the industry?

And I think that especially Folkehallene, that's not like the sports aspect.

if we put the hockey team Oilers aside, because that's a very obvious one.

But in terms of just the ability to go and play sports and do sports is not something that I had thought of as associated with oil.

But it is something that a lot of people did point out.

And I think the more cultural part of it too is,

I thought it was important to try to show these physical manifestations of it because it so often becomes very abstract and very kind of in, yeah, in just the theoretical level, like you can say, okay, yeah, of course you have the media and you have

some sort of, you know, popular media representations like the show Lykkeland (State of Happiness) and like these ideas and stories that we tell ourselves as a city and a nation.

But to also see the kind of cultural production have a physical side and be physically present in the city, I thought was quite interesting and important to show as well.

[SPEAKER_03]

Yeah, and I think that's, and you also write about that in the articles, not only that these sports facilities are, what do you say, indirectly funded by oil, but also that they're named by an oil company.

Maybe you could elaborate a little bit on that.

[SPEAKER_01]

Yeah, so I think

I find it quite interesting that it's not only that it's named after an oil company, but it's named after a company called Vår Energi, which means our energy.

Which, if you don't know that it's an oil company, I mean, of course it has energy in it, so you can kind of guess also based on where you are, but it's not necessarily...

directly you know associated with oil unless you're from the area um but it's it's our energy and then paired with the name which is like the people's sports halls I just think there's also something about the the communal and like making oil communal through this communal

ambition of sports and health and bringing people together um to do a social thing and do it yeah come together use their bodies but like do it in the framing of this is a gift from the oil industry and and it's it's our energy you're also part of this energy it's almost like

I mean, back to the consent question, it's almost like it's chosen for you that you're also part of it.

Because, yeah, you're in this big bubble of our energy and in the people's halls.

And if you're not part of it, then you're not part of us and you're not part of the people.

[SPEAKER_03]

Yeah, and there's also some really interesting sort of information about, like, Vår Energi, was...

co-founded by a local investor who is also the father of one of the more famous actors in Norway who is also very locally grounded.

So there is this whole, what do you call it, tie into the cultural industries.

And then also the other thing I was thinking about, from my own research in Korea, so in Korea,

hour in korea is called uri and uri goes into a lot of names of everything from banking to to social movements and so on but it's sort of like this very implicit reference right that it's something that you sort of have to be you have to be in it to understand what it means and i think that's what really interesting about Vår Energi and folkehallene and you sort of are able to sort of

show that this is some of the more implicit ways that people get associated with the oil industry.

I also thought if we look at, because you also look at sort of

one of those ways in which people might be more critical of the oil industry was through social inequalities and how you in the mapping exercise show how those play out spatially in the city.

Could you say a little bit about that?

And also maybe from your own perspective growing up in the area.

[SPEAKER_01]

Yeah.

I think, I mean, several participants after, you know, going through the more obvious, like pointing out the oil museum and then the, yeah, more industrial parts.

A lot of them then went to neighborhoods because it is very divided into like, this is where the rich people live, but you're rich if you work in the oil industry.

Like that's kind of synonymous.

And

And it's, it is kind of part of, I would say, and this is just me speaking from my experience now of also, you know, not being from the city, but going to high school in the city and then seeing, you know, you start to explore new areas of the city, new neighborhoods, and then you start to kind of map out like, okay, who lives where and who does what.

And you can really see this big distinction.

And I think one of the participants pointed out Eiganes (Neighborhood) as like,

The villas don't even look real anymore because they're so kind of perfect.

But I also think it kind of speaks back to what you were saying, Sebastian, about the kind of understatedness of the wealth.

But maybe in other wealthy areas, you would see more like mega mansions and very flashy houses, which

I mean, that's kind of what the participant is saying, but I don't think it's flashy in the maybe like North American sense.

It's a very like understated flashy in that it's just pristine white paint and it's a nice cherry blossom tree in the garden.

But it's still, it's almost like it's a different...

shade of white paint there versus, you know, in Storhaug or like a more traditionally working class neighborhood, which of course, we can talk about how that is also changing.

But that's, that's maybe one of the more like nuances that is also hard to kind of bring out in an article format.

But I think, yeah, in general, too, with the social inequalities, like you can
you can really feel when someone works in the oil and also in like what I think just maybe
what people think it's I don't want to say natural but like the things that people spend
money on you know that most houses have two cars in the driveway and then
There's the e-bikes and there's also all these small signifiers of wealth that are very
present in certain neighborhoods and then maybe not as present in others.

[SPEAKER_03]

And I can just mention that one of the ways that the other thing, most of the houses in
Stavanger are wooden houses.

So they don't necessarily look very extremely expensive.

But then you can see little things like roof tiles, for example.

What type of roof tiles do they put on there when they renovate?

You can say, oh, that's a wealthy person who can afford those roof tiles.

So I think this is really interesting with these very small, subtle wealth indicators.

Or success indicators, maybe you could say, also.

E-bikes, I think is really interesting.

You need e-bikes to get around in the city, especially if you want to go to university
because it's up on a hill.

But you can also definitely see there what brands are...

Like, you have, like, what would it be, like, 10,000-euro e-bikes breaking around in the
city, and you're like, wow, it's just a mode of transportation, but it's also definitely a
signifier of, like, maybe both being working in the oil industry, but also being
environmentally conscious in this very expensive way.

Yeah.

So...

I was also thinking about another thing, because maybe that's not something you write
about in the article, but I was just thinking about it.

Also the funding of elite sports.

I was joking last month that Stavanger is finally taking its place in Norway by winning the
national football championship for the first time in 34 years.

And just seeing how...

how like also other sports like cycling ice skating of course like speed skating is a very big sport because of the uh is a big sport in uh in in um we also have like that big um what's it called uh what does that what is that called english

[SPEAKER_01]

I always just call it rolling skis, but I don't think that's correct.

[SPEAKER_03]

No, I don't know what it's called.

[SPEAKER_01]

Ski rolling.

[SPEAKER_03]

We have a festival in August where all the Norwegian top stars come to Sandnes, the city to the south of Stavanger to compete.

And there's also this massive party.

And maybe that could also lead me, because you also talk about the ONS conference and the free concerts.

So that's also something maybe you could expand a little bit on.

[SPEAKER_01]

Yeah.

I think so the ONS is the, yeah, what most people refer to as the oil conference.

What does it stand for again?

[SPEAKER_03]

offshore Northern seas.

[SPEAKER_01]

Yes.

That's what it is.

Yes.

Um, and it's by annually, um, huge conference.

Um, yeah, it used to be about oil.

Now I think they're trying to rebrand into an energy conference.

Um, but they, it kind of,

always becomes this big spectacle, which is also, of course, something that I can remember from growing up.

And you would go into the city to be a part of the big free concerts.

And it was more of this party atmosphere.

And I think growing up, you don't really think

about like who's putting it on why is it here um and then of course as you get a bit older and like this is also what a lot of the participants pointed out that um it it both you know you engage more critically with it and you start asking questions that like

what is this for and who's putting it on but also just the the production value of it and how it is in itself a display of wealth um I think and that's it's you know um yeah a display of wealth in the sense that it's uh yeah quite well organized concerts but then also this I think it goes back to this idea of like

if you participate in the public goods, like, do you also then, are you complicit?

Do you consent?

Which of course is, I think those concerts are more something that would be more of like an active choice in going to, like, it's less like, oh, I want to work out.

And like, these were just the sports halls that are available, but it's, it's kind of like, do you, are you required to like take a stance and like not participate in this

public party because of some moral I don't know issues with the oil industry or like can you go and enjoy it and see a fun music artist and still you know have your morals intact and then also I think going back to the

the social inequalities in the neighborhoods, there's also surrounding this conference and kind of on the side of this big public concert, there's also, if you then like walk around the different and specifically the different like kind of oil associated neighborhoods, you also see a lot of more private garden parties with like important people that are also, you know,

a more unofficial part of this conference and that are also quite elaborate parties and invitations that only a few select people are invited to can attend.

And those parties also happen in very specific neighborhoods.

[SPEAKER_04]

And I think just to bring two examples that really, I think,

They are making a useful contrast.

So one thing was when I was in the town, in the city, doing an ONS and Elon Musk came with his chopper and fucking landed in the middle of the conference and was celebrated as a hero.

That was before his flirt with Donald Trump.

But nevertheless, I mean, he was still like a pretty much a bad guy even back then.

But everybody was like, whoa, this is so crazy and so on.

So that's a very lucid example of the importance and the kind of money that actually is at stake at these conferences.

But the other thing is also, and this has kind of like been brought into my attention because of the people that I know who live there and so on.

But like during the ONS conference, renting out like an apartment and a house or anything, it's so expensive that people are actually getting thrown out of their apartment because the landlords can get like a...

not a full year, but like a substantial amount of money for just renting it out for a few days.

So that really also says something about who owns the homes and like who, because I mean, at least to my knowledge in Stavanger, when I lived there, you know, it was a lot of like local people

You know, people renting out their rooms and so on.

And, you know, it was the rich people who couldn't afford to buy the entire houses.

And then they would like sublet or lease out either a basement room or even the entire house.

So, I mean, so that kind of like wealth that is both generated within, that is directly generated within the industry, but also kind of like rips, seeps or spills in your article, like spills over to other places really, really intensifies these kind of like unequal of the way that money is generated.

And yeah.

That was just like my little anecdote.

[SPEAKER_03]

Can I just jump in with another anecdote?

Because actually, one of my colleagues, they just moved to another apartment.

And they had actually looked at another apartment before that.

But the guy who owned it had put into the contract that they could rent it the whole year except for the week of the ONS, where they had to vacate the apartment

for him to be able to rent it out to ONS.

And I think maybe just to provide some context, like I just saw the latest number for ONS, they expect 70,000 people

to come to the ONS this year.

And this is in a city of 150,000 people.

So it's a really significant amount of people coming into the city from all around the world to join this conference.

And it's super expensive.

I can't remember the cost, but it's ridiculously expensive, especially if you want to have access to the more, like you said, the more closed circles of the conference and activities.

[SPEAKER_01]

Yeah, I didn't know that landlords could even do this and that it's allowed.

But I think it's another kind of, I don't know, example of how this perfect image of Norway as like the crown jewel in social democracy is a bit, you know, it is until it isn't.

And it often isn't because of oil, honestly.

[SPEAKER_03]

And just to mention, it wasn't legal to put that into the contract, but because the rental market in Stavanger is so heated right now, they can actually do it because people are desperate to find homes.

Maybe we should go back to what you just said about Norway, because I think...

One thing that has struck me is when I'm traveling and I go to other places in Europe or outside of Europe, very often people can mention specific cities or specific countries that are very tied to the oil.

industry but Stavanger never really shows up in those conversations people are usually quite surprised oh I didn't know there was a city called Stavanger so I think maybe and that also speaks to what you were talking about earlier both you and Sebastian about like the understatedness of things but but it could also be tied to this idea of like Norway being um we call it a good well-functioning social democratic welfare state have you any thoughts about that

[SPEAKER_01]

um i think i mean first of all i can say i have a similar experience to you then that um when i travel as well i have the sense that people haven't really heard of stavanger don't really know and if i say like yeah no it's the oil producing whatever and i think that that's maybe

I don't know if that's me also expecting people to know because I think people in Stavanger have this like, oh yeah, but like we, I think, I think people in Stavanger see themselves as very international because of the oil industry.

And because there's so many people coming to Stavanger, a lot of people travel, um, because of the oil industry.

Uh, you know, there's the direct flights to Aberdeen.

A lot of people go to Houston, um, in a similar, uh, way that a lot of, um,

You know a lot of people where one parent is at the platforms, you also know a lot of people where they moved to, I don't know, Azerbaijan or some other kind of... You think at first obscure country and then you think, oh no, oil, that makes sense, they're there for work.

So I think that people in Stavanger maybe have this idea of it as being very international and therefore also being

relevant in other other areas when we go traveling and then realize like oh that's actually like no most people that i meet think stavanger is in northern norway um i don't really know why but that's that seems to be the trend now um but i think i think it's maybe both

I think it's connected to Norway having this oil fund and this kind of more distributive policies so that when people hear Norway in relation to oil it's kind of it's already like one big national package and maybe the more like regional yeah differences get a bit lost but

But then I also just think it is a bit funny with this discrepancy between how Stavanger sees itself versus how often it kind of gets forgotten or overlooked, unless you're in very oil-heavy conversations.

[SPEAKER_04]

yeah um i think there's something interesting going on at least also what i came to understand where there seems to be two discourses at stake so one of them would be like this kind of like stavanger situated a way of of talking and thinking about oil where oil is kind of like

Everywhere, but also people seem to argue that they have a good deal of understanding about the oil industry.

They have an intimate connection to it and so on.

um but also but then you have like a larger kind of like idea about oil in norway where you'd have like the oil fund as you say but also like um this kind of like idea about the good oil producer and kind of like the good clean oil which um it wasn't necessarily as much of a conversation that i

that i kind of like came across in Stavanger, but it seems like a much more like a national branding strategy.

So I guess that kind of like also ties into some of your, the people that you kind of like did these mapping exercises with where they're kind of like

Both being like, oh yeah, there's oil everywhere, but also it's doing some kind of good or you can't really escape it.

But maybe you can kind of like also bring in your personal experiences about like, what is Stavanger to Norway?

What is Stavanger to oil?

And what is Norway to oil?

If that makes sense.

Yeah.

Because there's also something, and I find this hugely interesting, if I can just further qualify my point, and this is the sensor periphery.

I mean, you have like in Oslo, you have like a very consolidation of power.

And if people have seen the TV series, I could only stand like a couple of episodes, but like the exit one, right?

I mean, that's all, that's mainly in Oslo.

But in Stavanger, there's also, it seems like also there is some kind of like, yeah, peripheral thing, marginal thing going on.

So maybe you can speak a little bit to that.

[SPEAKER_01]

I think in terms of the center periphery between Stavanger and then Oslo, I suppose, I think that goes back to what we talked about in the very beginning of this sentiment in Stavanger of like the rest of Norway, they just don't understand how big the oil industry is and they don't get it because they don't live here.

It's not their lived experience.

They only reap the benefits of the rich state that is only rich because of our region.

So I think it becomes this very like, we did it and we're the ones providing for you and none of you seem to give us any thanks for that.

All we get is these climate activists and whatever.

So I think there's some dimension of that and then I think

I think also some of the participants pointed out that because they were from other parts of the country and then had moved to Stavanger and they were also reflecting on like oh I don't know if this exercise would have worked elsewhere because I don't know if people elsewhere think that much about oil

and about the spaces that oil fill, if that makes sense, and the ways that it does manifest in more ways than industry.

So they were kind of saying, in terms of the more cultural manifestations of oil, that they were like, I just don't know if anyone would think about it in other places.

And then...

I think if I can also build a bit on your point about Norway seeing itself as the good oil producer and having the clean gas.

So I lived in Canada for a few years.

That's where I did my bachelor's.

And I lived in Ottawa, which is the capital.

And then you have Alberta, which is kind of the Stavanger on speed version.

And I, towards the end of my stay there, I started seeing all of these ads in Ottawa that was like, oh, I forget the exact phrasing, but it was something about like the world needs Canadian oil because Canadian oil is the good oil or something like that.

Not that I've lived in Alberta.

I've been to Alberta.

But I can... You know, there's some similarities going on.

I think Alberta's a lot more maybe...

I don't know.

It's culturally closer to the US.

I think it's a little bit more kind of rough around the edges than Stavanger.

But I do think there's also that shared sentiment that Alberta is the one fueling Canada's economy.

Not intended, but still.

And I think it's interesting to see this kind of same dynamic playing out of the country trying to frame...

a region's resource extraction as the good kind, when I don't think that that's how the region itself is trying to position itself or trying to position the industry or the resource extraction.

So I definitely think there's something interesting going on about how oil producing nations position themselves versus the regions that, yeah, are doing the energy production.

or extraction.

[SPEAKER_03]

I wanted to go back to something about also the hypervisibility and obscuration that you talk a lot about in your article.

Because I think that another aspect, and you don't cover that in the article, but I think it's another example of that is sort of like,

foreign workers in Stavanger because they're both... They constitute 20% of the population.

They're very visible because a lot of them work in frontline jobs.

But they're also...

or at least my experience is that they're not very visible to the local population to the same extent.

There's still some quite hard segregation between the migrant workers that come into Stavanger and the local population.

And I was at a workshop last week about public art

our art in public spaces in Stavanger.

And I was asking, why isn't there any public art pieces that sort of recognizes the importance of migration into the city from pretty much every part of the world?

We're working either in the service industries or other oil platforms or in oil companies.

And it sort of fell flat.

The people there, they didn't quite understand what I was talking about.

And I think that was very interesting from this also being so visible in every shop, in every restaurant, in every hotel.

But at the same time, they're not really seen as part of the oil region, if that makes sense.

[SPEAKER_01]

I think that's a very good point.

I think in terms of my article, one of the kind of things that you can't show on a map is often the humans.

And I definitely kind of grappled a bit with the...

the human dimension obviously missing in this framework or this way of of yeah visualizing a city but i think it's a super good point and a very interesting point i think it also speaks to this um

this idea that the city has of itself and like what kind of internationalism is it that Stavanger both promotes but then also accepts I guess and like wants to be associated with um yeah which I think is often the more kind of

framed in a more like adventurous way as like we like Stavanger bring the world to Norway and like this is how Norway gets internationalized which I think is also yeah part of this um self boosting that the Stavanger region does um but I think you're spot on that there's there's that story also then covers up um

a lot of other humans that are there and people and yeah.

[SPEAKER_04]

Yeah, I mean, if I can just, there's something that I was kind of reflecting on when reading on your article and mainly because it also kind of, it frames and situates and troubles a lot of kind of my, the stuff that I've been working on doing my PhD, which if it's about a chemical company that moved into a local or to us next to some,

small towns and then they kind of like became those small towns became like company towns and so on but they also did a lot of pollution chemical pollution but still there seems to be kind of like this nostalgia and so on so you have like the typical narrative of a company town that comes in and you know comes to define so much of how the city of what we can think of or refer to as development but let's say you know a specific

uh way of um creating wealth to some people not to other people and i think you put that really really beautifully in your article also but there's also something you know because like so the way that i would kind of like go about it or the way that i would in one of my article kind of argue

is that this company is allowed to create all of these things like support the cultural life, the local football teams and so on, precisely because of the absence of a welfare state.

So they went in and they took over what in Scandinavian countries or in the Nordic region would typically associate with the job of the welfare state.

building infrastructure, providing medical services, and so on.

And I thought that argument said really nicely with me, and that's great and so on.

But while reading your article also, there seems to be like this double, I guess you would also call, yeah, this double kind of like conundrum where...

the state is the company and like the welfare state is the company too so maybe you can also talk give us and the listeners a little bit of like around like how

how in kind of like a public Norwegian discourse, how Equinor or formerly Statoil, the oil producing company is perceived and talked about, but also what you'd said about the oil fund.

We had talked a little bit about it, but like, how is the general public kind of like, how are they talking about or discussing, uh, Equinor?

[SPEAKER_01]

I think, um,

I have a harder time saying something about how people think of Equinor now.

I think also because I've been away for a while.

But in terms of the oil fund, I get the sense that people see it as

kind of the responsible thing to do and it's great that um the the revenues from the oil industry goes to this like big piggy bank and then we can save it for a rainy day and and that's great um but then i i i do sense now recently with the more like energy crises and and inflation i get the sense that people are a bit like okay well it's

I think it's raining.

Should we start opening the piggy bank?

So I don't know if that really answers your question.

I think this is kind of very much not something that I discussed in the article, because I think the issues with the higher inflation and stuff would come later.

But I think this idea of

responsible management of the income.

I think that's a very kind of strong narrative and a strong discourse.

But then I think in terms of these public goods and what you were saying about

from your research that that the companies were kind of allowed to fill that space because the state didn't um I think in Stavanger and I don't know this is this is again from like the participants I'm not sure what's like

if it could be different.

But some of the participants kind of had this idea of like, well, there's no way Stavanger would have such a flashy concert house or concert hall if it wasn't for the oil industry.

And there's no way that we would have all these things if it wasn't for the oil industry.

And so it's not that the cultural...

it's not that you couldn't go to a concert.

It's just that the way you can go to a concert has been sort of altered or amplified by the oil industry.

And I think, again, it goes back to this point you were raising, Sebastian, of the kind of understatedness of the wealth, because some participants also brought out the like,

I mean, yeah, we have, you know, Norway's full of roads, it's full of tunnels, but have you seen the tunnels here?

And have you seen the motorways here?

Like, it's so... It's such, like, engineering and, like, very flashy, but, like, it's flashy in, like, different shades of grey asphalt.

Like, it's not... It's not, like, a huge, like, Taj Mahal monument.

It's just, like, a really cool tunnel, which...

you know, if you don't really think about the money and resources that goes into making that tunnel, then you wouldn't really notice it.

But yeah, I think those ways of like, yeah, just amplifying the normal everyday things.

[SPEAKER_04]

Yeah.

It's like, I mean, people don't buy these really expensive orange sneakers, but they buy these extremely expensive, good hiking shoes.

Yes.

[SPEAKER_03]

Yeah, and I actually, that just reminds me, because that's a conversation I have with my partner all the time, like, when we look at the roads or the tunnels in Stavanger, you're like, I try to explain, like, in Denmark, when you build a road, you'll probably buy, like, the like the, what do you call it?

The stones on the side, like I can remember what they're called and lighting from sort of like mid shelf, but in Stavanger, everything just feels like it comes from the top shelf, right?

Like it's extra expensive granite or it's extra expensive light installations or something like that.

Like it just feels like, and I think that's a really, I think that's a really good point you have.

Like it's, it's like the everyday life,
things are amplified in Stavanger.

You don't see people buying houses with, I don't know, golden columns or anything like that.

But they're just making small amplifications to what

normal people would buy and then sort of through that they can show wealth and so on um but i wanted to come back because the question that sebastian just asked about the relationship to equinor um and maybe i don't know if you can if you have any thoughts about that but i have a sense when i read in the newspaper that the newspaper is more interested or more proud of like

raw energy and aka bp then equinor and maybe that has to do with equinor is more associated with the state whereas war energy and aka and also rosenberg shipyard is more associated with like local local business people or this is something we build it's not it's not something from the state does that make sense yeah i i think i mean i i buy that um

[SPEAKER_01]

I think just personally speaking, like Equinor or Statoil, and maybe this kind of confirms what you were saying, but that's never build much.

I can't think back to growing up and having... I don't think that... Or maybe there was something in the shift between Statoil and Equinor.

But before, when I was daughter, it felt more.

But maybe this is also just me, you know, kind of romanticizing and it's nostalgia.

And that was rosy and a different thing.

But I think you might be onto something about the, like, regional thing.

And, like, one of them being more the state and Norway.

And then the other parts being more like, no, but this is the real beating heart of it.

[SPEAKER_02]

Do you have any more questions, Sebastian?

Otherwise, we might end there.

Okay.

[SPEAKER_03]

Well, thank you so much, Björk, for joining us on the podcast.

And we will link to your article in the notes of the episode.

So thank you so much for joining us.

And hope to talk to you another time.

[SPEAKER_01]

Yeah, this was great.

Thank you guys so much.

[SPEAKER_00]

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