

# Different Voices, Different Stories in climate change communication

Conference and workshop in Bergen  
25 – 26 October 2012



# DOES LANGUAGE MATTER TO CLIMATE CHANGE?

Different Voices, Different Stories:  
Perspectives on Language Use in Climate Change Text and Talk

**Conference at the University of Bergen, Thursday 25 October 2012**

Venue: Auditorium "Egget", Student Centre, Parkveien 1, 5007 Bergen

Financed by the SAMKUL programme, Forskningsrådet/Research Council of Norway

## **Programme Thursday 25 October**

**8.30 – 9.00** Registration

**9.00 – 9.30** Opening by professor **Gjert Kristoffersen**, Dean of the Faculty of Humanities  
Welcome by conference organisers professor **Kjersti Fløttum**, University of Bergen (UiB),  
and professor **Trine Dahl**, NHH Norwegian School of Economics.

**Tone Bjørndal** - Voice of the Youth: *Climate and the Future*

## **Keynotes**

**09.30** *Too hot to handle? Climate change communication and its public response*

**Marianne Ryghaug**, professor, Department of Interdisciplinary Studies of Culture, NTNU, and  
Deputy Director of the Centre for Sustainable Energy Studies (CenSES)

Chair: Professor Trine Dahl, Dep. of Professional and Intercultural Communication, NHH

**10.10** *A Nelson Mandela Approach to the Polarization of Global Warming*

**George Philander**, Knox Taylor Professor of Geosciences, Princeton University and Research  
Director of ACCESS (African Centre for Climate and Earth System Science)

Chair: Professor Helge Drange, Geophysical Institute, UiB/Bjerknes Centre for Climate Research

**10.50 – 11.05** **Coffee break**

**11.05** *Voices in context: Perspectives on how language matters in climate change communication*

**Kjersti Fløttum**, professor, Department of Foreign Languages, UiB, and **Trine Dahl**, professor,  
Department of Professional and Intercultural Communication, NHH

Chair: Professor Gisela Böhm, Department of Psychosocial Science, UiB

**11.45** *Just Tell a Story!: The Power of Communicating Climate Science via Cultural Narrative*

**Michael D. Jones**, Dr., Residential Research Fellow, Edmond J. Safra Foundation Center for  
Ethics, Harvard University

Chair: Senior researcher Endre Tvinnereim/Director, Bergen Programme for Governance and  
Climate, Uni Rokkansenteret, Uni research.

**12.25** *Cry Wolf: How are journalists supposed to "stay on track" when politicians don't assume responsibility?*

**Frank Rossavik**, Political commentator for *Bergens Tidende*, Bergen/Commentator and  
columnist for *Morgenbladet*, Oslo

Chair: Senior researcher Endre Tvinnereim, Uni Rokkansenteret, Uni research.

**13.00 – 14.00** **Lunch**

**14.00 – 15.15** **Panel debate**

Mediator: **Gudrun Sylte**, Head of communication, Bjerknes Centre for Climate Research

**Unni Berge**, political advisor, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, former deputy director of ZERO –  
the Zero Emissions Resource Organisation

**Anders Bjartnes**, director at the Norwegian Climate Foundation

**Kikki Kleiven**, associate professor at the Department of Earth Science, UiB, research director at the  
Bjerknes Centre for Climate Research

**Paul Joakim Sandøy**, incoming leader of Unge Høyre (Young Conservatives)

**15.15 – 16.00** **Plenary discussion**

## Workshop for PhD candidates and master students, Friday 26 October 2012

**Venue:** Seminar room A, Student Centre, Parkveien 1, 5007 Bergen

<http://rom.app.uib.no/rominfo/index.php?roomid=SS%3ASEM-A>

**Time:** 09.00–15.00

**No fee**

The topics of the conference will be followed up in a one day workshop for PhD candidates/master students by the organisers in collaboration with professor Marianne Ryghaug and Dr Michael Jones, who will give introductory presentations of their own work.

On the basis of submitted abstracts, the following participants will present their work:

PhD candidate **Eirik Swensen**, NTNU / University of Oslo:

*The relation between climate awareness and (missing) action in Norway*

PhD candidate **Katherine Duarte**, University of Bergen:

*What is the fuss all about? Voices and attitudes in the Norwegian climate coverage*

PhD candidate **Annika Arnold**, Stuttgart University:

*Storying climate change: Codes, narration, and genre within climate change communication*

Master student **Sandra van der Hel**, University of Amsterdam:

*Climate games: Discourse of global warming in virtual media*

Master student **Laila Borge**, University of Oslo / University of Bergen:

*The REDD+ discourse in a donor country (Norway)*

PhD candidate **Marte Reenskau Fjørtoft**, NHH Norwegian School of Economics:

*The climate issue as a communicative arena: a linguistic-discursive study of government-produced climate change texts in Norway and Bolivia*

## PRACTICAL INFORMATION for the conference 25 October:

Venue: Auditorium “Egget”, Student Centre, Parkveien 1, 5007 Bergen

<http://www.sib.no/en/Map/sportsmap/studentsenteret>

**Registration** to conference coordinator Øyvind Gjerstad:

[oyvind.gjerstad@if.uib.no](mailto:oyvind.gjerstad@if.uib.no)

Final registration: **19 October 2012**

**Students and PhDs: no fee**

For other participants – fee: NOK 200 (coffee/tea and lunch included)

**Payment** can be made to account number 76940500857 (University of Bergen)

IBAN: NO5276940500857, SWIFT: DNBANOKKXXX

**NB!!!** Please include the following information in your payment:

112000-IF, SAMKUL – ”Different Voices, Different Stories”

## About the conference speakers:

**Michael Jones** is currently an Assistant Professor at Virginia Tech's Center for Public Administration and Policy and is also a research fellow at the Edmond J. Safra Center for Ethics at Harvard University. He received his PhD in Political Science in 2010 from the University of Oklahoma and holds an MA and BS in Political Science, both granted from Idaho State University. His research focuses on the role and influence of narrative in public policy processes, outcomes, and science communication. <http://works.bepress.com/mjones/>

**George Philander** is Knox Taylor Professor of Geosciences at Princeton University and Founder of ACCESS (Africa Centre for Climate and Earth System Science, Cape Town, South Africa). His main academic fields include General Circulation, Ocean-Atmospheric Interactions, Climate Fluctuations, Paleoclimates. He has published extensively within these areas and of particular interest for this conference is his 2009 paper, 'Where are you from? Why are you here? An African perspective on global warming' (*Annual Review of Earth and Planetary Sciences*). [http://www.princeton.edu/aos/people/faculty/george\\_philander/](http://www.princeton.edu/aos/people/faculty/george_philander/)

**Frank Rossavik** has for many years been working as a political commentator for several Norwegian newspapers, reporting both from Norway and from Brussels. He also lectures on political science at the Buskerud University College. Rossavik is currently a member of the Advisory Board of the Norwegian Public Broadcasting Corporation as well as a board member of the Freedom of Expression Foundation in Norway (Stiftelsen Fritt Ord).

**Marianne Ryghaug** is Professor in Science and Technology Studies at The Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) and Deputy Director of Center for Sustainable Energy Studies (CenSES). She has been engaged in research related to energy, environment and climate change for 15 years, and has published articles on topics like media representations of climate change, public appropriation of climate change, scientific practice and consensus formation, climate policy and adaptation. <http://www.ntnu.edu/ansatte/marianne.ryghaug>

**Trine Dahl** is Professor of English linguistics at the Department of Professional and Intercultural Communication, NHH; **Kjersti Fløttum** is Professor of French linguistics at the Department of Foreign Languages, UiB. They have both been engaged in linguistic and discursive research on scientific discourse for several years and on climate change communication since 2009. For publications see <http://www.nhh.no/Default.aspx?ID=569> (Dahl) and <http://www.uib.no/persons/Kjersti.Flottum> (Fløttum)

## About the panelists:

**Unni Berge** is political advisor for Heikki Holmås, Minister of International Development. Berge has a Master's degree in political science and broad experience from the environmental movement in Norway. She has, together with Gudmund Skjeldal, published the book *FEBER- historien om norsk olje og gass* ('FEVER – the story of Norwegian oil and gas'). Berge is former deputy director of ZERO – the Zero Emissions Resource Organisation. [www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/ud/about\\_mfa/Other-political-staff/berge\\_radgiver.html?id=679005](http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/ud/about_mfa/Other-political-staff/berge_radgiver.html?id=679005)

**Anders Bjartnes** is director at the Norwegian Climate Foundation. He has a long and varied experience from mainstream Norwegian media – VG, Dagens Næringsliv – and has also been correspondent for an international weekly on renewable energy, Recharge. <http://klimastiftelsen.no/>

**Helga (Kikki) F. Kleiven** is Associate Professor at the Department of Earth Science, University of Bergen, and research director at the Bjercknes Centre for Climate Research. She works within marine geology and geophysics, in particular within paleoceanography and on thermohaline ocean circulation. Kleiven directs several EU and Norwegian Research Council projects and is actively disseminating knowledge on climate through the courses 'Klimaklok' and 'Generasjon Grønn'. <http://www.uib.no/persons/Kikki.Kleiven>

**Paul Joakim Sandøy** is the incoming leader of the Young Conservatives, the youth party of Høyre, the Conservative party of Norway. He has been a member of the Central Board of the party since 2010, and before that he worked as a political adviser to the UH Landsforbund. Paul Joakim is also working towards a master's degree in law at the University of Bergen.

## ABSTRACTS – “Does language matter? Different Voices, Different Stories”

**Michael D. Jones:** *Just Tell a Story!: The Power of Communicating Climate Science via Cultural Narrative*

Adorned with scientific consensus about the causes and many of the potentially cataclysmic consequences, climate change is easily one of the most important and *agreed upon* long term problems facing the human race. Yet, and despite scientific consensus, a non-trivial minority in the US and other countries around the world reject efforts by climate change communicators to accurately convey the facts and relationships that scientists have come to take for granted. Such repeated and widespread communication failures have prompted organizations such as the National Research Council in the United States to issue statements arguing that better climate science communication is critical to developing and implementing strategies to deal with climate change. Examining survey based experiments conducted in the US in the years 2009 and 2010, the research presented here addresses how narratives—and the characters within—can be utilized by climate science communicators to craft more effective messages.

**George Philander:** *A Nelson Mandela Approach to the Polarization of Global Warming*

Global warming is polarizing because it involves both science and ethics. How will the rise in the atmospheric concentration of carbon dioxide affect climate? That scientific question, in principle, has an unambiguous answer. In our response to global warming, what is the appropriate balance between our obligations to those suffering today, and our responsibilities to future generations? This ethical question has no simple answer, but it seems obvious that to tell those who live in abject poverty that the future will be worse, is cruel. For guidance on how global warming can become, not merely a threat, but also as an opportunity (for the alleviation of poverty) we can watch the film INVICTUS in which Nelson Mandela transforms the game of rugby, from a symbol of division and oppression, into a symbol of unity and pride. We are likely to be wiser stewards of planet Earth once everyone appreciates that we are fortunate to be in a special place at a special time.

**Marianne Ryghaug:** *Too hot to handle? Climate change communication and its public response*

The focus in this talk will be on what we can learn from previous experiences of consensus formation processes in the area of climate science when they are performed 'in the public eye', like for instance as happened in relation to the 'Climate Gate scandal'. The presentation also focuses on the role of climate skeptics related to these kinds of issues, as well as how media representations of climatic change is related to the uptake of climate science. What are the effects of the representations that are available? How can we understand public sense making processes and the appropriation of the climate change problem?

**Kjersti Fløttum and Trine Dahl:** *Voices in context: Perspectives on how language matters in climate change communication*

The point of departure for this talk is that language DOES matter in the circulation of climate knowledge and policies – through different voices (scientific, political, media, activist, general opinion) and in the shape of different “stories”. First, language not only reflects and expresses but also influences attitudes and behaviour; second, language is a means of communication open to multiple interpretations – and manipulations. Furthermore, the potential influence that language can have depends to a large extent on who says what and in which context. We will report on results from our research related to how different actors construct their agendas and what linguistic and rhetorical means they use. Our material includes reports edited by the IPCC and UN institutions, media texts and political White Papers.