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The Dark Side of Ecomedia: Dystopian Imagination of the Sustainable Development Goals in Swedish Doom Metal

Abstract: Ecomedia studies often align with ecocritical activism, portraying environmental themes and advocating for climate justice. However, this chapter investigates a contrasting phenomenon: the emergence of a 'dark side' of ecomedia – cultural expressions that obstruct climate action through denial, delay, and inaction. The study explores how ecomedia can be mobilized for uncivil ends, challenging normative assumptions about civil society's role in promoting sustainability. It focuses on the Swedish doom metal band Wardencllyffe and its frontman Jacob Nordangård, whose work reimagines the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as instruments of global control. Drawing on civil society theory and transmedia storytelling, the chapter conducts a deep intermedial and transmedial analysis of the song and music video *Georgia Guidestones/Evilution* (2021). This includes decoding lyrics, musical composition, visual aesthetics, and narrative strategies. The analysis reveals a coherent conspiratorial narrative that inverts the SDGs into symbols of oppression. Through a synthesis of sound, text, and image, Wardencllyffe constructs a dystopian vision in which climate change is portrayed as a fabricated threat and sustainability as a tool for authoritarian control. The study suggests that conspiracy-driven ecomedia can generate what we term 'conspiratorial affect,' using artistic expression to foster distrust in climate initiatives. While the analysis is limited to a single case study, it opens avenues for examining similar patterns in other cultural artifacts. This chapter contributes to the emerging discourse on cultural climate obstruction, urging future research to further investigate how artistic media may serve not only as tools for ecological advocacy but also as platforms for resistance to and obstruction of environmental action.

Keywords: dark ecomedia, conspiratorial affect, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), doom metal, conspiracy theories.

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EKPHRASIS, 1/2025

**ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES
ACROSS MEDIA
pp. 154–175**

DOI: 10.24193/ekphrasis.33.10
Published First Online: July 16, 2025

Fifty shades of climate change denial: conspiracy theories as transmedia storytelling

What if everything we think about ecological threats against the biosphere is part of a sinister plan for a universal power grab? What if every organization, every thinktank, every researcher working on climate-related issues manipulate their findings or even worse, are complicit in organized deceit and a massive cover up that has been going on for almost a century? What if every report or intergovernmental agreement, from the seminal *Limits of Growth* (1972) by the Club of Rome to the UN Paris Agreement in 2015 are the outcome of a dark conspiracy with the evil intention to suppress humanity and to introduce a global dictatorship? Since more than a decade, ideas like these inform the authorship and aesthetic production of Jacob Nordangård, one of the most prolific ‘conspiracy entrepreneurs’ (Harambam 278–291) in Sweden. In 2012, Nordangård published his doctoral thesis on the biofuel policies of the European Union (EU) and founded his doom metal band ‘Wardencllyffe’, symbolically named after Nicola Tesla’s electricity tower on Long Island. The tower occupies a prominent place in free energy suppression conspiracy theories (Pakalka & Noreika), alleging that Tesla managed to generate and transfer wireless electricity but was killed for this ground-breaking discovery that would have undermined the profiteering of energy companies. On his website, Nordangård claims that “Tesla wanted to liberate humanity with the help of free energy, and he represents in many ways the eccentric and mad genius.” But Nordangård also states on his website, that his ambition founding the doom metal band “was and is to bring together a range of different artistic expressions with science”. Apart from his dissertation, he is the author of five books, some of them translated to English (and other languages), such as *The Global Coup d’État* (2024) and *Rockefeller – Controlling the Game* (2024), both pushing the unsubstantiated claim that climate issues have been consciously constructed as a political agenda with the long-term strategic goal of achieving totalitarian control of humankind. In 2025, Nordangård published *Temple of Solomon* in English, a book extensively covering his project of creating a total work of art combining authorship, lectures and music. The book also explains the author’s ideas behind the song analysed in this paper, ‘Georgia Guidestones/Evolutio’n’ (2021) – extensively presented later – which alleges that the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are part and parcel of the malevolent plan to enslave humanity (Wardencllyffe).

It is this intersection between Wardencllyffe as a musical project and Nordangård’s work engaged with denying the reality of climate change that caught our attention since it raises several questions in the wider field of intermedial ecomedia studies. Is artistic expression of climate change denial also part of research into ecomedia and if yes, in how far? How do (inter)medial expressions of climate-related conspiracy theories intersect with media grappling “with ecological issues, frameworks, and approaches” and in which “ecomedia are

media of and about the environment” (López et al. 2–3)? These potential paradoxes and contradictions constitute an important trajectory of our inquiry.

Already in 2020, Bruhn proposed that ecocriticism can be understood as “a venture comparable to science communication” (8) since it engages with the intermedial communication of the scientifically substantiated fact of climate change or in broader terms, knowledge of the Anthropocene, its threats and anxieties triggered by them. Moreover, ecomedia products are seen as “result of a sometimes very elaborate and complex transformation of the form and content of scientifically produced knowledge” (Bruhn 10). As we will see, Nordangård’s authorship and aesthetic production operates in similar terms, yet with inverted goals. His systematically assembled knowledge (with its own truth claims) alleges that climate change is not a scientifically proven fact but a hoax to bring about a global coup d’état – which is the real threat. So when the media expressing such ideas are intergrated with each other (lyrics, music and image) or even transformed (conspiracy theories translated to soundtrack or imagery), it follows the similar dynamics as ecomedia. The coexistence of music, image and text or the transformation of conspiracy writing into conspiracy music arguably appears as a negative of ecomedia, with diametrically opposed aims. Bruhn also discusses the issue of representation, how climate change as reality is difficult to grasp, lacking clear genre conventions. In Nordangård’s case, the challenge also is a similar. His conviction of that climate change is the result of a vast conspiracy against mankind necessitates the use of media products to make the plot visible, audible and emotionally tangible.

In his thesis *Fuelling Denial. The climate change reactionary movement and Swedish far-right media* (2024), Kjell Vowles explores three overlapping spheres of climate obstruction. Primary obstruction is concerned with spreading doubt about climate change and its underlying science, whereas secondary obstruction implies to accept its findings but to delay action. In the sphere of tertiary obstruction, cultures, hierarchies and values “stand in the way of necessary action” (Vowles 29). Leaving aside Vowle’s close discussion of obstruction and denial and their interrelationship, Wardencllyffe can be studied in this tertiary sphere, as a cultural expression of denial and obstruction and as an odd case of inverted, alternative or ‘dark’ side of ecomedia. Vowles also identified a strong nostalgia, “an anachronistic longing to a time when life was perceived to be easier for the men who were in control”, a “time before environment movements and science started to show the negative side effects and pollution caused by industrial processes” (19). This nostalgia seems to be intrinsically intertwined with denialism. The dark side of ecomedia appears as its cultural manifestation.

Machin and Ruser have highlighted the “inevitable tension between the ‘democratic side’ and the ‘dark side’ of civil society and its politics of sustainability” (297), which is the terminology we have been inspired by when attempting to propose the existence of a dark side of ecomedia. There are plenty of normative expectations concerning the role of civil society in achieving ecological, economic and social sustainability and justice. But, as the

authors argue, as much as civil society can play an important role as an actor in between different sectors in society, not least in mobilizing support for climate action, civil society actors can “undermine any transformative potential and bolster the unsustainable status quo” (Machin & Ruser 298). A case in point would be the German PEGIDA-movement, the ‘Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamization of the Occident’ and its populist style of politics, closely associated with the right-wing extremist party Alternative für Deutschland (Quadrelli, Önnersfors, *Performing* 173–200). From its onset in 2014, PEGIDA mobilized massive support on the streets of Germany for its exclusionary agenda by creating an inclusive performative style appealing to diffuse and ambivalent sentiments of nostalgia and melancholia of the past, also communicated through culture and music (Önnersfors, *Retrotopia* 135–152). Moreover, as Nam has argued (167), since the emergence of the climate action group Fridays for Future, PEGIDA “increasingly develops the counter-discourse to consider climate change a fiction or, further, a sort of conspiracy”. Machin and Ruser argue that a dark side of civil society can “preclude cooperation” (302), thus for instance thwart climate action organized from below, a good example being the German ‘anti-Greta’, Naomi Seibt (Butler and Eilperin).

When trying to outline the characteristics of a dark side of ecomedia, it is such tensions we are interested in. For example, most of the contributions to the recent *Routledge Handbook of Ecomedia Studies* (2024) operate from the vantage point of our current climate emergency and how contemporary medial and cultural responses are crafted around irreversible climate change. Moreover, ecomedia studies as such frequently appear as ecocritical activist or artistic interventions against climate injustice. But in how far can the aesthetic expression of conspiratorial climate denial in the tertiary sphere of obstruction be conceptualised as part of a relational or dialectic dynamic of ecomedia or even as ‘eco-countermedia’ with reminiscence of the dynamics of the relationship between ‘mainstream’ and ‘alternative’ media (Holt)?

Since about a decade, there is a growing body of research into conspiracy theories, in its thinnest definition more or less founded assumptions about “a group of people acting in secret to nefarious ends” (Birchall 34) as the driving force behind events. In distinguishing conspiracy theories from other forms of communication and information, they have been conceptualised as narratives. Tangherlini et al., have for instance developed “an automated pipeline for the discovery of conspiracy and conspiracy theory narrative” (1), heavily relying on narratology in the tradition of Greimas. His so-called actantial model allows to study “actants (people, places, things), relationships between actants, and a sequencing of these relationships” in a rather fixed distribution of narrative role positions with villains and perpetrators, heroes and victims, opportunists and renegades (Tangherlini et al. 3). On the basis of such approaches, Önnersfors (*Konspirationsteorier* 43–68) has developed a model of conspiracy theories as meaning-making narratives comprising of twelve ingredients and catering to epistemological, emotional and existential needs among target audiences. Madisson and Ventsel, authors of *Strategic conspiracy narratives. A semiotic approach* (2021) argue that the study of sign

processes allows us “to understand multimodal and intertextual combinations of various texts and different patterns of interaction co-evolving with those texts” and thus “meaning-making in strategic conspiracy narratives and how this meaning making shapes the target audience” (2–3). What makes these approaches productive for this study is that they were developed in the analysis of strategies of conspiracy narratives circulating in online environments and textual units mediating conspiracy theories as such, including videos. Only in recent years, the study of the visual culture of conspiracy theories has gained traction (Önnerfors & Caumanns 441–456), lyrics and music have only recently emerged as a new area of research (Önnerfors, *Konspirationsteorier* 65–67; Riksbankens Jubileumsfond). This paper is an attempt to combine these different approaches in unpacking intermedial expressions of conspiracy narrative achieving what we might call ‘conspiratorial affect’ among target audiences, with other words “the interrelations between the emotional (affective) and the argumentative (discursive) aspects of meaning-making in conspiracy theories” (Leone et al. 53). Madisson and Ventsel have developed this approach further in their study of “affective narrating practices and affective communities” where the function of conspiracy ideation is to trigger “intense emotions (e.g. fear, indignation and disgust)” with the ultimate aim to create a community around the divisive message (19). The same authors develop an extensive theoretical framework around conspiracy narratives as “transmedia storytelling that embraces several modalities and platforms” (Madisson and Ventsel 5). When we in the following investigate the intermedial relationship between text (lyrics), images (video content and artwork) and music in Wardenclyyfe’s denialist doom metal embedded into Nordangård’s authorship, we aim to exemplify such transmedial narration across different platforms and media.

Studying the transmedial expressions of conspiracy ideation

In outlining a methodology for studying strategic conspiracy narratives as transmedia storytelling, Madisson and Ventsel (24) highlight several challenges, not least that meaning-making is intertwined and scattered across different media. Elaborating concepts proposed by Eco and Lotman, Madisson and Ventsel operate with the ideal categories of ‘Model Reader’ and ‘Model Author’ who establish a mutual relationship in coding and de-coding of sign-systems and where “the Model Reader points at the author’s understanding of a segment of the audience to which the author has addressed the message”, the “image of the audience” (Madisson and Ventsel 29).

This includes several discursive strategies such as

- a basic dictionary establishing “elementary semantic qualities of expression” which “directs the interpretation strategy” of the target audience (Madisson and Ventsel 27). For example, the initiated reader of conspiracy lore is already well-versed with free energy suppression conspiracy theories and capable of decoding dog-whistles like

references to Tesla's tower Wardencllyffe on Long Island. Thus, already the band's name hints at foul play, shaping "further interpretation paths in the auditorium" (Madisson and Ventsel 27).

- rhetorical and stylistic hyper-encoding, which includes "peculiarities of the language use predominant in the audience as well as its slang, the metaphors they would understand, and the audience's expectations regarding the boldness of speech and the representation of the opponents" (Madisson and Ventsel 27). The author has to frame a message that resonates with the readers' capacities to detect figurative expressions as well as specific stylistic connotations. The 'Georgia Guidestones', as we will explain more comprehensively below, are for instance in conspiracy culture shorthand for the motives of dark elites to achieve population control.
- inferences of ordinary scenarios that determine a certain framework of action for participants in narrative in which the "choice of the scenario shapes the word use". Framing is part of cognitive knowledge and "representations of the 'world' that make it possible for us to commit the basic cognitive acts, such as, for instance, the act of perception, linguistic understanding and activities" (Madisson and Ventsel 28). In the case of 'Georgia Guidestones / Evilution' it is the genre of tragedy paired with unavoidable catastrophe setting the frame for the audience, stripped of agency, exposed to and controlled by the evil machinations of the climate conspiracy.
- inferences of intertextual scenarios have to take the reader's "earlier reading experience and familiarity with genres" into account, shaped by "rhetorical and narrative schemes that are related to a narrower cultural competence" (Madisson and Ventsel 28). Different from dictionary and encoding as above, the authors here refer to narrative macro-patterns, for instance a tale of a Golden Age lost, yet possible to restore in the future (e.g. 'Make America Great Again') or – as we will see below – a more dystopian tale of dictatorship, doom and despair.
- ideological hypercoding where "the narrative will shape the Model Reader's ideological contingency that will take into consideration ideological views" of the reader (Madisson and Ventsel 28). In our example this would for instance imply that the ideas of the SDGs or of transnational decision-making in general (UN) as evil can be presupposed among the target audience and aligns with previously held assumptions and stereotypes.

In our analysis of 'Georgia Guidestones/Evilution', we have been guided by these strategies of transmedial storytelling and how to decode them. More specifically, we have combined different approaches to investigate intermedial relationships between text, image and music. As far as the lyrics of the song are concerned, we have applied a methodology developed by Koehler in his investigation of far-right influences on the German anti-vax protest milieu through music. Koehler used the 'Codebook of Online Anti-Vaccination

Rhetoric' (subsequently: Codebook) developed by Hughes et al. for deductive coding of content. It identifies sixteen rhetorical strategies (RS) and 22 narrative tropes (NT) referring to "modes of persuasion" and elements of storytelling (Hughes et al. 3). Elsewhere, this methodology was used in a comparative analysis of four Danish and Swedish anti-corona protest songs (Önnerfors, *Singing*).

Analysing the visual culture of conspiracy theories, as expressed in the video and album artwork connected to 'Georgia Guidestones/Evilution' relies on previous research. According to Caumanns and Önnerfors (441), "the visual culture of conspiracy theories recognises patterns, detects agency, maps coalitions, crafts enemy images and visualises secrecy in various interrelations of mediality (intermediality), essentially between verbal and visual media" in three modes: medial transposition (e.g. text to image), media combination (e.g. text and image in one function) or intermedial references where an image "refers to another conventionally distinct medium, thematising, evoking or imitating elements or structures of, for example, a concrete prior text, speech or another graphic image" (Caumanns & Önnerfors 442). Studying "conspiracy narratives and the role of visual culture, trans-medial narratology research offers a methodological advantage" (443) since it includes non-verbal representations – in our case, video and album artwork as well as music. The authors then outline several characteristics of visual storytelling, for instance animal metaphors (octopus, snake or spider), metaphors of control (puppet-master, pyramid, all-seeing eye) or threat (cloaks as a code of malevolent secrecy, dagger, apocalyptic fire and flames). Mixed mediality, for instance the "intricate relationship between image and text" reinforce meaning between different modes of expressions (447), in particular the artificial construction of imagined connectivity (as in the infamous 'conspiracy board' in which annotations, newspaper clips and images are combined with a red thread in a seemingly random order). Yet another important strategy is identified as performativity, when the idea of conspiracy turns into a spectacle, for instance the antisemitic fiction of blood libel ordered along a particular string of narrative, both in print, in religious theatre plays or in propaganda movies such as *Der ewige Jude* (1940). In modern art, conspiracy is expressed as "toxic togetherness, outrageous overlaps and acid amalgamations" (Caumanns & Önnerfors 452), for instance as visualised (network) diagram, collage, patchwork or assemblage. Other visual strategies are alienation (zoomorphism) or blur, allowing for collective "amateur reinterpretation of visual evidence" and search for causal connections (453) as in online alternate reality games (ARGs). Finally, the authors claim that "the hyper-mediality of the digital age appears to – once more – dissolve the borders between text, image, sound and performativity, and prepares the ground for visual as much as virtual dissemination" (454).

Musicological research into the potential existence of a particular soundtrack of conspiracy is at the occasion of writing this article still in its infancy. In our case, we will wade into the peculiarities of the hard rock genre 'doom metal'. Scientific analysis of doom metal is rare, but in a 2013 thesis, Piper characterizes this metal-subgenre as extremely slow and where

meaning is constructed in an aesthetic interplay between “album artwork, lyrics and horror film” (13). The elements of ‘doom metal’ are described as “overwhelmingly concerned with the anxiety of death and the powerlessness generated by mortality” (Piper xi). Piper identifies “themes of weakness, despair, fragility and mortality to create an atmosphere of anxiety and dread” (34–35). In sum, “questions raised about existence, society, death and dying are never answered, but rather left to fester and inspire uncertainty” (Piper 36). When it comes to the music itself, Piper explains, doom metal is heavy as “a sensation of weight, typically a weight that overpowers and overwhelms” and “most songs are driven by modal melodies featuring minor seconds and tritones and repetitive rhythms that entrain the listener’s body into a propulsive groove” (39–40). Below, we will unpack this musical style closer.

Performing Sustainable Development as the Doom of Humanity

The empirical core of our analysis is constituted by the song ‘Georgia Guidestones/ Evilution’ released by Wardencllyffe in connection with Nordangård’s 2021-book *Den globala statskuppen* (‘The Global Coup-d’état’). So far, the book has been published in four editions and in 2024 appeared in an English translation. Since the lyrics and performance of the song are embedded into the meaning of the Georgia Guidestones in conspiracist lore in general and in Nordangård’s authorship in particular, it is important to provide with a minimum of context for the analysis since they produce key elements of the relationship between Model Author and Reader as outlined above.

Not much substantial is written about the Georgia Guidestones, a stone monument in Georgia (US) consisting of five huge slabs of granite about six meters tall with an enormous capstone, constructed in 1980. A 2009-article in the *Wired* calls it “America’s Stonehenge” and three years later, a documentary dug deeper into its intricate history surrounded by mysterious donors and aims. The slabs are engraved with text and symbols in eight languages (English, Spanish, Russian, Chinese, Arabic, Hebrew, Hindi and Swahili) said to be directed to a future post-apocalyptic world with the motto “Let these be guidestones for the Age of Reason”. The inscription, consisting of ten messages, makes references to population control, reason and the rule of law in balance with nature. These will extensively be presented later since they also are part of Wardencllyffe’s lyrics. In the book *The Resistance Manifesto* (2005), activist Martin Dice expressed criticism of the Georgia Guidestones as a monument with deep satanic origins. Whoever is believed to have commissioned the monument must have been a member of a Luciferian secret society that leads the development of the NWO, the ‘new world order’. Dice believed that the elites planned to use technology to extend their own life and that they aimed at population control to use the planet’s resources for themselves. His *Resistance Manifesto* has fuelled conspiracist imagination around the monument. Consequently, the Georgia Guidestones suffered attacks in the early 2000s: graffiti against the NWO and

Satanism, about 9/11 being an inside job and Barack Obama being a Muslim. The campaign against the monument intensified during COVID-19, spearheaded by Republican politicians claiming that the messages were manifestations of a satanist plan of world domination. In July of 2022, the Georgia Guidestones were finally destroyed in a massive explosion, which among conspiracy theorists was interpreted as an act of God's mercy. Considering the transatlantic spread of conspiracy culture, it does not surprise that the Georgia Guidestones are known in a Swedish context and resonate with an audience susceptible to conspiracy theories. One of the most prolific Facebook-groups in this regard in Sweden, 'Folkets rättigheter i samhället' ('The People's Rights in Society', +40k members) has multiple posts commenting on the Georgian stone monument. In January 2022, Nordangård posted an ad in the group to buy a signed copy of his 2021-book *Den globala statskuppen* together with its soundtrack 'Georgia Guidestones/ Evilution' (a physical CD). The book cover shows a familiar image in conspiracist lore, the all-seeing eye associated with presupposed illuminati-imagery (compare with the US one-dollar bill). However, its iris is composed of a circle with the 17 UN SDGs according to Agenda 2030. A deep reading of *Den globala statskuppen* was produced in 2025 by Önnerrfors and we will return to significant overlaps to the song lyrics later. According to the English-language presentation of Nordangård's book, the global coup-de-état was unleashed in 2020, where dramatic events "appear rather as part of a well-directed chess game, with complete control of the whole planet as the final goal" (Skyhorse). Moreover, "there are many 'existential threats' (climate crisis, refugee crises, terrorism, pandemics, etc.) that can be used to establish a firmer and more centralized governance. This can be a gradual process, barely perceivable until it's almost a *fait accompli*". Such perceptions of global political events clearly invoke the fear for loss of control, heteronomy, or external locus of control and that the forces outside are able to manipulate our life realities. Why the song has the alternative title of 'Evilution' can only be speculated about. There is a movie from 2009 with the same title in which an alien bacterium resurrects the dead on Earth, perhaps alluding to the idea that the COVID-19 virus was intentionally released. Other pop-cultural references to video games, books or songs are possible. A 2014-book *The Evilution: Rise of the Antichrist – Blood of the Lamb* by horror-author Aslin treats the topic of 'rapture', when evil returns and unleashes total control over humanity and the "one inexorable horrific beginning of the end ... that is ... The Evilution" (Good Reads).

(1) Content analysis of lyrics

The lyrics of 'Georgia Guidestones / Evilution' start off with the ten inscriptions of the stone monument in which they are likened with the global goals. The next part is devoted to reveal the original intention of the SDGs, a diametrically opposed inversion of their meaning. For instance, the true purpose of SDG 1, 'No poverty' is said to be to 'eliminate the poor'. In a chorus playing with words, a connection between 'Devil Bill' Rockefeller and Bill Gates (of Hell) is constructed.

Part 1 (Inscription from the Georgia Guidestones)

Maintain humanity under 500,000,000 in perpetual balance with nature.

Guide reproduction wisely – improving fitness and diversity.

Unite humanity with a living new language.

Rule passion – faith – tradition – and all things with tempered reason.

Protect people and nations with fair laws and just courts.

Georgia Guidestones – Global Goals

Let all nations rule internally resolving external disputes in a world court.

Avoid petty laws and useless officials.

Balance personal rights with social duties.

Prize truth – beauty – love – seeking harmony with the infinite.

Be not a cancer on the earth – Leave room for nature – Leave room for nature

Part 2 a) (Inversion of the SDGs to their evil opposite)

1. Eliminate the poor

2. Unleash the hunger

3. Release the virus

4. Indoctrinate the children

5. Transform the genders

6. Control the water

7. Manage the grid

8. Robotize the workforce

Chorus

Evilution – Devil Bill and the Gates of Hell

Mass Delusion – Devil Bill and the Gates of Hell

Part 2 b) (Inversion of the SDGs to their evil opposite continued)

9. Track all the goods

10. Monitor all movement

11. Build cities for control

12. Decrease all consumption

13. Change the global climate

14. Oversee the seas

15. Force people from their homelands

16. Implant a digital ID

Chorus

Evilution – Devil Bill and the Gates of Hell

Mass Delusion – Devil Bill and the Gates of Hell

17. Enhance all control

Source: Wardencllyffe 2025.

A simple interpretation of the lyrics falls into two parts: the recommendations of the Georgia Guidestones are contrasted sharply with their alleged dystopian implications – the SDGs as abuse of power and control, a stark and gloomy warning against a future where humanity is manipulated and oppressed. This message is enhanced by the chorus which portrays the SDGs (and their ‘revealed’ meaning) as a malevolent scheme. The very song title can be interpreted as a dog whistle in the conspiracy community, since the Georgia Guidestones already are perceived as a monument over an alleged conspiracy against humanity. For an ordinary reader of the lyrics, the inscriptions would possibly appear as controversial, but for the ‘Model Reader’ of conspiracy lore we can already assume a horizon of understanding that has been formed by previous reading and decoding experiences. When it comes to an understanding of the SDGs as an evil masterplan for the manipulation of mankind, this figure of thought presupposes a familiarity with such an interpretation. Perhaps is the strongest intertextual reference Nordangård’s book itself, where the SDGs and their alleged true purpose are described extensively in an annex to the book together with the personal comments of the author (Nordangård 262–299). More about this later, since his treatment also relates to the visual narration of the SDGs in the music video.

(2) The interplay between lyrics, text, music and images

In the following section, we treat the interplay between lyrics, text, music and images as they are expressed in the 4’56” music video of the song on Youtube (Wardencllyffe, YouTube). The music of ‘Georgia Guidestone/Eviltion’ primarily consists of three main A B C themes with a variation in A2. The musical analysis mainly focuses on the relation between the lyrics and the lead guitar (as well as other instruments). Two melodic themes in the lead guitar emphasize the lyrics in part A and part C.

A1 00:00–00:48

The music video starts with a dramatic and colourful vignette of the Wardencllyffe tower in front of the Georgia Guidestones and where the top of the tower moves into an eyeball placed in an electric cloud (0:00–0:07). The Guidestones – following the order of the engraved recommendations – are then visually coupled to the population bomb and eugenics (0:08–0:22), by an illustration of the all-encompassing interconnected Internet of Things and the iconic frontispiece of Hobbes’ *Leviathan* (0:23–0:39). A robotic arm with the symbol of justice is next (0:40–0:48). The intro 00:00–00:07 and the verse 0:08–0:48 feature a recurring melodic phrase played by lead guitar.



The melodic phrase in the lead guitar utilizes a minor scale and chromaticism, with a rhythm consisting of one quarter note, four eighth notes, and one quarter note. It creates a dystopian feeling which emphasizes the lyrics.

Maintain humanity under 500,000,000 in perpetual balance with nature.
 Guide reproduction wisely – improving fitness and diversity.
 Unite humanity with a living new language.
 Rule passion – faith – tradition – and all things with tempered reason.
 Protect people and nations with fair laws and just courts.

B1 00:49–01:18

Images of the Guidestones are mixed with its artistic representation as the all-seeing eye whose iris is made up of the seventeen sustainability ‘Global Goals’ as on the album and book covers (0:49–01:18). The lyrics in this part are exclaimed as a *Sprechgesang* in typical metal fashion: “Georgia Guidestones / Global Goals”.

A2 01:19–01:50

This part starts with the guitar’s initial melodic theme during the first sentence during which we see images from the UN security council (01:19–01:27)



(02:31–02:56). The lyrics in this part are exclaimed as a *Sprechgesang* in typical metal fashion: “Georgia Guidestones / Global Goals”.

C 02:57–04:44

This section is rather complex and the inverted evil meaning of the 17 SDGs are expressed in a binary visual scheme divided into two parts, underscored by music.

Part 1 (02:57–03:26)

SDG	Visuals	Revealed evil purpose	Sequence
1 ‘No poverty’	execution scene	‘Eliminate the poor’	02:57–02:29
2 ‘Zero hunger’	starving children in Africa	‘Unleash the hunger’	03:00–03:02
3 ‘Good health and well-being’	COVID-19-pandemic	‘Release the virus’	03:03–03:06
4 ‘Quality education’	child exposed to cruel mind control	‘Indoctrinate the children’	03:07–03:11
5 ‘Gender equality’	Austrian drag Eurovision-artist Conchita Wurst	‘Transform the genders’	03:12–03:14
6 ‘Clean water and sanitation’	Image of smart water management solutions	‘Control the water’	03:16–03:19
7 ‘Affordable and clean energy’	illustration of interlinked energy systems	‘Manage the grid’	03:20–03:22
8 ‘Decent work and economic Growth’	robots handling cardboard boxes in a factory	‘Robotize the workforce’	03:23–03:26

The text is once again emphasized by the guitar that plays a melodic phrase consisting of two notes, F and A flat which forms a minor third.



The minor third in music is often associated with something sorrowful and this, together with the text, emphasizes that something ominous is on its way. The drums play quarter notes on the hi-hat on the second and fourth beat of each measure whilst the rhythm guitar plays sixteenth notes. At Goal 4 the intensity of the music increases as the drum plays sixteenth notes on the floor tom which creates a musical image of something unstoppable.

Chorus

This binary scheme is interrupted by the wordplay of the chorus “Evilution – Devil Bill and the Gates of Hell / Mass Delusion – Devil Bill and the Gates of Hell” (playing with the name of Bill Gates who in conspiracist lore has been accused of orchestrating the COVID-19-pandemic) and where a spectacular piece of artwork is displayed (03:27–03:42). Klaus Schwab (head of WEF) is sitting in an armchair together with a cat and styled in the fashion of Bond-villain Blofeld. Behind him stands a witch, most likely president of the EU-commission Ursula von der Leyen. The central figure of the image is a smiling Bill Gates

with a triangular belt knuckle, devil's horns and a shining vaccination syringe. To the left of Bill Gates we see two men dressed in suits: one of them (Elon Musk?) bites the globe with vampire teeth, the other reminds of a caricature of a typical robber baron, with antisemitic undertones. To the top of the image we can see the face of George Soros, possibly David Rockefeller (who Nordangård has written about), releasing the virus, falling like drops of rain in golden light. The style of the image is difficult to characterise. It follows a gloomy colour scheme, creating a fluorescent and almost transcendent impression otherwise found on esoteric self-help literature, science fiction and gothic fantasy, frequently overburdened with explicit and overly clear symbolism reminding of kitsch. In musical terms, the sixteenth note-based accompaniment of SDG:s 1-8 is interrupted at the words "Evilution" and "Mass delusion", where the accents instead are placed on quarter notes. To underline the sinister phrase "Devil Bill and the Gates of Hell", both guitars are silent, and the bass drum plays thirty-second notes.

Part 2 (03:43–04:44)

SDG	Visuals	Revealed evil purpose	Sequence
9 'Industry, innovation and infrastructure'	a flow chart	'Track all the goods'	03:43–03:46
10 'Reduced inequality'	a control room with screens	'Monitor all movement'	03:47–03:49
11 'Sustainable cities and communities'	image of a smart and digitally interconnected city	'Build cities for control'	03:50–03:54
12 'Responsible consumption and production'	a calculation of carbon emissions	'Monitor all movement'	03:55–03:58
13 'Climate action'	a picture of geoengineering methods	'Change the global climate'	03:59–04:02
14 'Life below water'	a satellite monitoring the globe	'Oversee the seas'	04:03–04:06
15 'Life on land'	refugees in Ukraine at a checkpoint in Uzhhorod	'Force people from their homelands'	04:07–04:10
16 'Peace and justice, strong institutions'	x-ray showing implantation of microchip	'Implant a digital ID'	04:11–04:14
[Chorus] Another interlude with the chorus and Devil Bill Imagery is displayed. The song finishes off with the last SDG.			04:15–04:30
17 'Partnerships to achieve the goal'	a picture of Bentham's Panopticon-prison	'Enhance all control'	04:31–04:44

At the ninth goal the minor third melodic phrase returns in the lead guitar.



The sixteenth note-based accompaniment is interrupted at the words "Evilution" and "Mass delusion," where the accents instead are placed on quarter notes. As before, to underline "Devil Bill and the Gates of Hell" both guitars are silent, and the bass drum plays

thirty-second notes. The last and seventeenth goal “Enhance all control” is repeated four times and in this part the lead guitar plays the minor third melodic phrase, the rhythm guitar plays sixteenth notes. The drums play quarter notes on the hi-hat on the second and fourth beat of each measure whilst the base is silent.



When “Enhance all control” is repeated for the fourth time, the tempo slows down and the music fades out, into the image of the first vignette with the Wardencllyffe tower in front of the Georgia Guidestones. Even though it is quite common to fade out recorded songs, this particular fade-out creates a sense of dystopia.

Taken together, lyrics, music performance and video (combining elements of text and image) powerfully communicate the idea that the SDGs and the Georgia Guidestones somehow are linked and that they represent an evil masterplan to enslave and destroy humanity. There is little doubt that the Global Goals aim at their opposite and that sustainable development only serves as a pretext to the totalitarian power grab unleashed by the WEF and its partners. We are also served a colorful gallery of villains, first and foremost Bill Gates, the new “Devil Bill” who guards “the Gates of Hell”. Plotting together with his sinister companions Blofeld/Schwab, the witch von der Leyen and evil robber barons, humanity is enslaved, final doom appears as unavoidable.

(3) Intertextual/-medial references to Nordangård’s authorship

As mentioned above, the SDGs and Nordangård’s personal interpretation of them is extensively treated in an annex to his book *Den globala statskuppen* (262–299). From a reading it emerges as evident that this interpretation and individual lines of the lyrics are directly related, for instance mentioning the sesame score, robotization of the workforce, technocracy, eugenics, depopulation, smart cities and ultimate evil end goal: total and panoptical control of the world. Imagery of the music video can also be found in the book, almost identical for SDG 14, of Schwab or implanted ID (Nordangård 291, 140 and 208) and very similar for many others. The Georgia Guidestones are treated on several pages (Nordangård, 21–23). Many of the actors portrayed in the song are presented in the book, and an impressive chart clearly illustrates how the UN, WEF and G20 dominate transnational entities like the EU, nation states like Sweden, regions and in the end individuals top-down and through the SDGs as a tool of domination (Nordangård 71). The underlying thesis of the book is however that the global power grab is crafted around an orchestrated crisis, the alleged climate emergency. Pages up and down are spent discrediting both the phenomenon of climate change and the actors commenting and reacting upon the climate emergency, such as Greta Thunberg. COVID-19 and The Great Reset are described as the trigger for the

worldwide coup-de-état. An extensive chapter is devoted to the key role of Bill Gates who is mentioned throughout the book (Nordangård 156–177).

This evident relationship between song, lyrics, their visual expression and authorship is further deepened by the most recent book published in 2025, *The Temple of Solomon*, a commentary to the entire album and its (visual) program. The Georgia Guidestones are treated extensively (Nordangård 76–90), followed by a section on Evilution (91–103).

Decoding the Delusion

On a narrative level, the lyrics, artwork and music of ‘Georgia Guidestones/Evilution’ expose several rhetorical strategies (RS) and narrative tropes (NT) resonating with those detected in German, Swedish and Danish samples of anti-corona protest songs (Koehler, and Önnersfors, *Singing*). Without expanding upon the underlying analytical framework for these studies more than necessary, ‘Georgia Guidestones/Evilution’ engages for instance in rhetoric holding public health practices (as part of the SDG:s and the fight against the pandemic) to ridicule in an “overall tone of mockery and/or contempt” (RS1, Hughes et al. 7) – for instance with its multicolor panorama image over the assembled villains. The fight against the cabal “is framed as one of global, historical, or even mythic proportions.” Moreover, “hyperbolic rhetoric and superlatives are used to convey that this threat is profound enough to change the world, to enshrine the power of a corrupt elite – or to imperil the most vulnerable among us (children)” (RS5, Hughes et al. 7). It is possible to expand this RS of hyperbolism to music and artwork in the song. This is even more pronounced in RS12, ‘Panic Button’ according to Hughes et al. (8), “a common rhetorical technique that uses audio and visual cues intended to spark alarm, disgust, confusion, squeamishness, anxiety, or dread in audiences.” Even richer is the use of NTs in ‘Georgia Guidestones / Evilution’. The trope of ‘1984’ implies for instance that the “pandemic and all public health measures associated with it as the final few steps toward a maximally repressive global government” and where “free speech, freedom of religion, and freedom of travel will soon be abolished” (NT1, Hughes et al. 9). The warnings of authorities and governments are completely overblown and serve other purposes (NT2). The elites are portrayed as corrupt, “a standard populist appeal”, combined with the trope of unaccountability, where “doctors, politicians, and the media will never have to account for their lying or incompetence” acting out of sinister motives (NT4, NT8 and NT14, Hughes et al. 9). Even more so, recurring emergencies and crises (such as climate change and the pandemic) create an “unprecedented opportunity for corporate looting and medical profiteering” or “a set-up for crony handouts and panic-driven marketing”. These are stories, “in which powerful men will do whatever it takes to compete and aggrandize their wallets and ego – whether it means lying, neglect, withholding care or resources, or plain out killing” (NT6, Hughes et al. 9). No doubt, that freedom is ‘under siege’ as NT7 is called and where “common rights such as speech, assembly, or possession of some entitled object are being stripped from citizens” (Hughes et al. 9). All “these narratives cast their heroes and villains as

either all trustworthy, good, and ‘on the right side’ or else dangerously misguided, stupid, or evil” (NT20, Hughes et al. 11). The ‘imminent threat’ that is invoked as a NT “warn their audience that ‘time is running out,’ and something terrible is either happening or about to happen very soon. This threat could be specific [...], or it could be vague” (NT20, Hughes et al. 11).

The 22 NT:s can according to Hughes et al. (6) “further be classified as directed toward five major types of antagonists: (i) the government, (ii) the medical establishment and political/economic elites; (iii) mainstream (and implicitly, pro-vaccine) society at large; (iv) an entirely unspecified ‘shadowy villain’; (v) the vaccine itself.” ‘Georgia Guidestones/ Evilution’ presents a panorama of a universal, all-encompassing sinister and cynical cabal preparing for the global coup d’état. No specific government is targeted, yet political power on transnational level as such, which is portrayed as a thoroughly corrupt tool for the organization of human societies. The super conspiracy encompasses all possible actors: experts, authorities, figures of cultural influence, medical establishment, governments, media, and press. Representing pure evil, these powerful forces act out of deeply misguided ethical or metaphysical intentions (represented by the inscriptions on the Guidestones and the SDGs as a plan to subdue humanity). From the lyrics it also emerges that a named antagonist, Bill Gates, is held responsible for the situation together with an intimate group of villains in politics and economy, most importantly Klaus Schwab.

The visual strategies with which this narrative is communicated rhetorically in the music video are mainly collage and assemblage, toxic togetherness suggesting connections between seemingly unrelated phenomena over time and space, ranging from representations of eugenics, the title engraving of Hobbes’ *Leviathan*, the Georgia Guidestones, the United Nations and the WEF. If the first two minutes of the music video already represent a very dense visual program of an all-encompassing conspiracy, the pace of the assemblage is accelerated in the SDG-staccato, a quick series of eight and a further nine images in the rest of the song. The viewer is here confronted with execution, starvation, mind control and similar and rather generic vignettes of the revealed and sinister meaning of the SDGs, ending with Bentham’s frightening *Panopticon*. As extensively described above, this staccato of images is interrupted by the close up hovering over the hyperbolic multicolored representation of perpetrators: Schwab/Blofeld (arch-villain), von der Leyen (evil witch) and Bill Gates (devil) and the other characters (robber barons). The visual program of the video offers no narrative thread or order itself, rather its patchwork character enhances the sentiment of disconnected connectedness where disparate representations of deception create self-referencing meaning – dread, unease and doom offering no solutions to or release from the evil, mankind is exposed to. This story can only have a bad ending. How the peculiarities of metal music underscore and amplify these sentiments was already described above. A more comprehensive study of Wardenlyffe’s music might reveal larger patterns in the sonic program of conspiracy.

Let us now return to the elements of transmedia storytelling as outlined by Madisson and Ventsel. It is obvious that the performance of ‘Georgia Guidestones/Evilution’ on several levels engages with rhetorical and stylistic hyper-encoding in a shared dictionary between Model Author and Model Audience. On the textual and visual levels, this relates to the familiarity of the audience with the reading of the stone monument and its inscriptions as something evoking unease and disgust. For those who don’t share previous knowledge communicated in transnational conspiracy lore, at least familiarity with Nordangård’s writing must be assumed and in which the sinister character of the Georgia Guidestones is extensively developed.

The chorus refers to previous understandings of the Rockefeller-family (‘Devil Bill’) and of Bill Gates as responsible for the climate and pandemic hoaxes respectively. In the case of Nordangård, the obsession with the Rockefeller’s and their alleged machinations dates back to his dissertation and can be decoded by the readers/listeners who are familiar with these dog-whistles. Finally, to read Agenda 2030 and the SDGs as a globalist master plan of malevolent manipulation of mankind is part and parcel of Nordangård’s authorship and another well-established trope in international conspiracy lore. For those who are acculturated with the negative interpretation of the global goals, it comes as no big surprise that their evil meaning is revealed in the song.

This also refers to the second strategy of transmedia storytelling, evoking scenarios determining a framework of action for participants in narrative. Yet, what stands out as odd is rather that the scenario about the SDGs as an evil manipulation seems to imply and reinforce a rather passive role for the victims of the conspiracy, sentencing them to inactivity and powerlessness in the narrative. There is no call for action, no space for dissent or heroism, adding to the emotion of doom as underscored by images and music.

We can detect important intertextual interferences and earlier reading experiences or associations that are taken for granted. Madisson and Ventsel refer here to the ability to recognize meta-patterns (or genres) more than the familiarity with specific vocabulary (as above). ‘Georgia Guidestones/Evilution’ traps the audience in the drama of tragedy, human suffering heading towards inescapable catastrophe, a “foundational plot from the cultural memory” (Madisson and Ventsel 28). ‘Doom’ is the guiding sentiment, in an acid assemblage of music, image and text. We are confronted with an extreme imagery of external locus of control, the community of victims is suppressed from the outside and cannot escape heteronomy. An extreme path-dependency is assumed, an ultra-determinism as found in messianic evangelical Christianity where the fall of mankind is programmed and develops as foretold in prophecy and scripture – also expressed in the genre of rapture literature and movies. That Nordangård indeed might have been influenced by such millenarist ideas is hinted at through the second part of the song title, ‘Evilution’.

Closely related is ideological hypercoding, shaping ideological consistency among the audience. In Nordangård’s case, and following the tone set already in his doctoral dissertation,

transnational policy formation through thinktanks, networks, intergovernmental bodies and international organizations is met with severe suspicion. Nothing good can ever come out of such coordination of actions across borders. This suspicion is in particular directed towards utopian ideas and foresight scenarios which are confused with the ability of alleged masterminds to plan the development of political events decades or even centuries in advance. Whatever challenges for humanity they might address (peace, public health, climate) – the true purpose is always to enslave mankind and to increase the power of the wealthy and selfish elites.

The combination of these strategies suggests that the intention of ‘Georgia Guidestones/ Evilution’ not opens up for “multiple paths of parallel reading” unlike more open-ended artistic expressions but reduces interpretation “limited by the nature of conflict and the particular purpose desired by the author, as well as by the specifics of the target audience” (Madisson and Ventsel 29).

Denialist doom and the dark side of ecomedia

Can Nordangård be treated as an example of a(n emerging?) dark side of ecomedia? In this chapter, we have focussed on the song and performance of ‘Georgia Guidestones/ Evilution’, which sows profound doubt about the intentions of mitigating the climate emergency. In Nordangård’s dark ecomedial imagination, the climate emergency does not exist or if it exists, it is the outcome of intentional geoengineering and not human overconsumption of fossil fuels and CO₂, as his artistic treatment of SDG 13 suggests. The true purpose of providing clean water and energy, of measuring and tracking carbon emissions or building sustainable cities is instead to achieve total control (see SDG:s 6, 7, 11 and 12 above). What even against this denialist backdrop appears to be absurd is to associate SDG 15, the concern for life on land with forced displacement of “people from their homelands” (Wardencllyffe). This suggests that people escape from their countries of origins not because of warfare, crises or due to climate change of free will or rational choice but that the global flow of migration is somehow orchestrated. This is a clear overlap with ideas resonating with the far-right about an intentional ‘Great Replacement’ and one that led the self-styled ‘eco-fascist’ Tarrant to carry out his terrorist attack in Christchurch in 2021 (Önnerfors, *Konspirationsteorier* 206–207). For Nordangård, the SDGs are part of a global masterplan to subdue humanity and linked to the Georgia Guidestones which occupy a special place in conspiracy culture (a shadowy elite proclaiming its evil plan). The climate emergency is fabricated and the true emergency is instead the looming global power grab of apocalyptic proportions, represented by transnational decision-making. The audience is left with almost no clues as to how Nordangård imagines the planetary interaction between humanity and

nature, since he clearly is against any attempts to mitigate climate change. His ecomedial storytelling started with the dystopian scientific interpretation of biofuel as a constructed policy area, moved over to attacking ecological doomsday-rhetoric, but adapted instead the master frame of ‘doom’ in both metal music and authorship in the sense that what is endangered is human agency since it will be subdued and enslaved by the exaggerated hoax of climate change. Perhaps this constitutes one of the most significant pillars of a dark side of ecomedia: medialised anxieties not about ecological collapse, but instead the collapse of freedom as the outcome of coordinated climate action. Or as Nordangård sings in the song ‘HAL’: “Take me back to the glory days / Then man was free to choose his ways [...]” (Nordangård 238). This juxtaposition of melancholia versus manipulation appears as one of the key ingredients of dark ecomedia as a repertoire of cultural climate obstruction, a strong counter-current of nostalgia.

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