

The LINGCLIM Project – an overview

<http://www.uib.no/en/project/lingclim> 2013-2015/2016

Research Council of Norway, SAMKUL programme

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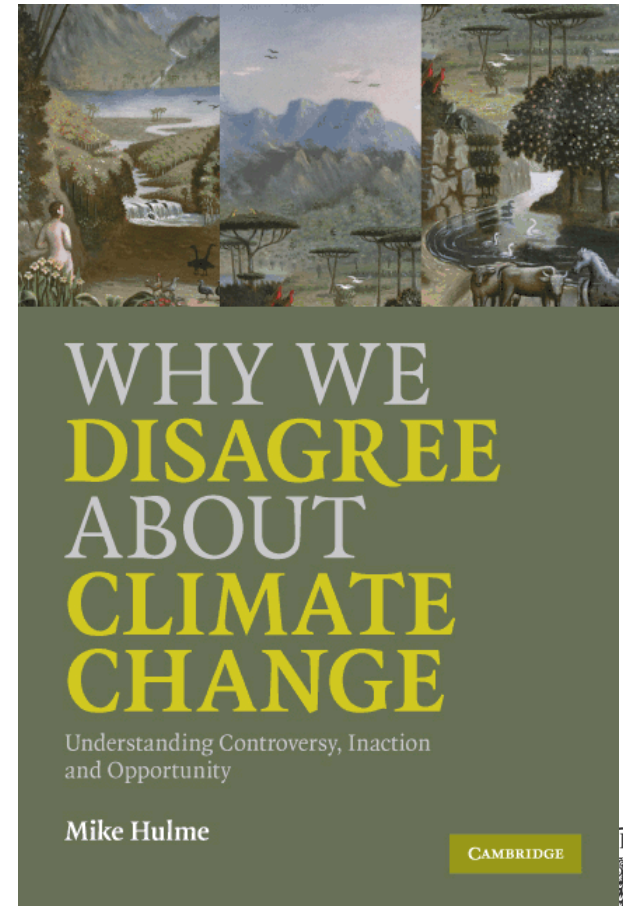
University of Bergen



LINGCLIM –

*Linguistic **representations** of climate change discourse and their individual and collective **interpretations***

- The meaning ascribed to climate change (CC) is closely related to how the phenomenon is portrayed
 - CC not only a physical phenomenon
- > **The role of language:**
a vital component of the prerequisites underlying societal development



LINGCLIM main objectives

- (1) generate integrated **new knowledge** on **the role of language in the CC debate**, through developing a **interdisciplinary methodology** based on **linguistic and narrative analyses**, including opinion and political surveys and psychological experiments
- (2) explore the impacts of various (conflicting) narratives and frames on public **opinion, attitudes and behaviour**, with a special focus on perspectives of the future

On interdisciplinarity

- Hypothesis: Language influences which knowledge structures and connotations that are activated and which inferences that are drawn by people
- BUT: Also influence by source, context, values, interests
→ The need for a cross-disciplinary research design
- **Prerequisites:** people, risk-willingness, time, infrastructure
- Interdisciplinarity is more a goal to strive for than a state
- Interdisciplinarity should enrich the involved disciplines



Why the selected disciplines?

Start: Bjerknes Centre for Climate Research (BCCR)

Reasons related to theories, methodologies, infrastructure

- **Linguistics** – to set the agenda (micro- and macro levels)
- **Climate science** – relation science-based knowledge and what is actually said/written; updating from **BCCR** & IPCC
- **Psychology** – relation language representations and people's interpretations/response
- **Political/social science** – public opinion, patterns of consensus and controversy / **Norwegian Citizen Panel**
- **Computational science** – data-driven techniques for analysing large volumes of text

Enriching methodological experiences

- **Combination** of micro-/word-level linguistic analyses, macro-level text structures and extra-linguistic context
- **Combination** of quantitative (political science) and qualitative (linguistic/semantic) approaches
- Use of the notion of **narrative in three disciplines**: linguistics, psychology and political science

Linguistic/discursive theoretical framework

- **Linguistic polyphony – multivoicedness:**
Interpretation of explicit voices as well as identification of more or less hidden interaction / Argumentation
- **Lexical-semantic studies:** Value-laden expressions
- **Cognitive linguistics:** Metaphors
- **Framing:** Writers'/Communicators' framing activity as visible at various linguistic levels
- **Narrative theory:** How CC representations are structured around a complication or plot with possible actors («heroes», «villains», «victims»); interpretations



IPCC Fifth Assessment Report Synthesis Report

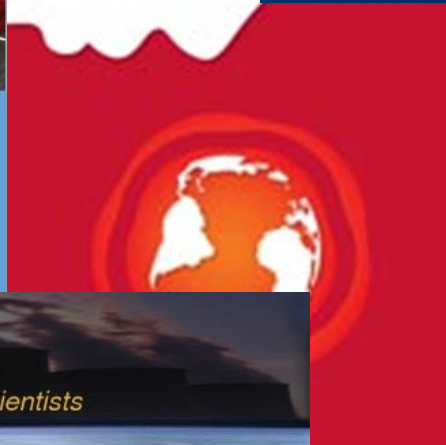
2nd November 2014
Copenhagen

IPCC AR5 Synthesis Report



Human Development Report 2007/2008

Fighting climate change:
human solidarity in a divided world



Bergens Tidende



RealClimate

Climate science from climate scientists



Le Monde

the
guardian



Materials, topics and some results (1)

- National and foreign political documents (White Papers)
 - Two conflicting stories in Norwegian politics
 - South Africa's conflicting roles of hero/villain/victim
- International Reports (UN, IPCC)
 - UN: CC as 1) a matter of human rights or as 2) a matter of hindrance to economic growth
 - IPCC: *Summaries for policymakers* (AR4 and AR5)
 - Expressions indicating various levels of (un)certainty in combination with non-predefined linguistic means
 - Narrative structure?
 - Quasi-absence of people – what importance for the reception and response?

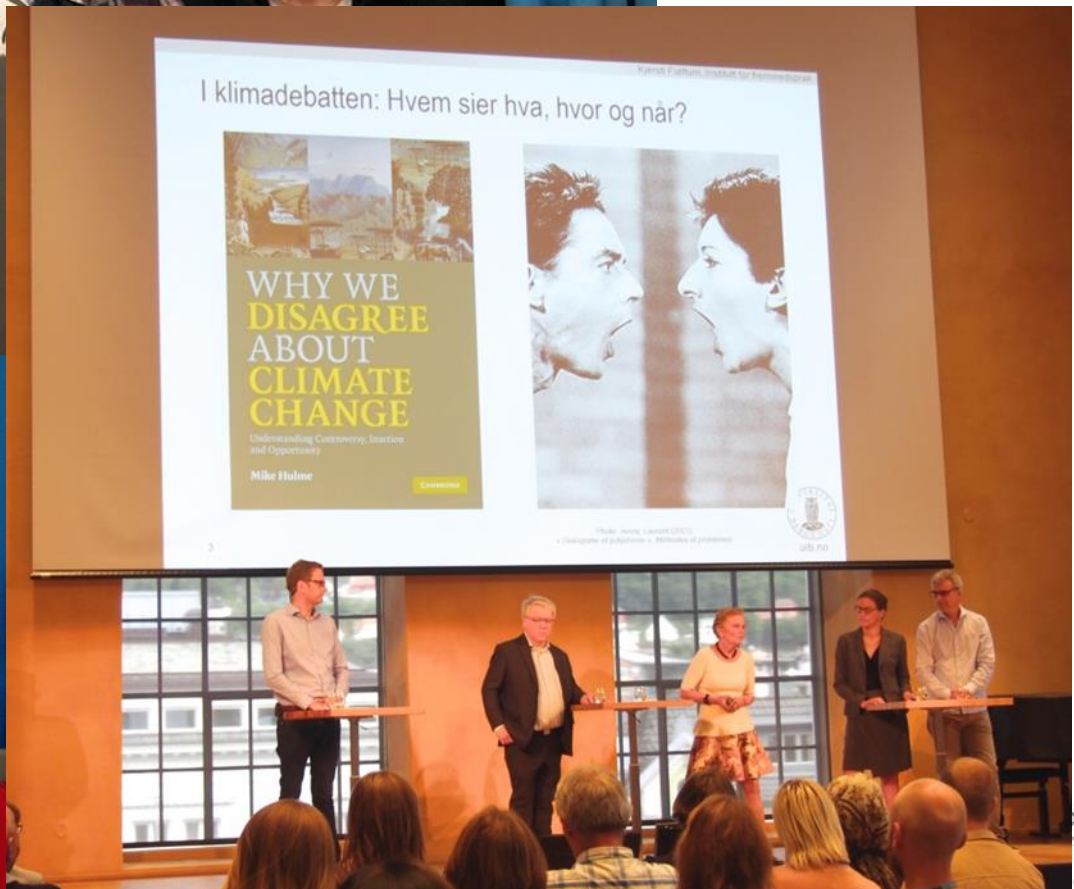
Materials, topics and some results (2)

- **Traditional media (mainstream newspapers, UK, FR, NO)**
 - Identification of voices and positions in the CC debate
 - How journalists use sources' statements
 - Difference UK and FR: more explicit position taking by French journalists
- **Blogs** (corpus established by the NTAP project)
 - Analysis of representations of the future
 - Nine meaning categories of perspectives for humanity, nature and countries
 - Large presence of perspectives related to sustainability
 - Positive value-laden characterisations

Materials, topics and some results (3)

- Questions and experiments through the **Norwegian Citizen Panel**, national representative research-based online panel
- «**Survey discourse**» - respondents' answers to open-ended questions, views on climate change and solutions
- Rich text data varying from one word to long narratives
- Improved understanding of people's interpretations of and attitudes to the multifaceted phenomenon of CC
- Possibilities to follow changing opinions over time

OUT-REACH



What are the future
most important and ground-breaking
research questions
related to
the human side of climate change?



Thank you!



UNIVERSITY OF BERGEN

Kjersti Fløttum, LINGCLIM, October 2015