

Norway House, Brussels October 2022



**Pushing pesticides onto Norwegian gardens, fields, and forests,  
1945-1995**

May-Brith Ohman Nielsen  
Professor of history

## **Pushing pesticides onto Norwegian gardens, fields, and forests, 1945-1995.**

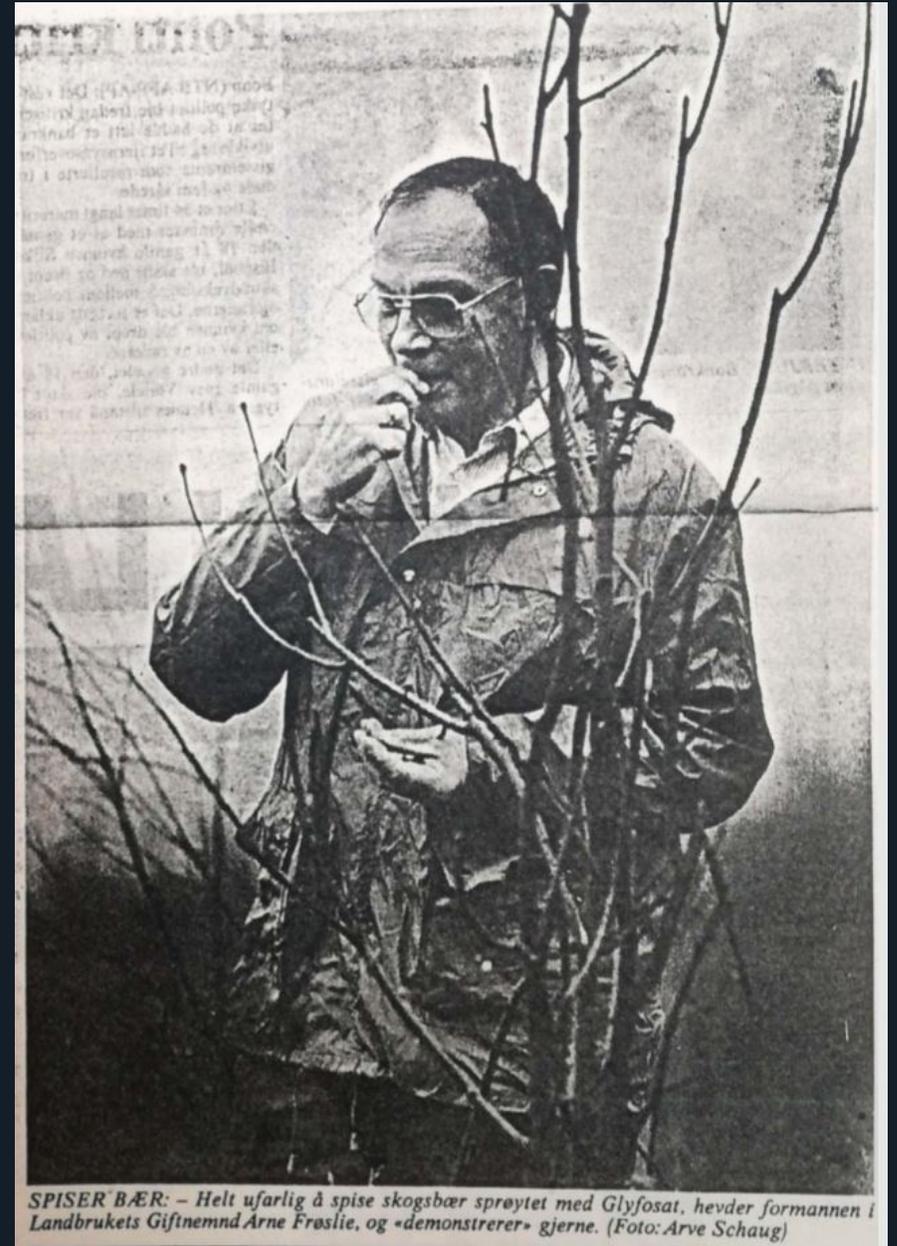
Some glimpses of historical lessons – to be - learned

May-Brith Ohman Nielsen, Professor of history, University of Agder.  
Leader of the project *Deadly Dreams – The cultural history of poison 1850-2020*.

Arne Frøslie, eating glyphosate, Roundup, sprayed forest berries for the press in 1983.

Frøslie did this to demonstrate that Roundup was completely harmless to eat for humans and animals, and thus, there were «no problems» with glyphosate spraying of Norwegian forests, fields, and gardens.

*Why did he do that?*



The answer to this why-question could be a shallow one.

- Some of the Roundup promoters in the 1970s and 1980s ate or drank the substance in front of professional or public audiences to convince them that Roundup was completely harmless. They did convince many, and themselves too.
- The newspaper journalist had challenged him. Frøslie could not just back out.

Or

We can look for *deeper historical* root problems within pesticide administration, education, and practice. Some of these may still be very much present today.

This is what I do in my research. I do not directly investigate into the present-day political discussion. I research the historical practices and mindsets that made Frøslie eat that blueberry. And I ask questions like: Where are the Frøslie-logic today?

It is still around, and we need to decipher it to uncover it.

Ohman Nielsen, May-Brith and Seines, Anne Mette

**Poison to the Beasts: Changing Poisons and Poisoning Practices in Campaigns to Kill Norwegian Birds and Mammals, 1845-1967**

[Environment and History](#), Volume 25, 2019

Ohman Nielsen, May-Brith

**Syntheticising Scandinavia: The Introduction of Synthetic Pesticides to Scandinavian Gardens, 1945-1952**

[Journal of History of Science and Technology](#), vol 14, 2020

Frøyen Anne Jorunn

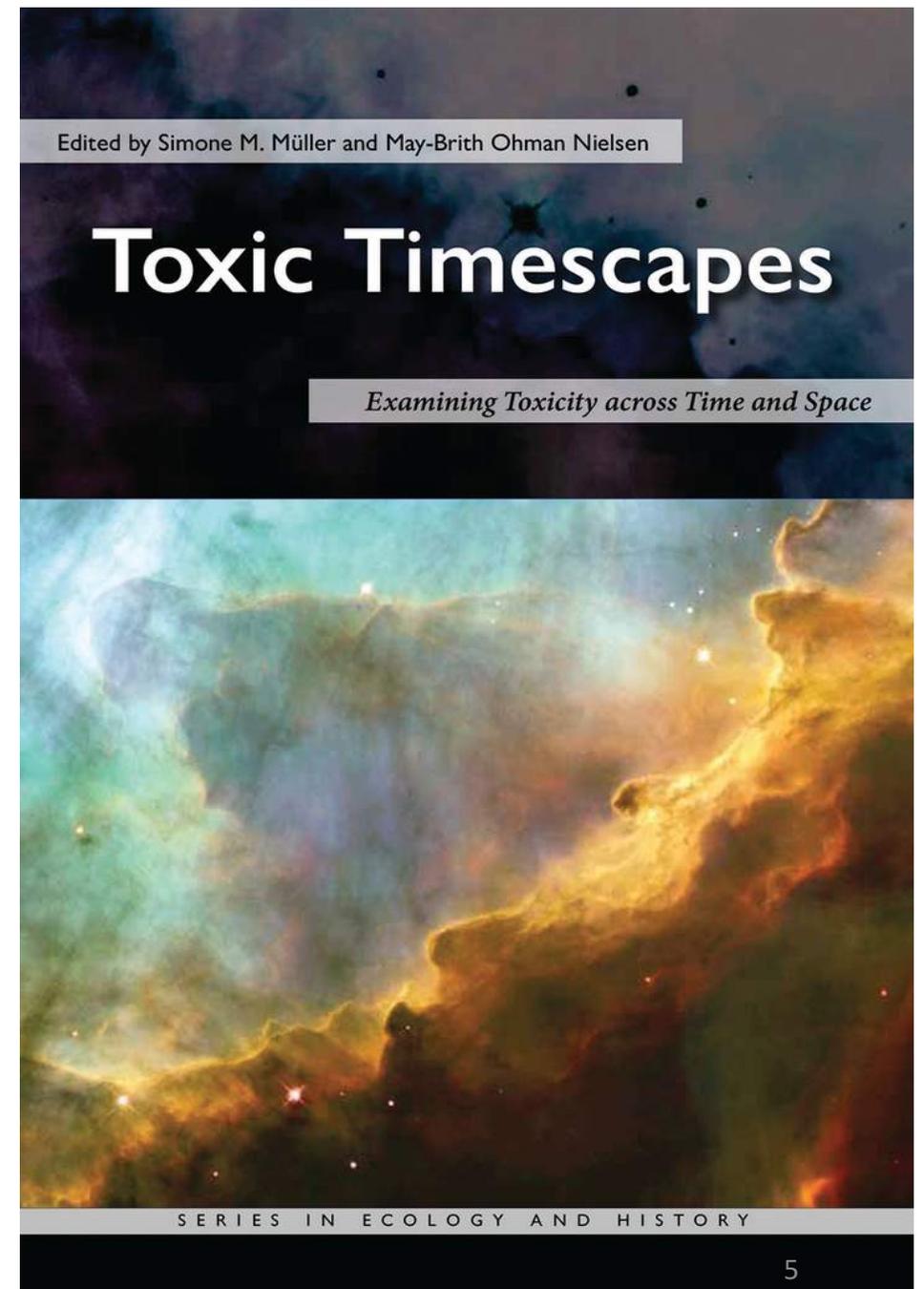
**Influencing for Results: Bees, Beekeepers and Norwegian Pesticide Legislation**

[Journal of History of Science and Technology](#), vol 13, 2019

Frøyen, Anne Jorunn

**«Fyll jorden og legg den under dere.» - Jordbruk, gift og natur i Norge frå 1875-1995.**

[PHD- thesis, University of Agder, 2022.](#)





**Areas studied in the Deadly Dreams project**

**Agriculture, family gardening, forestry**

**Wildlife eradication programs, pest eradication**

**Poison purchases from Scandinavian pharmacies**

**Plastification of everyday life**

**Professional cleaning**

**Industrial pollution in family companies**

**Environmental issues in school history teaching**

**Environmental issues and perspectives in newspapers**

**Environmental issues in international institutions**

# The role of experts in Norwegian pesticide administration 1945-1992, a legacy of toxics, and a legacy of mindsets

- The shift from holistic to prescriptive technologies in agriculture, gardening, and forestry
- The size of the expert group and their variety of expertise and experience
- Relativization of harm and of usefulness
- Flows of information, fences against critical knowledge and new scientific approaches
- Forms of knowledge, modes of thinking, ways of reading

# The shift from holistic to prescriptive technologies in agriculture, gardening and forestry

Ursula Franklin: Technology is not just machines, gadgets, or electronic transmitters, but a comprehensive system including methods, procedures, organization and «most of all mindsets».

« The dominance of prescriptive technologies in modern societies discourages critical thinking and promotes a culture of compliance. »

This transformation from holistic to prescriptive technologies took place at different times within agriculture, gardening, plant nurseries, green house production and forestry.

The main expert message was like this: You do not know what is good for you, for your farm, your garden, your forest, your plant production. - We know. Follow our instructions.

Instructions, and the mindset of instruction, was everywhere, in particular with regards to pesticides.

# Some major pesticide phases in Norway

The phenoxy acid phase, 1948 – 1974 -->

The glyphosate phase, 1974 – 2002 – 2017 →

The DDT phase, 1946 – 1970 - 1989

The mercury phase, 1955 – 1978 – 1989

The lindane phase 1946 – 1993

The lead arsenate phase → 1880 – 1950s

## **The size of the expert groups and their variety of expertise and experience**

The smaller, or more exclusive, the group of inner circle expert, and the closer they are, physically and organizationally, the more are tendencies to conform, agree and not voice concern or opposition.

This is particularly problematic with regards to recruitment to state or government positions in pesticide administration, or advisory committees.

And with regards to the funding of research, education of researchers and building of research groups.

## Relativization of harm and of usefulness

The state *plant protection authorities* were to decide if a substance

- Did effectively kill pests, weeds, fungi, rodents etc, and did not harm the plant culture or livestock unnecessary
- Was more efficient than other products on the market
- Were relatively cost effective and thus it could be recommended to farmers, gardeners, foresters. and plant producers

The Department of *agriculture's toxicology committee / poison commission* were to decide if a substance

\* Was considered sufficiently safe for humans and livestock and they decided on the instructions for legal use and for «safe handling» by the applicators.

## Flows of information, fences against critical knowledge and new scientific approaches, «pre-lobbying»

From the 1920s onwards the pesticide companies were the major suppliers of information about their products and their use. This material was pushed through educational institutions, governmental institutions, professional institutions, regional and municipal mentor services and membership associations, as well as in straight forward commercials in journals, shops, and newspapers.

Many of the experts within the pesticide administration system, at times, worked as consultants for the pesticide companies. This could help the companies understand and comply with the rules. But it hardly made the expert less sympathetic to the companies. Ethical guidelines were absent.

In times when experts with other types of expertise raised critique, questioned or tried to limit the use of pesticides on a particular arena, the pesticide experts joined ranks to stop this, or some profiled person took on the task to attack the critiques by various means.

Most of the research were financed by the industry.



Most of the independent research funding went to a limited set of research disciplines.

SKADEINSEKTEN.T.K.NES

**DDT**

**Kverk**

**DDT**



De revolusjonerende KVERK-DDT preparater redder millionverdier ved å «kverke» skadeinsektene i hus og hjem, stall og fjøs, i frukt- og bærhagen, i veksthus, på grønnsakvekster og dyrket mark. KVERK-DDT preparatene er meget effektive. Framstilles i 10 forskjellige typer spesielt tilpasset de ulike formål. Forlang vår katalog!

A/S PLANTEVERN-KJEMI • SKØYEN PR. OSLO  
Produksjon av plantevernmidler



**VERN om HAGEN**



*Edv. Björnträdf*  
MASKINERIKT UTLEIE  
Jernbanetorget 4, Oslo

DELING LANDBRUKSKIE

**UGRESS?**

Det er hyggelig å gå en tur med KVERK-STOKKEN. Den dreper ugresset mens De spaserer.

Et helt nytt «våpen» for ugressbekjempelse. KVERK-STOKKEN gjør slutt på strevsom lusing og verkende rygg.



**EFFEKTIV -  
LETTVINT -  
RIMELIG!**

**Den beste løsning  
når hagen skal sprøytes**

*Mot skadedyr:*

**LEBAYCID** (fenthion)  
De fleste vanlige skadedyr i pryd-, frukt-, bær- og grønnsakhagen bekjempes effektivt med Lebaycid. Midlet er særlig egnet for amatør-dyrkerne (fareklasse B).

**META-SYSTOX** (metyl-demeton-0)  
Hvis det er sterke angrep av bladlus eller midder, vil Meta-Systox, som har systemisk virkning, være å foretrekke, fordi dette middel har vesentlig lengere virkningstid enn Lebaycid.

*Mot soppsykdommer:*

**EUPAREN** (diklofluamid)  
Det nye soppmiddel Euparen har størst allsidig virkning og er derfor det fordelaktigste middel i småhager. Euparen er det beste middel mot gråskimmel (råte) på jordbær og andre planter, har kurativ (drepende) virkning mot meldugg på roser, er et utmerket middel mot skurv og har ellers god virkning mot en rekke andre soppsykdommer i pryd-, frukt- og bærhagen. Euparen virker dessuten mot midder.

 **BAYER KJEMIS**  
OSLO

## Forms of knowledge, modes of thinking

We need to acknowledge the impact of the cultural legacy and the conceptual mindsets, not only within the fields of pesticide promoters, but also in the general public.

## Advice

The holistic vs prescriptive technologies issues need to be addressed in education and dissemination, as well as questions of horizons and timescapes

A variety of sciences should be involved in providing advice, in funded research, synthesis, and environmental education

Research and analytical tools from the humanities and social sciences can bring forth new concepts, humanize the field, and help to investigate significant social practices at different levels and in different groups.

Research ethics training must be strengthened and academic integrity education programs at all universities. Universities must develop ethical guidelines for how research institutions should protect and support their researchers.



SPISER BÆR: – Helt ufarlig å spise skogsbær sprøytet med Glyfosat, hevder formannen i Landbrukets Giftnemnd Arne Frøslie, og «demonstrerer» gjerne. (Foto: Arve Schaug)

We need to train young people the skills to read sources like this

And yes, we would benefit from working together.



9929/81

Journalnr. 10794 / 8 1 H 5	Fra	Fra	Fra	Fra	Fra
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Sakstittel: flysprøyting klage	14/18/5				
Behandlet av	Dato	Signatur			
Saksbehandler	5/5 81	KM			
Byråsjef		X			
Overlege	4/5	OAA			
Eksped.sjef					
Med.råd	27/5	EW			
H.dir.					
Statsråd					
Ekspedert	29/5-81	ET.			

15 MAI 1981  
15 MAI 1981  
Fylkesjordsling  
Rosenkrantzgt. 8 Oslo 1

Ref.:  
SAK: Klage av 16/2 1981 ~~ixx~~ over Grimstad helseråds vedtak i sak nr. 11/81, jfr. vedtak i sak nr. 16/81. Helikoptersprøyting av skogsplantefelt med plantevernmiddel.

anm. Tar opp på kontaktmøte m. SIFF prinsipielt -81 OAA

Går til hygienisk vurdering v/ overlege Aarflot.

KM 5/5-81 170  
Vi går imot SIFF's vurdering og anbefaling om til Glyfosat med. beredning m.v. Vil du uttrykkelig oppnevne de allerede nevnte feltene SIFF ut. Glyfosat med. 5/5 170

Om vi går imot SIFF?

Retur 4.9.  
Som MS u jys i brev om vi bli gi mot helseråd/fylkeslege SIFF?  
Om om sunn tale

Deptet viser til ovennevnte klage samt til gjenpart av vår eksp. av 24/2 d. å. til Grimstad helseråd.

Vi har mottatt klagesaken ved eksp. av 14/4 d. å. fra fylkeslegen i Aust-Agder.

Av de mottatte saksdokumenter fremgår at De i brev av 16/2 d. å. hit har påklaget Grimstad helseråds vedtak i møte 9/2 d. å. , sak nr. 11/81. Vedtaket lyder:

"Helserådet kan tillate helikoptersprøyting med glyfosat sommeren 1981 på de betingelser som er stillet i H.sak 28/80 og de generelle forskrifter.

Av de påsøkte felt må følgende utgå:  
Felt 2, 15, 16, 20, 24."

Vi viser forøvrig til utskriften fra helserådets møtebok for nevnte sak.

Deres klage ble behandlet av Grimstad helseråd i møte 6/4 d. å. , sak nr. 16/81. Her ble tidligere vedtak i sak nr. 11/81 opprettholdt, idet helserådet begrunner dette med at rådet ikke kunne se at klagen medførte at nye momenter var fremkommet i saken.

Vi viser forøvrig til utskriften for sak nr.

19/5-81  
20.5.81  
OAA