

NORDIC
THE CLIMATE
STORY LAB

INSIGHTS ON
CLIMATE STORYTELLING

2023/2024 REPORT OUT

WELCOME

In the midst of a climate emergency, storytelling might seem like a luxury we can ill afford. Yet, the power of story to move minds and hearts is undeniable and, perhaps, more crucial than ever. Stories can provide spaces for dialogue, they can heal, catalyze action, they can help us grieve, get up and act. In times of crisis, stories can lift our spirits, ignite our imaginations of other possible futures.

The world is in transition. Storytellers and the film and media industry have a crucial role to play. In 2023/2024 Climate Story Lab Nordic (CSLN) initiated a Nordic platform for climate storytelling, supporting film and media makers, and working with capacity building within the film industry towards climate action. In collaboration with DocSociety and CPH:DOX, the first edition culminated at Copenhagen Film Festival 2024 with a public event addressing the role of documentary film in climate action.

The first edition of the Climate Story Lab Nordic supported nine climate films at various stages of production in the Nordic countries. The goal was to develop their climate stories and their impact strategies. These stories convey of Sami resilience, rural perspectives, youth dreams, scientific journeys and much more. Poetic, humoristic, philosophical, scientific, the expressions are varied and they

all contribute to a sense of hope in the midst of the climate crisis.

This cohort extends the global movement started by DocSociety to catalyze urgent and compelling climate narratives. Since its first Climate Story Lab in New York City in 2019, there have been dozens of editions in all continents. The Climate Story Lab (CSL) is weaving a worldwide community of climate storytellers, showing how these stories are more vital than ever in an era of polarization, fragmented attention, and rampant misinformation.

This collection of essays shares the diverse perspectives of the filmmakers, scientists, journalists and practitioners who contributed their wisdom and practice to the Climate Story Lab Nordic 2023/2024. It is imagined as a handbook that can be read in any order; an anthology of ideas and practices gathered for emerging filmmakers, seasoned storytellers and communicators interested in the power of story. And this is just the beginning. The climate crisis demands that we reimagine how we tell stories. We invite all those engaged with climate storytelling to join this growing community - there is so much important work ahead.

Find us on www.climatestorylabnordic.org

Diego Galafassi, Julia Dahr and Anne Gerd Grimsby Haarr

CLIMATE STORY LAB NORDIC HOSTS

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Introduction

Start from where you are – the air you are breathing. We are both authors and characters in this vast, complex narrative of a heating planet. From how you traveled to the place you are now, the food you ate, the clothes you wear – each choice ripples through our interconnected world, leaving its mark on our changing climate. Climate change is everything change, and as we trace our lives into the fabric of nature, we weave our climate stories.

Filmmakers and storytellers are at the heart of transformative climate action. As filmmakers, we have a unique opportunity to shape what people see and, consequently, how they understand and engage with the climate crisis. The climate crisis is not a single story rendered in degree celsius and targets for action. The stories we tell and how we tell them shape our imagination of the climate crisis. Stories also affect the alliances we create and the actions they lead to. While climate communication shares the latest information about climate change (e.g. peer-reviewed studies), climate storytelling is a space for making sense of what this crisis means at a practical, political, emotional and existential level. The stories we tell can be prisms, they can lift us, heal us, open doors, shape imaginaries, activate hope and agency. Through the power of visual narratives, we can make the abstract concrete, the distant personal, and the overwhelming actionable.

In June 2022, Reuters Institute and the University of Oxford published a report showing that more people say they pay attention to documentaries (39%) than to major news organizations (33%) for information about climate change. Documentaries were twice as influential as celebrities and activists on social media and

three times more influential than politicians and political parties on this issue. This was the case across all markets in the aggregate, as well as across age groups.

Films (and artistic works more generally) create rich contexts in which information can be communicated. They can also reach audiences that normally would not come across such information. To make a film is to render the climate crisis in a specific way. The climate storytelling community is creating climate stories that are diverse, inclusive, and grounded in the principles of climate justice. They amplify the voices of those on the frontlines of the crisis and by centering their experiences and perspectives, they can foster empathy, build solidarity, and mobilize support for equitable solutions.

The Climate Story Lab was initiated by Doc Society and Exposure Labs in 2019 and since then it has been conducted in over a dozen countries. It brings together storytellers, media makers, scientists, grassroots organisers, funders and changemakers to catalyze the most compelling media projects being made to address the climate crisis and to share knowledge and experience on how to create an impact with climate stories and climate communication in general. The Climate Story Lab wants to inspire and prepare storytellers and cultural organisers – to facilitate necessary climate narrative conversations within their own communities that will inspire citizens, engage politicians, create debate and dialogue and mobilise communities. Through a multi-day convening, the Lab provides a space for collaboration, learning, and creativity to help strengthen the quality and impact of climate storytelling. Participants engage in sessions led by experts on various aspects of climate



PHOTO DIEGO GALAFASSI

change and communication strategies, while the filmmakers who participate with a selected project also have the opportunity to workshop their own projects and get feedback from the group. The ultimate goal is to support and amplify narratives that can shift public perception, inspire action, and build the movement needed to tackle the existential threat of climate change.

The Climate Story Lab Nordic (CSLN) 2023/2024 brought together a curated selection of powerful creative narratives addressing climate change and climate justice from across the Nordic region. The goal of the lab was to support climate storytellers and strengthen the Nordic network on climate impact producing to create debate, dialogue within the polarized climate debate and reach more diverse audiences as well as policymakers and other game changers in tackling our global climate emergency. The residential lab took place at Filmhuset in Stockholm in November 2023, fostering an immersive and collaborative environment where filmmaker teams worked on the development of their impact strategies and learned about each other's practice and approach. CSLN culminated at CPH:DOX24, with a public open event where more than 500 participants; climate scientists, scholars, practitioners, filmmakers and film industry representatives discussed

climate storytelling and what can the film industry do to address the climate crisis. At CPH:DOX24 the selected CSLN projects were showcased and connected to key allies, strategists, representatives, organizational partners, and funders to explore and develop impact strategies.

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In the pages that follow you will find insights, reflections, and provocations from some of the filmmakers, scientists, practitioners who participated in the CSLN 2023/2024, as well as additional contributions useful to the field. This collection of essays demonstrate how creators are meeting this moment with creativity, courage, and conviction.

This handbook is designed for flexible reading. Each essay is self-contained and they are organized in three distinct sections. In the first section, you'll encounter foundational arguments that approach climate storytelling from various critical angles, including climate science, communications, activism, and social justice. The second section provides a snapshot of climate storytelling in the Nordic countries,

viewed through the lenses of the talented Nordic filmmakers selected for the 2023/2024 CSL cohort. Their diverse experiences and innovative approaches serve as a microcosm of the larger climate storytelling landscape, illuminating both the challenges faced and the exciting opportunities that lie ahead. In the final section, we turn our gaze to the future, asking "What next?" Building upon the knowledge and insights gained from the previous sections, we explore practical strategies and cutting-edge ideas for pushing the boundaries of climate storytelling, both as individual storytellers and as an industry. This concluding section serves as a powerful call to action, urging filmmakers and the broader film industry to harness the transformative power of their craft to drive meaningful change in the face of the escalating climate crisis.

The Scottish poet Kathleen Jamie in her recent book *Cairn*, stated "how do we find images and symbols adequate to our predicament?". This is the task that many filmmakers around the world have given themselves to.

The Nordic context

Navigating complexities in climate storytelling

The Nordic region, often perceived as a haven of environmental stability, is increasingly grappling with the tangible impacts of climate change. Recent years have seen a surge in extreme weather events. Devastating forest fires have swept through Sweden and Norway. Unprecedented floods have inundated coastal areas and river basins across Denmark and Finland, while severe droughts have strained agricultural systems, affecting thousands of farmers and threatening food security. These events are not isolated incidents but part of a growing pattern that underscores the region's vulnerability to global climate shifts.

All Nordic countries are signatories of the Paris Agreement, and in order to fulfill their commitment, Nordic countries aim to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 40% by 2030 compared to 1990. The Nordic Council of Ministers has developed a vision to transform the Nordic Region into “the most sustainable and integrated region in the world” (Nordic Council of Ministers 2021)

However, despite this progressive history, the Nordic region is not immune to the global challenges of polarization, misinformation, and climate denial. Norway's identity as both an oil producer and environmental leader creates policy contradictions (Lahn 2019). The rise of populist parties in Denmark, Sweden and Finland renowned for their green initiatives, has faced internal debates about the pace and scale of climate action, with some groups advocating for slower transitions to protect certain industries (Vihma 2021). Some groups now use climate issues as a wedge to distance themselves from established political parties, essentially turning climate into a matter of identity politics. Rather than outright denial seen elsewhere, populist parties in the Nordics often frame climate concerns as alarmism, portraying climate action as exaggerated or unnecessary. They frequently claim that climate policies will severely harm the economy, using these economic impact narratives to oppose action.

The Nordic countries must also confront their historical and current contributions to global emissions. As early industrializers and, in some cases, significant fossil fuel exporters,

these nations bear a disproportionate responsibility for the cumulative greenhouse gasses in our atmosphere. This legacy of emissions has far-reaching consequences, disproportionately impacting vulnerable communities in the Global South.

These challenges highlight the complex interplay between environmental leadership and socio-economic realities in the Nordic countries. They also underscore the ongoing need for diverse stories and reaching diverse audience groups to address misconceptions, bridge ideological divides, and support climate action in the region. Nordic filmmakers are dwelling in these dynamics between the region's environmental aspirations and its political realities. The effectiveness of film as a medium for climate communication in the Nordic countries is enhanced by the high levels of trust in media characteristic of the region. The Reuters Institute Digital News Report (2021) indicates that Nordic citizens generally have more faith in their media sources compared to many other parts of the world. This trust amplifies the potential impact of climate-focused films, allowing them to shape public opinion and potentially influence policy decisions.

The Climate Story Lab Nordic 2023/2024 was founded on the need to broaden and deepen climate storytelling in the Nordic region. It was also designed to address the need to work strategically and collaboratively on how to reach specific audiences with specific stories to create deep changes to address the climate crisis. Our aim was to discover and support narratives that reach diverse audiences and embrace the complexities of our climate reality – the paradoxes, contradictions, and controversies, as well as the resilience, creativity, and passion found in Nordic communities.

We understand that effective climate narratives must go beyond simple messaging to explore the nuanced realities of our changing world. The selected projects reflect this ambition. As we move forward, we hope the Climate Story Lab Nordic can serve as a catalyst for a new wave of climate narratives – ones that are as multifaceted and dynamic as the issue itself.

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PART 1

FOUNDATIONS

The following series of thought-provoking essays by experts in various fields explore various aspects of climate storytelling. Each essay offers unique insights into the role of storytelling in addressing the climate crisis. It includes perspectives on climate justice, effective communication strategies, and the potential of science fiction in envisioning sustainable futures.

Stories matter

KAREN O'BRIEN

Imagine a group of young people sitting in a closed circle around a campfire. It's 2050, and they are participating in a 5-day celebratory "wake for the planet." This gathering has taken place annually in sacred natural spaces around the globe since 2025, before many of them were born. The wakes serve as a vigil for all that has died, but also as a celebration of an emergence from a deep sleep. Jaina, the youngest in the group, gently lifts the heavy Coulter pinecone and speaks.

"Once upon a time, there lived a society that vastly underestimated its potential to consciously transform itself and its systems. This society was spread across the globe, like a network of mycelium, but its members were unaware of their connection to each other and to nature. In fact, most of them stood by as mere observers, watching as the planet heated, as wildlife disappeared, as sea levels rose, and as a very small number of people grew incredibly wealthy by changing the global environment, without caring for the collective good of all sentient and non-sentient beings."

The group let out a collective sigh, but there were grins on their faces. The pinecone story was their favorite part of the ceremony .

"In those days," Jaina continued, "people were convinced they were small, separate, and insignificant. They thought there was little they could do to make a difference. They did not think that they mattered." Heads shook vigorously in disbelief, as participants tried to imagine their parents and grandparents once holding these thoughts.

"Back then, people had disconnected their minds from their hearts, and their hearts from their stories. Many believed that false narratives were true, so they became emotionally attached to divisive, fracturing, and polarizing words. They forgot that they were one, and that this oneness transcended time and space."

Jaina finished her part of the story then passed the pinecone to the next person, who cradled its spiny scales and continued. It was a story of urgency and a story of hope. As the pinecone made its way around the circle, the full story emerged. It was, in the end, a love story of transformation, and it was now being told by people all over the world. Both

the story and ritual were a reminder of how wrong things could have gone. Not listening to the wisdom of nature, including themselves, and disregarding the power of community and connection nearly destroyed them. It was the story that saved them.

Stories matter. They play a foundational role in cultures and societies. Everybody knows that we are a story-telling species. Stories transmit lessons about relationships, including our relationships to each other, to nature, and to the future. Knowledge and wisdom are embedded in the stories that we share, especially those that are passed down through families, groups, networks, and generations.

Some stories communicate timeless and universal themes such as courage, self-discovery, liberation, and love. Rich with symbolism, insights, and lessons, these stories are relevant to the past, present, and future. They can guide us through our contemporary challenges. For example, think about The Tortoise and the Hare, one of Aesop's Fables that reminds us of the importance of being persistent and determined, rather than rushed and overconfident. This moral tale reminds us of the dangers of racing ahead with geo-engineering solutions like solar radiation management to address global warming. Amidst the urgent calls for transformative change, it suggests wisdom in the steady pursuit of practical, political, and personal transformations that address the underlying causes of climate disruptions, biodiversity loss, poverty and inequality, and violent conflict.

Stories also transmit the wrongs and injustices of the past, reminding us of the victors and victims, heroes and villains, us and them, right and wrong, and countless other binaries. They reveal the prejudices and stereotypes that prevailed in the past, which has often led to the trauma and pains that are waiting to be healed. Stories provide clear signs that societies and cultures are continually changing and evolving. For example, everyone has heard "damsel in distress" stories, where the helpless woman is saved by a knight in shining armor. Over time, such fairy tales have been replaced with stories that convey women as strong, capable, and resilient. Powerful.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Prof. Karen O'Brien is an internationally recognized expert on the human and social dimensions of global environmental change, and her research focuses on themes related to climate change impacts, vulnerability, and adaptation. Karen's recent books include *You Matter More Than You Think: Quantum Social Change for a Thriving World and Climate and Society: Transforming the Future* (with Robin Leichenko). She has earlier been involved in the work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the Global Change Programmes of which she also was awarded a shared Nobel Peace Prize 2007.*

Karen gave spoke at the Climate Story Lab in Stockholm

It is tempting to look back upon our old stories with discomfort and a sense of shame or embarrassment, or to condemn the storytellers for holding narrow and limited perspectives. Yet it is also possible to use these stories as inspiration, for they invite us to identify contemporary biases and the limits to our own perspectives. How will future generations hold us accountable for the limited perspectives that guide our actions and inactions? They may question why we distanced ourselves from the well-being of animals, plants, ecosystems, and future generations, treating other species as if they were insignificant and expendable. Perhaps they will shake their heads in dismay that we could not collaborate and shift the oppressive and destructive systems and cultures that were changing the climate, especially when we knew better. They will most certainly ask, why were we underestimating our collective capacity for social change? What was our story?

The stories we tell are interpretations of reality that are filtered through perceptions, bathed in emotions, and riddled with blind spots. Some of our stories are impactful and can drive positive change, whereas others may subvert or paralyze it. Or push us in the opposite direction, amplifying our tendencies to divide and destroy the very communities and ecosystems that are critical to our well-being. In a world where millions of stories are vying for attention and where disinformation is ubiquitous, how do we discern which stories are worth listening to, which ones we will share, and which ones we are ready to let go?

A first step is to listen deeply and take in what is happening in the world. When we read the news these days, the top stories convey a tragic sense that something is terribly wrong. The hottest year on record, again. Extreme heat in South Sudan, a severe drought in Afghanistan, wild and destructive fires in Canada, melting ice in Antarctica, and on and on. Scientists have been observing the patterns and connecting the dots for

decades, and the implications for both our present and future are clear. A sense that we are diminishing and destroying the potential for life to thrive on Earth makes it easy to conclude that we have collectively “lost the plot.”

What does this mean? In relation to stories, losing the plot implies a lack of direction and loss of coherence in the overarching narrative. It reflects an awkward disconnect from the larger context. The global challenges we face today demand that we recognize this disconnect and tell stories that point us in the direction integrity and wholeness.

A first reaction is always, “easier said than done.” Yes, it is easier to tell stories of disconnection to fire up negative emotions, and we indeed need to give words to our grief and grievances. Drawing attention to present and future dystopias is an opportunity to hold ourselves and others accountable for the damages we have done to others, or that others have inflicted upon us. Stories of disconnection are often stories of responsibility, and they say a great deal about our ability, inability, or failure to respond.

A second step is to recognize that telling stories with integrity involves being in integrity. This includes catching ourselves when our words do not resonate with what we care about for ourselves and for others – our deepest values. It means recognizing that our connections are entangled in a larger context. To take care of the whole, we need to acknowledge it first. Integrity is, after all, the state of being whole.

Climate science has a lot to tell us about systems and relationships, and it reminds us that connections matter, whether through microscopic bacteria in soils that influence the carbon cycle, or through the regional impacts of the Arctic Oscillation teleconnection. The impacts of climate change we experience across the globe and anticipate for the future are clear signs that it is time to listen, and to consciously choose

a different story.

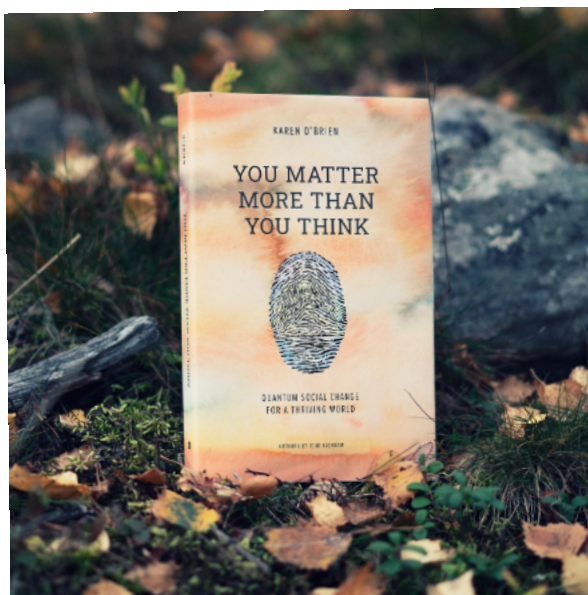
We are all storytellers, and we are always contributing to a larger narrative, whether we tell our stories in conversations, through poems or short stories, through novels or works of art, or through films and documentaries. Stories collapse a world of possibility and potential into something material – with matter referring to both substance and significance. Not every story that exists in our imagination must be told, and choosing which stories to tell and repeat is an act of responsibility.

The basis of our humanity lies in shared stories. We connect to each other through stories, and their shared meanings hold us together. We can heal ourselves and our environment through stories, including regenerative stories and collective action stories, inspiring stories of courageous individuals who challenged the status quo, and powerful stories of communities who acted with integrity and responsibility. We can also tell stories of our entangled future, and remind ourselves that we are creating the future right now.

Looking back from 2050, young people sitting around campfires will likely be grateful to the storytellers who listened then spoke responsibly and with integrity, transmitting universal values and themes that could be embodied and expressed in the world through individual and collective actions. They will appreciate every story that broadened and deepened our understandings nature and the nature of reality.

Most of all, they will celebrate the love story of transformation that drove social change, leading to an equitable and just world where they and all life could thrive. As they pass around the pinecone, a symbol of human enlightenment, wisdom, and regeneration, young people will thank the generations ahead of them for recognizing that their stories mattered.

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Karen O'Brien's latest book is entitled You Matter More Than You Think, introduces a radically different way of thinking about climate change and social change. Inspired by ideas from quantum physics and quantum social science, quantum social change describes a conscious, nonlinear, and non-local approach to the transformations needed right now to address multiple global crises.



Climate change 101

KIM NICHOLAS

The sum of all of climate science, or of what everyone needs to know about climate change, can be summed up almost like a haiku:

It's warming.

It's us.

We are sure, it's bad,

we can fix it.

This is a very short summary of the 10s of 1000s of research studies and 1000s of pages of IPCC, the UN climate panel, the leading authority on climate change, which consists of scientists and is vetted line by line by the world's governments in their summaries for policymakers. So IPCC is the grand motherhood of where to go when you have climate questions.

If we start with global warming, we're getting very, very close to 1.5 degrees of the Paris Agreement. 1.5 degree is not a hard and fast line below which everything is fine and above which everything is disaster, but every 10th of a degree makes a huge, huge difference for the people in places that we love. We have very clear evidence that the earth is warming. And we know that unlike previous times in Earth's history, where warming had natural causes, this time, the warming we're experiencing is caused by humans. About three quarters of it is caused by burning fossil fuels like coal, oil and gas. About a quarter of warming comes from land use, primarily agriculture.

Those of us who live in rich countries account for about 12% of the global population, and have historically emitted about half of all the CO2. This is important

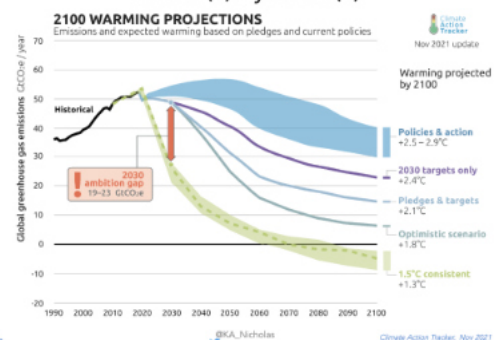
because warming is directly proportional to the total amount of CO2 in the atmosphere. The main greenhouse gas, carbon dioxide, lasts in the atmosphere for 1000s of years. To compare, Stonehenge or the Great Pyramids, are about 5000 years old roughly, that's half the time some of the carbon from today will last in the atmosphere. This carbon legacy is incredibly important.

The disproportionate nature of climate change results in a huge gap between those who've caused the most emissions, and those who are on the frontlines of most acutely feeling the impacts. This disproportionality of climate injustice should be a huge motivation for taking climate action.

A little bit of IPCC history and the 1,5 degree target...

The statements that have come out of the IPCC since 1995, have changed dramatically. Back in 1995, there wasn't strong enough evidence to say anything more than : the balance of evidence suggests a discernible human influence on global climate. In other words; it is likely humans were having an impact, but it doesn't specify which direction. Over time, this got more and more certain. The previous IPCC report 2013, said: it's extremely likely that human influence has been the dominant cause of observed warming since the mid 20th century. The IPCC's definition of extremely likely means more than 95% certainty. The latest IPCC report from 2021, says it's indisputable that human activities are causing climate change. So now it is just a fact, there is no doubt that the current warming is caused by humans. Also, we know where those greenhouse gasses come from, both geographically and in terms of the activities that cause them. It is from burning fossil fuels, deforestation and land use. This means that there is even

For 1.5°C, we (!!) need to cut global GHGs in half (!!) by 2030 (!!)

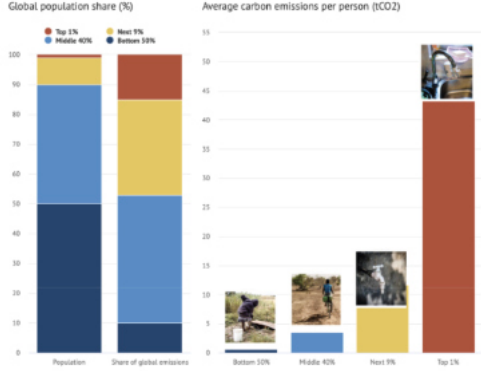


ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Professor Kimberly Nicholas is a sustainability scientist at Lund University (LUCSUS), Sweden. Apart from having published plenty of scientific articles, she also writes for publications such as *Elle*, *The Guardian*, *Scientific American*, and *New Scientist*; and is the author of the Los Angeles Times bestseller *UNDER THE SKY WE MAKE: How to be Human in a Warming World*, and the monthly climate newsletter *We Can Fix It*. Her work has been featured by outlets including the BBC, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Atlantic*, *WIRED*, *National Public Radio*, *Public Radio International*, *Vox*, and *USA Today*.

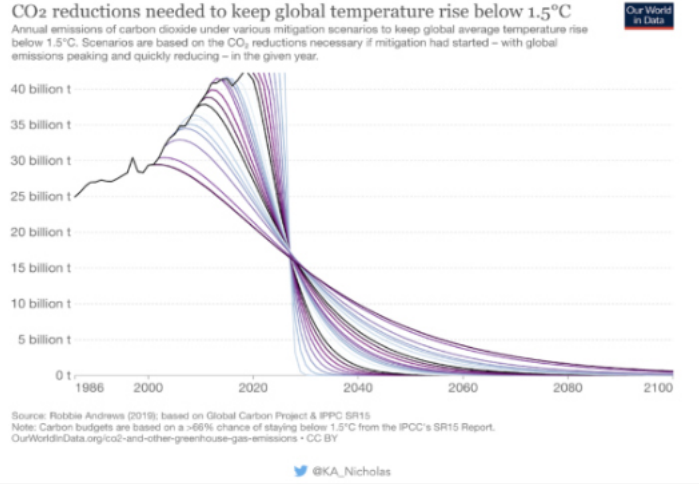
Nicholas gave a talk at the Nordic Climate Story Lab in Stockholm. This essay is a revised form of that talk.

High emitters need to reduce personal emissions



The global share of carbon emissions (left) and average carbon footprints (right) of the top 1%, next 9%, next 40% and bottom 50% of emitters. Chart by Carbon Brief, using Highcharts. Credit: Bruckner et al (2022). @KA_Nicholas

Emissions have to peak now and plummet to zero



Source: Robbie Andrew (2019), based on Global Carbon Project & IPCC SR15. Note: Carbon budgets are based on a >66% chance of staying below 1.5°C from the IPCC's SR15 Report. OurWorldinData.org/co2-and-other-greenhouse-gas-emissions - CC BY. @KA_Nicholas

more of a link between warming and impacts, meaning how humans caused climate change, but also how that is creating spinoff effects such as extreme climate events, including heat waves, heavy rainfall, and droughts that are more frequent and more severe. So we know that it's us. And we know that it's bad.

Coral reefs are often one of the most vulnerable ecosystems, where we very clearly can see the impacts of warming and other climate changes. I remember reading this paper in 2007, and it was the first time it really hit me: what the difference between these kinds of abstract temperature targets might look like and what it might mean for people in places around the world. In the article I saw the difference between a healthy, thriving, beautiful ocean and the ocean subjected to more and more warming. And it's just an absolutely different world. This is what we're fighting for. This is why it's so important to limit emissions and to eliminate emissions as fast and fairly as possible. To retain as much life as we possibly can. Retain the conditions that we all need, both the 8 billion people currently alive, the 8 million species we share the planet with today and the future generations, for a good life available to us.

Solutions are simple, but not easy.

The good news is we can fix it, we know what we have to do to stop warming. Basically it is to leave fossil fuels in the ground, and work with instead of against nature, in our production of food and agriculture. Doing those two things could stabilize the climate. But we're not on track to do that yet. The UN Environment Programme and other agencies refer to something called 'the production gap'. This alludes to the difference between what governments have said they would do, with what governments are actually planning to do with where they're investing their money and where infrastructure is still being approved and built, and lastly to where we need to be.

So in order to stabilize the climate to fix it, humans have to completely stop adding carbon to the atmosphere. The main source of carbon is fossil fuels like coal, oil and gas. And you see that from where we are, we need to be on this very, very steep and rapid decline, where we're actually shutting down coal, oil and gas ahead of its planned lifetime. Further replacing it with clean energy and eliminating these emissions to the atmosphere. So this gap between where governments have promised to be, where they are and where we need to be is what

we're trying to close.

"This is where I hope storytelling can help people understand the scale of the challenge and what can be done."

The top 10 %; individual change versus system change

In my work, I focus a lot on the global top 10%. This is the group of people who make more than 38,000 US dollars per year. In Sweden, this translates to about 27,000 SEK per month, meaning it includes most people in Sweden, because that's below the median income. It covers a lot of the people living in Western Europe and North America and Australia, Japan, and New Zealand. This is the group who has historically been most responsible for emissions. If we look at the household level, we see again, a disproportionality even within Europe, basically, there is a group of the top 10% but especially the top 1% that are way over our carbon budget (the top 1% is earning 109,000 US dollars per year.) When we talk about system versus individual change, of course, we really need both as they are interlinked. Individual behavior change can help unlock system change and system change will in turn require some behavior change.

But regardless of the link, a really important point is that to actually stabilize the climate, we need system change. We need to have energy, transport, housing, societies that work without emitting carbon, and make it possible for everyone to have a good life. That will be enough for the bottom 90%. Starting with the middle 40% and below, to be where we need to be to meet our climate targets and stay within our carbon budget to limit warming.

Further, system change will not be enough to deal with overconsumption by the highest emitters. And that's why I focus on the top 10%. Because I think there's clear numerical

5 Roles for Climate Action

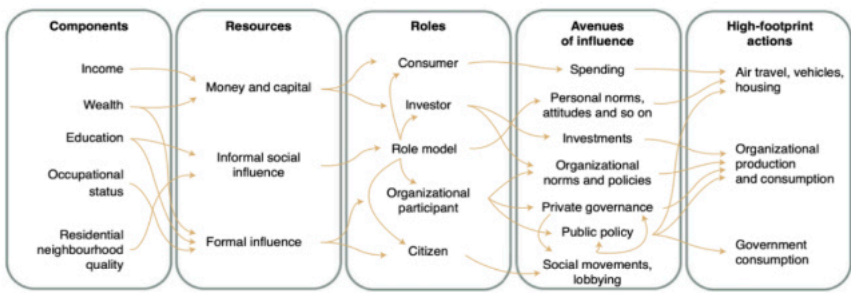
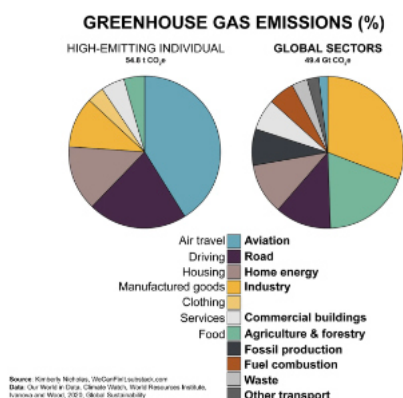


Fig. 2 | Links from SES to actions with high climate footprints. The silos depict how components of SES and the resources they provide may influence high-footprint actions via five social and financial roles that operate through different avenues of influence. The arrows in the figure represent links we hypothesize as important; the figure as a whole and the hypothesized links suggest an agenda for future research. Image credit: Emma Li Johansson (Illustrations).



evidence that this level of consumption (and when we think of consumption, we often think of shopping, buying stuff that we can hold in our hands). But what the data show is that the biggest overconsumption comes from hypermobility, from flying and driving, which is an activity largely of the wealthiest.

Driving cars, and flying, basically emerges only as a phenomenon in the top 10%, even within Europe. (Only 1% of the global population does half of the flying.)

So I focus a lot on how to reduce these activities to a globally sustainable level. And a lot of that takes cultural change, which is where I think the role of storytellers can be really critical.

It is critical to keep in mind who can do what, when we're talking about emissions reductions.

Especially important for storytellers dealing with audiences belonging to the 10 %.

So for a high emitting individual, you see that the majority of their emissions comes from driving and flying. There's not a huge amount of emissions they can save by changing their food, either food waste, or food habits and consumption.

“On the global level; industry is the single largest emitter.”

But when we start thinking about who can do what, with an industry consisting of hundreds or perhaps 1000s of different industries: cement, electronics, medical devices and so on there is a huge range of different industries. It's really important and helpful to look at our target audience, look at their emissions and focus on the highest emissions that they have control over. I hope for storytellers to take some of this climate science, these facts and translate them into compelling stories. We know that feelings are the bridge to high impact actions. In my work, I try to focus on linking facts, feelings and action. Because we know from research that a lot of people have some facts, know that climate change is happening, most people care, but partly they don't know what to do or what matters and has a high impact. Partly, they feel paralyzed; they feel ineffective, like their choices don't matter,

they don't see others around them acting. So those are two of the key pieces we need to address to galvanize climate action.

What high impact climate action looks like...

From a study we published in 2021, we identified five roles for this top 10% global group: what are the things that this group can do to take high impact climate action? We found that as a consumer, as an investor, a role model, a professional part of organizations and as a citizen, there are a number of high impact actions that can be taken. This framework was used by Netflix in their don't look up climate platform, where they consulted my co author, Kristian Nielsen amongst other scientists. Our model was also taken up by the IPCC in their demand side reduction chapter.

As a consumer, it's to cut as much as possible from flight, car and meat, and if not eliminate them completely, then to reduce them as much as possible, not letting the perfect be the enemy of the good.

As an investor, it's switching to a green bank who's not investing in fossil fuels, divesting any investments and pensions personally and supporting campaigns that work in school, and donating money and time to climate organizations.

As a role model, it's walking the talk. Taking high impact climate action: we have really clear evidence that this makes a big difference in credibility and affects others willingness to support climate action and to support policies themselves. Talk about that walk so start climate conversations, listen to what others have to say, and bring them into the climate community. Be conscious about social media use and about the art that we create, what we put out in the world, what kind of aspirations are we embedding in that work?

As a professional, if you're part of an industry, it's about getting your industry on board to do their fair share of meeting the Paris Agreement. Science based targets is an initiative to do that, divesting as a company or an organization, pushing for a whole supply chain and industry to meet standards and be Fossil Free. Or working on making your job a climate job. So take the skills that you have in the things that you already enjoy and are good at and direct them towards climate action.

And finally, as a citizen, a really powerful high impact role that we have is to elect strong climate champions to vote for. Studies have shown women and politicians with strong climate scores, meaningfully reduce emissions. Joining a political party or organization that's working for climate justice and action, help create media attention, or speak directly to our elected officials, and finally join nonviolent demonstrations.

These are the actions that have been shown to work! We are working to build a climate action guide too, which is an app to take people through their personal choices, what

they can do to have the biggest impact and make the biggest difference for the climate.

References to the data, the links and studies and background for this quick summary can be found in our monthly newsletter called 'We can fix it', as well as in my book: 'Under the Sky We Make' (2021).

100 companies in the world are sort of behind 70% of all the emissions.

That is also true. But at the same time, it's also true that more than 70% of emissions come from household consumption. So basically, we have to stop the production and consumption of fossil fuels. It's really important to focus on both of those levers. Efforts to focus on production are things like divesting and supporting the fossil fuel Non Proliferation Treaty, setting caps on production dates, and stop dates for selling fossils, infrastructure equipment. And on the consumption side, it's reducing demand from those who have luxury consumption that can be reduced.

Culture has a really important role in underlining system change or one way that it can do that is by changing norms and values, which helped move collective visions and ultimately help underlie changes in policy and practice. This is a very deep leverage point. And that can apply across the five superpowers, certainly, so it's not only about consumption, but I do think there's an important role in consumption, because so much of consumption is driven by aspiration of what a good life is? People with means think that a good life is a hyper mobile life. It's a life where you can travel around the world at a heartbeat anywhere you want fast and cheaply. And that's a cultural aspiration that needs to change if we're going to stop climate change, because there isn't a climate friendly way to achieve that. I think that could be one role for cultural artifacts and cultural products like film, but that's certainly not the only way. I mean, I would love to see films that address other issues, such as what it looks like to be a professional, what it looks like to be a high impact climate citizen.

Lastly to all storytellers; ask yourself what can be done to help people understand what their highest impact climate actions are? Focus on top emitters, both the people, the organizations and the groups that are responsible for the large shares of emissions and within that, - where those largest share of emissions come from and focusing on that. Putting your stories in a context and collaborate with scientists!

From Grief to Action: Effective Storytelling in the Climate Crisis

FREDRIK MORBERG

During the latter part of 1997 and most of 1998, coral reefs around the world suffered extensive bleaching and die-off due to rapidly rising temperatures in tropical seas. The heat caused corals to expel the algae living inside their transparent tissues, which provide them with energy and color. Such widespread bleaching had never been seen before and shocked the scientific community, including myself. That year, my wife and I welcomed our first child, a son. The thought that he might never experience coral reefs as I had was a profound emotional blow. For a couple of years, I gave several public lectures and wrote articles about the threats to the reefs. I tried my best, thinking that I would make everyone care by describing the threats and shouting as loudly as I could about the imminent demise of the world's reefs. Even though a few people wanted to listen, it didn't work very well in convincing the masses.

Sadly, as I write this, coral reefs are again suffering from an even worse bleaching event due to even warmer ocean temperatures. The severity of this recent bleaching event has surpassed previous records, raising widespread concern among scientists, environmentalists and others. It serves as a stark reminder of the ongoing challenges we face in protecting these vital ecosystems in the face of climate change. The recent bleaching in 2023 and 2024 has captured headlines all over the world as it represents the most severe and widespread episodes of coral bleaching on record. This crisis has highlighted the vulnerability of coral reefs in the face of climate change and has reignited discussions about the need for immediate and effective measures to mitigate global warming and protect these vital marine ecosystems.

The widespread media coverage has certainly raised public awareness about the

dire state of coral reefs and the urgent need to preserve them for future generations. But will this lead to lasting change significant enough to save the world's coral reefs? Will people listen this time, or are we doomed to repeat the same mistakes we made over 25 years ago?

Negative messages tend to gain attention in the moment and certainly make it easier to reach out in the media. But in the long run, another type of communication might be much more successful. Many environmental psychologists understood this long before I did, but I had to experience it myself for it to really sink in. The Norwegian environmental psychologist and economist Per Espen Stoknes has summarized this in an educational way in his book "What we think about when we try not to think about global warming". In it he describes the climate crisis and the psychological defense mechanisms we humans tend to use to keep worries and demands for behavioral change at bay. Among us researchers, it has been common to deal with this by presenting more and more convincing diagrams and other facts about, for example, the climate crisis or the state of the world's oceans. According to communication research, this rarely works. We simply need other ways to communicate in order to truly reach and influence people's attitudes and behaviors.

We need new stories. We must stop describing nightmare scenarios and instead connect different environmental and climate measures to positive visions of health and well-being. Such messages work for a variety of audiences, not just those already convinced. The more often we tell this type of forward-looking and visionary story, the more we will begin to live according to them, says Per Espen Stoknes. Recently, it may seem that the Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg and her movement "Fridays for

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Fredrik Moberg is co-founder and co-director of Albaeco, a sustainability consultancy specializing in science communication, and a researcher and senior communications advisor at Stockholm Resilience Centre, Stockholm University. He has authored two books: *Den Uppfinningsrika planeten (The Inventive Planet)*, which explores sustainable solutions inspired by nature, and *Koralernas planet (The Planet of Corals)*, published in May 2024.*

Fredrik facilitated and presented at the Climate Story Lab in Stockholm

Future" have disproven this thesis by gaining enormous traction for their message that we cannot solve a crisis without treating it as a crisis. As usual, reality is more complex than theory, and therefore I believe that both Greta and Per Espen are right.

In any case, during that period in the late 1990s, I decided to change the direction of both my research and how I argued for the preservation of coral reefs. In terms of research, this meant I began to study all the benefits, so-called ecosystem services, that people derive from coral reefs, and how dependent we are on their existence. Moreover, I tried to find solutions instead of merely describing the problems.

In 1999, for example, together with professor Carl Folke, I compiled a review of the ecosystem services provided by coral reefs, which we published in the scientific journal *Ecological Economics*. The article is still frequently cited today by researchers who, at the beginning of their own studies, want to refer to those who, in scientific terms, have demonstrated the obvious: that it is beneficial to save the world's coral reefs because they provide a lot of value to us humans.

In this way, I became part of a new generation of marine biologists who diverged from previous researchers. As American ecologist Nancy Knowlton described, this earlier generation was "a whole generation of scientists trained to describe the ocean's death in increasingly detailed and more grim obituaries." Instead of writing these "death notices," I began to think like a doctor, focusing on seeking cures and solutions. While it may sound presumptuous, it genuinely felt like I was part of an important shift. Seeing coral reefs as heroes rather than just victims is also a part of the story of biomimicry—sustainable solutions inspired by nature. By learning more about coral reefs and the benefits they provide, we can not only better understand how we can save them but also learn a thing or two that can inspire new smart solutions to the great challenges of our time. For example, among the diversity of life forms in coral reefs, researchers have found inspiration for medicines against HIV and leukemia, as well as a new type of climate-smart concrete.

Nowadays, when I give lectures, I often show

a modified satellite image of our planet shaped like a giant human brain. The image demonstrates that we humans both dominate the planet and possess enormous collective intelligence. The reason our species, *Homo sapiens*, has become so successful is precisely that our large brain capacity has made us smart, adaptable, and good at cooperating. After that, I click to a slide showing that the human population on the planet has more than doubled since I was born more than 50 years ago. Quite astounding. With a wry smile, I ask: "What could possibly go wrong with so many smart minds? Eight, soon nine billion of them. Surely it shouldn't be a problem to solve the great challenges we face in ensuring a positive future for both ourselves and the planet's climate and environment?" I say this somewhat jokingly, but also with the utmost seriousness. I am and remain an almost incurable optimist, and, just as the late Swedish health professor Hans Rosling used to remind us, quite a few things have improved in the world – such as reduced extreme poverty and increased life expectancy. But the problem, as my research colleagues and I often remind people, is that not everyone has benefited from the increased prosperity, and during the same period, things have gone very wrong regarding most global climate and environmental changes.

The key is to build on positive developments in human health and well-being while protecting the planet. Fortunately, I see more and more positive signs that we are beginning to take global environmental changes and injustices seriously and that we are more often putting our billions of wise heads together to collectively solve the problems. The Paris Climate Agreement, the UN's global goals for sustainable development, the Kunming-Montreal biodiversity agreement, EU's Green Deal, the worldwide school strikes for the climate, and the increase of conscious consumers who shop more sustainably (and consume less) are some clear indications that we have slowly started the transformation and are moving in the right direction.

In my more than 25 years as an environmental researcher and science communicator, university teacher, and lecturer, I have otherwise been confronted with a lot of much more negative images of the world – like the gigantic crisis facing the

world's coral reefs that opened this text. Science has often been better at describing problems than solutions. And the media is generally more interested in sudden environmental disasters than in small positive steps toward more sustainable development. But does this negative attitude make us engaged? Or does it just lead to apathy in the face of threats that we feel we cannot do anything about? According to brain researchers, we have an innate ability to mimic each other because of a certain type of nerve cell called mirror neurons. They form the basis of our compassion and actually make both negative and positive thinking contagious.

Of course, it's not as simple as everything getting solved just by thinking a little positively. That's not what I mean. It is truly high time to treat the global climate and ecosystem crises as real crises. But sometimes it feels like many of us suffer from a sort of paralyzing "mental acidification", which doesn't solve any problems either. I believe more in another form of storytelling. And it's not about ignoring the problems; rather, it's about opening our eyes to all the positive things that are also happening – or can happen – in the world.

Like many coral reef researchers, I share in the profound "reef grief" over the loss and degradation of half the world's reefs. However, we cannot remain paralyzed by sorrow. As Callum Roberts noted in *Reef Life*, "It all comes down to emissions. If we fail to reduce them, the reefs are doomed. But I'm still an optimist. Now we need to act, not mourn."

This underscores the importance of our storytelling. Martin Luther King Jr. spoke of his "dream," not a "nightmare," highlighting the need for hope and action over despair. In addressing global challenges, we must find and share narratives that inspire and mobilize us. As the American writer and activist Rebecka Solnit aptly puts it, "In order to do what the climate crisis demands of us, we have to find stories of a livable future, stories of popular power, stories that motivate people to do what it takes to make the world we need." Focusing on such hopeful and empowering stories, is probably the best chance we have to drive the necessary change to protect our coral reefs and secure a sustainable future.

A tale about telling stories about a climate-neutral future

PER GRANKVIST

Once upon a time, a little boy grew up on a farm in southern Sweden. He lived there with his father, who raised pigs, and his mother, who had many dogs and ducks.

Every night before bedtime, his mother would read him stories about various animals. The boy soon noticed that all stories started the same way: "Once upon a time," and ended the same way: "And then they lived happily ever after."

But the reading stopped one day, only briefly before he turned five. It so happened that he had cracked the code of reading and no longer needed his mother's assistance - he was soon reading every book he could get his hands on.

One day, some years later, he discovered that stories about families may start similarly but do not always end with them living happily ever after. His parents told him that they were having a divorce, so the boy and his mother had to leave the farm and move to a nearby town. They settled into a small house, and since it was just behind the local bookshop, he was happy again.

This is how the story of my life began, and like any story, it draws you in. As soon as you heard me utter the words once "upon a time," you knew the format and what to expect. The built-in promise of a happy ending will keep you engaged; you stick around to see what happens, and often, the story will teach you something about life along the way.

Joan Didion writes that we tell ourselves stories to live. However, we also tell stories to understand because there is no more effective way of transmitting knowledge than through stories.

Our brains are not information-processing machines, as we often like to think, but story-processing organisms. That is why we find it frustrating to listen to people who cannot tell stories or pile one fact after another on top of each other. Our brains are protesting.

When it comes to our personal story, we hope that it will end happily and that we will live a long life. But of course, we never really know for sure.

As the saying goes, we live our lives forward but only understand them backwards. That's why it's so hard to talk about the future.

As we move through life, we accumulate events, thoughts, and feelings into an emotional library that we can use to understand the world a little better. The older we get, the easier that is. We could use our experience of the past to understand the future as long as the story about the future involves something we can relate to.

The problem is that most stories about the future are not relatable but boring and confusing. They tell one fact after the other, and the story will not end happily for us.

People keep saying everything will be different because it needs to be different. Climate scientists have told us our lives need to change if we want to live happily ever after. We are constantly told that we will have to stop eating burgers and give up our cars, but what if what makes you happy is dining and driving?

You will get sad, mad - or both. You will resent the facts, resist the change, and fight the future like it would be the dragon in a bedtime story.

Once upon a time, a beautiful Swedish innovation program faced a challenge.

The program was called Viable Cities, and it was the princess of all publicly funded programs in the country. It also had the most ambitious goal—to make 20+ cities climate-neutral by 2030, twenty years ahead of the European Union. Since everybody admired the beautiful program, the EU said it also wanted to make cities climate-neutral, just like Sweden. Hence, the EU created an attractive program of its own to make 100

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

A Swedish journalist specializing on sustainable lifestyles and an author of several books on human behavior and sustainability. He's been named one of the best storytellers in Swedish media multiple times, for pioneering explanatory journalism in Sweden and well as his speaking skills, best described as intellectual entertainment. Since 2019 Per works on developing methods for storytelling at Viable Cities, a government innovation program at KTH, the Royal Technical University, Stockholm. Per joined us at Copenhagen:DOX and gave a talk about storytelling.

cities climate-neutral.

At this time, Viable Cities realised that facts were insufficient to change people's behaviours and that many resisted change, which was the challenge.

By now, the little boy who grew up on the farm—that was me—had grown up, and the beautiful program asked me to become the hero in this story by finding a way to tell people about the future that did not seem as frightening as a dragon.

In a way, the polarisation of the climate issue is a problem as big as the climate issue itself. If we cannot agree on a solution, we cannot solve the climate problem. Because of how brains work, we cannot reach a consensus and change behaviours just by referring to science. But fiction can.

As I joined Viable Cities, I wondered if science fiction may hold the key to explaining the future in a way that does not feel threatening but exciting and engaging. As science fiction writer William Gibson once said, the future is already here, only unevenly distributed.

Five years later, the result is a strategic consensus-building framework for describing the future using a storytelling approach inspired by science fiction and applied to the city planning process.

The framework is not the result of academic research but years of on-the-ground studies in several Swedish cities, interviews with citizens and policymakers, and local pilots trying to shape public policy.

The framework is called “Welcoming our common future” because that is what we must do. We can only go forward. If you are a city planner or anyone else trying to make a change, here are the stories you need to tell and how to structure those stories.

The framework's first condition is that for someone to adjust their behaviour, they must feel that there is a place for their identity, even in the future. Identity is key.

For decades, oil workers in Norway were told they were the backbone of their society. However, recently, they feel that their work has gone from a high to a low status and that they are perceived as enemies of the planet. To get on board, they must find identity not as oil workers but as energy workers. They must understand that their expertise is still valuable in other parts of the energy sector and will help the transition.

In the words of the German philosopher Jaeggi, ‘We are “caught” in roles and shaped by them.’ However, as a set of rules instructing our actions, roles are also malleable. By taking up roles and actively appropriating and interpreting them according to our reflexivity, we simultaneously affirm ourselves as social beings and modify the script of our roles.

That's why it is important to stress that most of our lives will remain unchanged in the future, even in a zero-carbon economy, to make the future seem less terrifying. As Gibson put it, the future is already here but unevenly distributed. People are already living a good life within planetary boundaries today, and we can learn from them.

The second condition is that quality of life must be the focus, not low emissions. This reflects the truth that everybody cares most about their lives and the well-being of themselves and their loved ones. You can still eat hamburgers and own a sports car if that is something you like, although the burger might be plant-based and the car electric in the future.

Of course, it stresses the importance of identity and what makes life worth living. Too often, we oversell the future as a green utopia where everybody is young, healthy, reasonable, and kind. And that's not something most of us can relate to.

If you remember the science fiction movie “The Fifth Element” by Luc Besson, you know what to expect. There may be flying cars, but you can still laugh, love, drink, and smoke—even simultaneously! Plenty of people will lie, cheat, and steal; oddly, that is reassuring because that is something you've experienced before. Most of the future will be the same. You will still be able to have a hamburger at McDonald's that is so saturated with fat that it can kill you, even though it's made of plants.

Think about it: Most of your life today is the same as before the iPhone, even though it was introduced as revolutionising the world. We should not oversell the future, promising people that everything will be perfect or that they will grow up to marry a princess. That is unlikely to happen.

The third condition is that the story is emotionally true, locally relevant, and scientifically accurate so that the audience cares enough about it to consider changing their behaviour meaningfully.

As I was watching the science fiction movie Wall-E by Pixar Animation Studios with my kids, I realised how moved I was by the story and how weird that was. On a high level, it's a movie about the loss of humanity through consumerism, but that's not something you realise from the start.

You get a story about the love between a garbage-compacting robot and a droid, set hundreds of years into the future, without dialogue between the main characters. No one speaks for the first 40 minutes or so! Still, there are scenes where tears will fall down my cheek every time. Why? Because they are emotionally true. I recognise their feelings, allowing me to relate to this dystopian future, even though I haven't experienced it.

I tested the theory this last weekend for

scientific purposes, and yes, I cried this time, too. That's why any story about the future needs to be emotionally true. It needs to move us and needs to make us care.

Your story also needs to be locally relevant. Climate change is a global phenomenon, but its implications can only be understood locally. It's the law of proximity; the closer something feels, the more attention we pay. To describe the future, you must convey locally relevant details that make people relate to it.

Little Red Riding Hood may not qualify as science fiction, but it still has an important lesson. To understand the significance of local adaptation, I studied several language versions of the book and paid close attention to the forest.

In the Swedish and Finnish Versions, the forest is thick, made of pine and fir, and the wolf is grey and mean. In the French version, however, the forest is made of oak, and the wolf has a beige fur. It is arrogant and smokes Gouloise. “Where are you going, to your grandmother, non?” In Spain, the forest is an olive grove, and the wolf takes long naps in the middle of the day.

My point is that it seems like children across Europe have no objection when they are told a wolf can do a convincing drag of an old lady, but if they do not recognise or relate to the forest in the background, they will throw the book out of the window.

Finally, we must be scientifically accurate when we tell stories. After all, facts are essential, but we shall not fool ourselves into thinking they are enough.

Remember Ibsen's play “The Enemy of the People”, where Doctor Stockmann discovers the water in a small Norwegian village is poisoned. Once he reveals it and presents the facts, he expects to be celebrated as a hero by all, but instead, he meets with fierce resistance from his neighbours.

“If the public baths are being closed because of this, what should I do?” someone who identifies as a bath owner asks. “What will happen to the local economy?” someone else thinking about the local relevance asks. Nobody takes Stockmann's side even though he is scientifically accurate. Spoiler alert: That story does not end with them living happily ever after.

Emotionally true, locally relevant, and scientifically accurate are the keys to telling stories about the future if you make people care.

But if you are in a hurry, making it emotionally true matters the most. Then, you have to consider the importance of identity and put quality of life at the centre.

Only when all conditions are met can consensus be built around public policies shaping our shared future. The framework acknowledges that there is no such thing as

a single story about the future in the city and that the storyteller needs to be someone they trust. If so, my framework has proven to de-escalate political conflict and ideological divisions.

Once upon a time in the future, there will be a place for you and everyone you care about. You will recognise most of it. You will be able to be who you are and do most of the things you already love, even though some things will be done differently. There will be burgers, cars, beer and football. And sushi, bikes, wine and opera, for that matter.

Life is not predictable or perfect. There will be anger and agonies, divorces and deaths, and you will be tested again and again. Eventually, you will learn that what makes you happy are the variations and the little things in life.

We know this because people in this city

already live like this. That's why I know that in the future, you can make ends meet and meet new friends, laugh and get laid, have dinners and go dancing, share our burdens and joys, watch movies and sleep under the stars. These are things that make life worth living. That's the kind of happy life we all long for, and there are already people living it today in our cities.

Using our framework has proven effective in getting people to welcome our common future, build consensus about where we need to go and what the future will feel like today, and have reasonable expectations of happiness.

It reminds us of how my mother finished all those bedtime stories and what everybody wants to hear at the end of the day.

"And then they lived happily ever after."

Climate Justice in the Nordics

JULIE FORCHHAMMER



I am Norway, I am oil (2024).

Welcome to Norway. Maybe you've heard about me? I'm the country with fjords and

mountains, placed on top of and to the left of the EU.

I am a country with my own oil company. It's called Equinor and I own 67 percent of it. I love Equinor as if it was my child. Which it kind of is.

The company was born in 1972, literally from my loins, from the underbelly of the Norwegian continental shelf, in the early years of our petroleum production, when we were all still innocent and cute.

We named the baby after me (the state) and oil. Statoil.

The baby started growing. Faster than a viral cat video. It travelled to other countries and continents, to Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Azerbaijan, Brazil, Canada, Libya, Nigeria, UK, the USA - everywhere with oil in the ground and resources to be extracted.

I extracted and I explored, the land and the seas, like I have done for over a thousand years. I am a viking, I plunder, I pillage, I gather my loot.

I am Norway, I am oil.

I was Statoil, now I'm Equinor. I changed the name in 2018. My petroganda-people made me do it.

My name has changed, my intentions not.

In 2018 my capacity for renewable energy was 0.6 gigawatts.

By 2022 my capacity for renewable energy was 0.6 gigawatts.

I invest in renewable energy but I invest more in becoming the last oil company on earth. Down below I am creating and extracting millions of barrels of liquid black gold. It will give me wealth and it will destroy people and species and entire countries.

I see your rising temperatures, I see your hurricanes.

I see your extreme heat, your flooding, your mudslides.

I see your pain and I raise you my highest investments ever in new oil and gas.x

I am Norway, I am a storyteller.

Being a country is amazing because I get to tell my own story. I can use all my non-renewable power to tell one big story, the magical story of my oil. Perception is everything.

My oil is so green you can smoke it in a joint. My oil is so white you can ski on it.

My oil is so democratic it will save the world, it will stop wars, it will bring more joy than a puppy on a rainy day.

I tell my story using every disinformation tool the fossil fuel industry has learned since 1914 - the year when John D Rockefeller Jr killed striking coal miners and their families in the Ludlow Massacre, and hired Ivy Lee, the godfather of PR, to clean up his reputation.

Woody Guthrie even wrote a song about Ludlow.

But I can sing my own songs, I am the green transition, I am the fossil fuel savior.

I am Norway, the oily Sauron of the North, my petroganda army is great.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Julie Forchhammer is the co-founder of Klimakultur, a Norwegian non-profit founded in 2021 in the mountains in Vang in Valdres. Klimakultur mobilizes the culture sector on how to take action on climate change and implement climate justice.

The most fantastic thing about being a state and an oil company is how both the government and the bureaucracy is built to support my interests. They are also telling my story.

I am Equinor, I sponsor, I advertise, I lobby. I pay the most professional storytellers of our time and buy an endless amount of platforms for them.

I am Norway, I let the children play.

For 30 years I have given all Norwegian children the gift of oil, telling them that they are the Heroes of Tomorrow.

From kindergarten to university, I am there. With my lego, with my music classes, my footballs, my winter sports.

I will guide the children every step of the way, I will dress them up, I will explore how many Equinor-logos they can wear before their families, someone, says STOP.

A thousand new stories

But something is happening these days. I can hear a buzzing, I can feel an itch.

Little mosquitoes are surrounding me. Every little one of them has their own little story to tell.

They are artists. Filmmakers. Writers. Dancers. Musicians.

They are climate activists, climate scientists, teachers, journalists, youth, grandparents. They are indigenous knowledge holders, they are culture and heritage workers.

They tell the stories of the things we are not talking about, from the people that have not been heard. The mosquitoes are multiplying.

You little tree hugging hobbits, stop telling your stories!

The stories you tell are changing me, they are changing my nation, my soul. They are killing my story.

I am Norway, I am changing

My oil is so green it stays in the ground. I am Norway. I was oil.

Storytelling and Climate Change

MICHELLE APPELROS

As Haraway writes: It matters what thoughts think thoughts. It matters what knowledges know knowledges. It matters what relations relate relations. It matters what worlds world worlds. It matters what stories tell stories (2016:35).

With this in mind I position myself with those claiming the more correct wording instead of climate change is climate crisis, or even emergencies, in plural that is.

-If they only knew...

My academic journey engaging with storytelling emerged when I learned about the information deficit model, and how it subsequently also has been disproved.

The information deficit model explains what it phrases: that information is lacking, i.e., “-if they only knew, then they wouldn’t have...”. This locution is often turned to, especially regarding climate change, in order to explain why people for some illogical reason are not changing behavior although it apparently would be the most reasonable thing to do.

The acclaimed researcher Kari Mari Norgaard writes extensively on alternative explanations, such as socially organized denial and tools to avoid cultural trauma (2011;2013; 2017;2018). Partly Norwegian, she initiates her research on Denial in Norway.

Norgaard claims: people have the information, they know, they are aware of the crisis, so the question of why lands on how “People want to protect themselves a little bit”(pp 63-95).

Norgaard links denial to privilege, away from information and instead towards emotions, political economy and social context (2011).

As a sociologist, Norgaard looks into social structures, but she visualizes how this information materializes and is found in all

layers of society; the individual, the family, the neighborhood as well as in the national identity.

What I learn from Norgaard is that we have patterns of rationalization in all different levels of our society and personal life that function to prevent change. She describes them as tools, sometimes as tools of innocence, because underneath lies reflections on privilege which are linked to racism, extractivism and other legacies of imperial colonialism.

Norgaard coined the term ‘double reality’, - the process through which climate change is kept out of the sphere of everyday life (2011:123). Simply put; double reality refers to how to know and not know at the same time. The sensation of discomfort that this state creates is often referred to as ‘cognitive dissonance’ as opposed to harmony.

Cognitive dissonance (a term Norgaard but also many climate psychologists uses) is a term coined by social psychologist Leon Festinger in the 1950s, in which he reversed the relationship between information, or knowledge, and behavior. Festinger’s research shows that when unpleasant tensions arise between what we know and how we act or behave, remarkably, we often don’t change our behavior, but instead our knowledge beliefs.

So where does this leave us regarding climate storytelling? And the questions of how we convey science?

Storytelling, fiction and perceptions on reality

Amitav Ghosh wrote in his *The Great Derangement*, (2016) that: the climate crisis is also a crisis of culture and thus of imagination” (p 9). Ghosh claims that our ‘Western’ and ‘modern’ development of the novel has changed the way we tell stories

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Michelle Appelros MSc in Human Ecology from Lund University with special interest in Climate change storytelling. Part of the Nordic climate story lab team as Intern. Member of the Copenhagen based artist and intervention group “The Syndicate of Creatures” and Co-founder of the Degrowth Festival in Copenhagen. Investigating storytelling theoretically but specifically through exploring and experimenting with the Story Completion’ method.

from traditionally having the narrative driven by extraordinary events to in the modern novel being focused on small, ordinary, everyday life stories hiding the narrative. Our cultural change of 'how' stories are told has rendered us unable to respond to the very real but enormous and global crisis of climate change. The lack of this reality reflected in literature and culture will in the future lead to this era becoming labeled as the great derangement, hence the title of the book. Ghosh's book discusses the importance of how we tell stories, mostly in fiction but also regarding the cultural change of how we 'tell stories' in western society and modernity are causing impacts beyond fiction (Ibid).

In 2018, Jem Bendell wrote the paper 'Deep adaptation' (revised in 2020) which stirred all sorts of reactions, one being kick starting the movement Extinction Rebellion but has since turned into a concept, an agenda and a movement in itself. Bendell, a sustainability management scholar became extremely discouraged and desperate when to him it was evident that "inevitable near-term societal collapse due to climate change" was close and already unfolding, but that nothing around him seemed to deal with this properly. The paper was addressed to industry, academia and institutions/governments and announced "the end of the idea that we can either solve or cope with climate change", and reviews why denial, especially among his professional peers, has left all debates without perspectives on climate induced societal collapse. He fronts arguments of realism and adaptation, that all of us need to face the truth and start preparing in order to be able to cope better with this forthcoming dystopian reality.

Vehicles of transformation?

Bendell has been criticized for fearmongering and being alarmist, but nevertheless he invokes questions of how we frame truth, science or reality and how that in turn affects how we respond. Something I myself have reflected upon studying climate science. Within the sector of society concerned with climate change, we have a long tradition of using predictions, forecasts, expectations, and probabilities, which is not fiction per se but definitely connecting to the hypothetical and therefore non-reality. (See for example 'Limits to growth' by Club of Rome 1972, World meteorological organization or IPCC reports from UN). For me these questions are not about being relativist (apolitical) or denying climate science but rather about reflecting on how strategies of 'now' based on perceptions of the future deem framings and mindsets as fundamental in their either limited or expansive capacities.

Apparently, both despair and hope can be used as vehicles of transformation.

Acclaimed utopian scholar Ruth Levitas claims that utopian visioning should be conceptualized as a method for facilitating social change. Both utopian and dystopia function as mentally contrasting current society which both can invoke the will to

change. As with utopias and dystopias, storytelling is a focal point.

Storytelling contains notions of framings and narratives, and there can be important tension around storytelling in relation to reality and the climate crisis; climate science is mostly based in an empiricist ontology claiming an objective reality, i.e., reality is demarcated and can be measured. Simultaneously, many arguments for needing societal change in relation to climate change are based on interpretative ontology claiming a complex plural (non-measurable) reality. This isn't always the case regarding marxist critique, but often when concerning feminist and decolonial based critique as they contain some degree of awareness of constructivism and subjectivity.

Storytelling is, therefore, not just about strategies but about worldview, ideology, and perhaps about just being human. Because we also base our interpretations of reality, or our ontology really, on the stories, framings, or narratives that we have access to or are told by our 'settings'. The stories that we are emotionally and personally attached to, embedded and invested in are sometimes hard to change, which is why, apart from more diverse and different stories, we also need other things. To be able to shift the value system and transform our existence, we need to expand our openness, willingness, empathy and care. In order for us to reconnect, we need to practice deep listening and unlearning as well as relearning. We need gatherings and re-generativity. We need new spaces for the uncomfortable, frustrating and messy.

If the social context we are sitting in is structured in such a way that we, although we hold the crucial information that we need, are constantly inhibited, counteracted and prevented to change. Then we need strategies and frameworks of care to foster and forge new paths based on new values and other kinds of thoughts. Borrowing from the Degrowth movement, we need to 'decolonize our imaginations'.

I will round up this essay by sharing two poetic quotes: firstly poet and climate activist Emily Johnston's idea that "to feel hope—is optional. Our job is to be hope, and to make space for the chance of a different future".

Secondly, a sentence from the Swedish protest singer Michael Wiehe: "The future is possible everyday, but someone needs to make sure it happens. When, if not now? Where if not here? Who, if not us?"

Communicating with the middle

CICERO CENTRE FOR INTERNATIONAL CLIMATE RESEARCH
ASTRID ARNSLETT, SENIOR COMMUNICATIONS ADVISOR
CHRISTIAN BJØRNÆS, COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

CICERO is a world-leading institute for interdisciplinary climate research established in 1990. We deliver high-quality research and knowledge that help society respond to the climate challenge and strengthen international climate cooperation.

Astrid is a former Head of Communication at the Norwegian Red Cross and communication advisor for the Conservative Party parliamentary group in the Norwegian Parliament. She has extensive experience with external and internal communication, media management and development of communication in organisations. Astrid is educated within Marketing.

Christian leads CICERO's communication team, which oversees project communication, external relations, content production and branding. He has written several articles and reports on the communication of climate change and speaks extensively on this topic. His background is in journalism and includes serving as editor-in-chief and working for television, online news publishers and magazines.

Many of us are only moderately concerned about climate issues, and often we have our plates full just getting through life. How do we best communicate with this group?

Norwegians are not a nation of climate deniers. At CICERO, we have asked around 4,000 Norwegians annually since 2018 whether they believe human activity affects the climate. Only 10 per cent say no. At the same time, our survey shows that around 60 per cent believe they have a personal responsibility to cut their own emissions, while only 40 per cent believe they have a responsibility to support policies that reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Half of us oppose increasing the price of oil, diesel, and petrol.

Instead, Norwegians are skeptical about some of the measures introduced to reduce emissions. A Yale survey shows that only 41 percent of Norwegians support phasing out fossil fuels. Even people in Saudi Arabia show more support, at 47 per cent.

We believe—and this is just our belief, as there is no research on this—that the narrative of the oil industry is strong: Norway is an environmental nation, our oil and gas are the cleanest in the world (which they are not always), oil gives us fantastic welfare benefits (which it does), and Norwegian emissions are tiny compared to China. This makes it easy to think that someone else should sort it out.

But what we do have research on is what explains more active resistance to climate measures such as taxes on petrol, meat, reduced oil exploration, etc. Again, this is based on CICERO's climate survey. Firstly, we know a powerful correlation exists between opposition to various measures. If you oppose taxes on red meat, you are almost guaranteed to oppose reduced oil activity.

The most prominent common denominator is not age, gender, whether they live in the city or countryside. Instead, it is the fear of the new. Xenophobia. Fear of the unfamiliar. These people want to continue living the way they always have, eating the same food, and maintaining habits and customs. These people see everything new as a threat to what they perceive as a good society. These people are not “deplorables”. You can find them among the sweetest, kindest people you know. Those who always stand up for friends and family. But they want to eat meat balls and drive their diesel cars in peace.

It is entirely possible to talk to these people about climate, but you cannot go straight to the point. You have to take some detours to reach the goal.

Issues like stopping oil production, carbon pricing, and wind turbines occupy a lot of space in the national climate debate. However, these big and important questions rarely affect our daily lives. Even though people in other parts of the world experience acute climate disasters, this doesn't generate a strong enough sense of urgency among many Norwegians to change their behavior.

But there is hope. It is much easier to get people involved in solving their everyday problems rather than global issues.

Given that communication should help reduce emissions, it must contribute to changing actions. Here, we present five statements worth reflecting on when filmmakers, municipalities, directorates, action groups, local businesses, etc., build communication around products and policy measures. The advice is partly based on our own and others' experiences, partly on current communication trends, and partly on

research.

Don't Talk About Climate All the Time

Even if a measure helps reduce climate emissions, that aspect isn't the most important for many of us. Many of us drive electric cars simply because they are cheaper. We install heat pumps and add insulation because electricity is expensive. We eat vegetables because they taste good. The new, great service a rehab center offers is more important than the building being made of solid wood with a high Breeam score. For many, a new bike shed by the ferry is more about health and fresh air than saving the climate. Fewer cars on the road can be more about kids walking to school safely than reducing climate emissions. Restrictions on land use can be important simply to preserve the beauty of the landscape people use for recreation.

Communicating multiple reasons to participate in climate-smart actions can generate greater enthusiasm for emission-reducing measures and behaviors. When Lofoten was creating a climate strategy, they involved and communicated with all possible sectors. Many measures addressed completely different problems, but they all contributed to reducing emissions. This brings us to the next point:

Everything is a Climate Issue

Didn't we say not to talk about climate all the time? At the same time, many issues have a climate dimension. Transport, food, and buildings are apparent, but communication about transition can also happen on a small scale. Getting people involved in small changes can pave the way for more significant changes later.

Improving a community involves a series of big and small changes. Many of these can increase or reduce emissions. No one moves to a new place because they are so good at cutting greenhouse gas emissions. But many move to places where it's good to live. Or want to participate in measures that make the village or neighborhood better. If these also reduce emissions, that's a nice bonus. For some. (See the previous point.)

It Does Not Have to Hurt

"People are dying from floods in Pakistan, and if you don't immediately stop eating meat, flying to the Med, and start biking to work, even more will die next year! Haven't you understood anything?!"

Are you really excited and motivated now? Some might be, but not enough of us.

If your communication about climate always has a dark backdrop, it can be heavy for both the sender and the receiver. We know that people are generally more motivated by (their own) opportunities than by avoiding (others') losses. We also know that people are more afraid of losing than they are excited about the possibility of winning. So

how do we best utilize these two personal traits?

Campaigns that manage to engage and excite people into changing their behavior, often link communication to a vision people find attractive. It can be about developing the community, new opportunities or jobs, an easier everyday life, a cleaner local environment, and so on. Again, we are back to solving everyday problems and creating the best place to live. Green business development that creates new jobs, better public health, and good community development doesn't hurt. It motivates.

You Must Outsmart the National Climate Troll

If you, through your communication, place the planet's and the nation's challenges on the recipients' shoulders, you quickly end up in polarized discussions that are difficult to handle.

The big national discussions about increased taxes, various bans, and the phasing out of oil production are well-suited for polarization. Polarization is the big national climate troll that eats local engagement for breakfast.

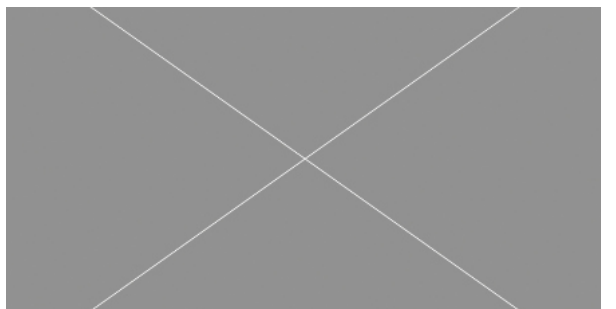
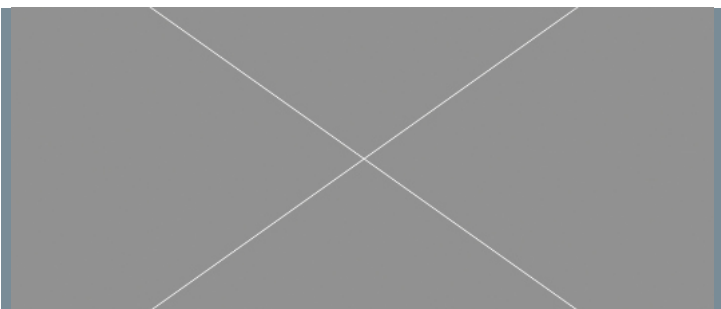
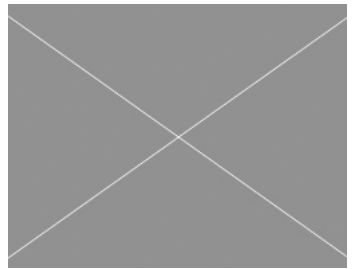
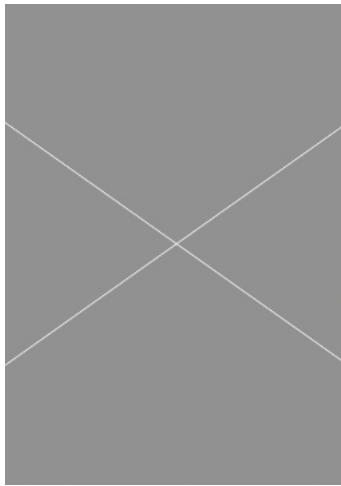
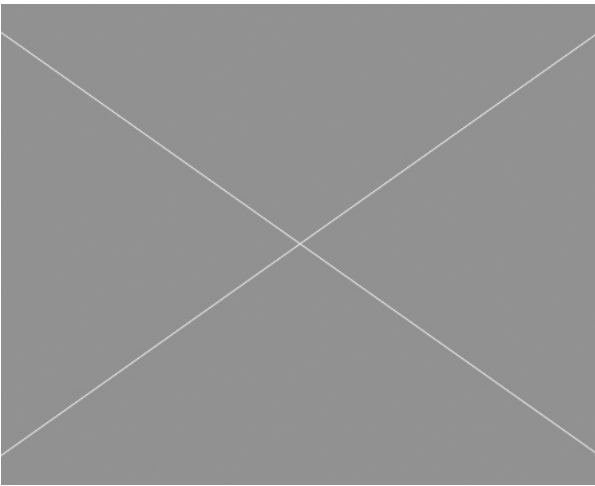
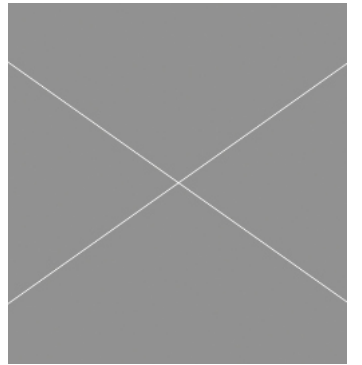
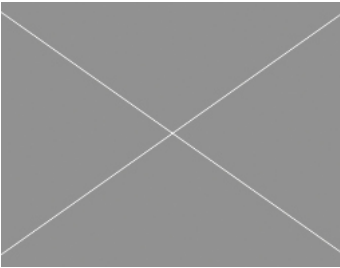
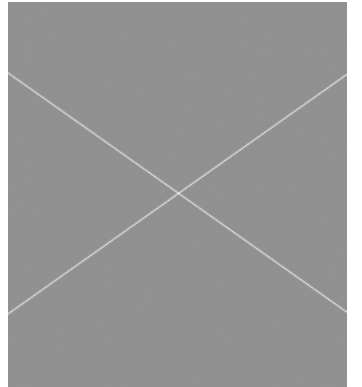
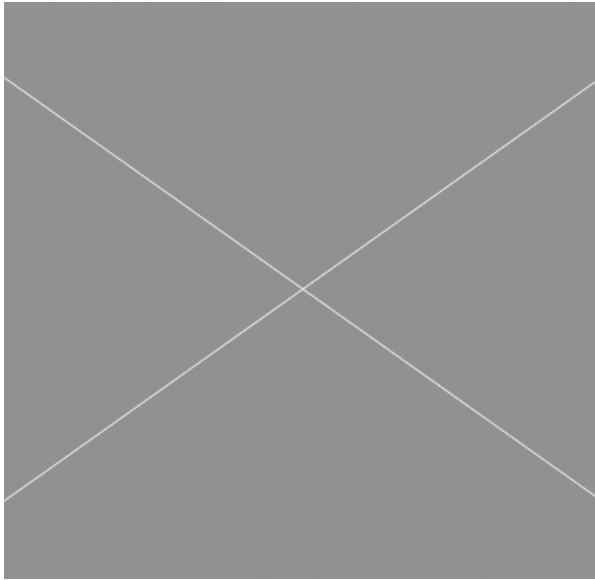
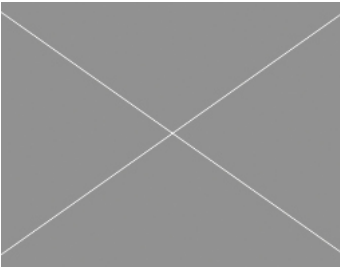
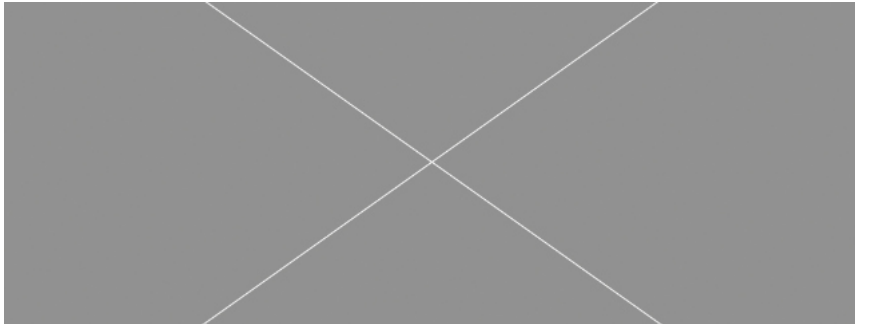
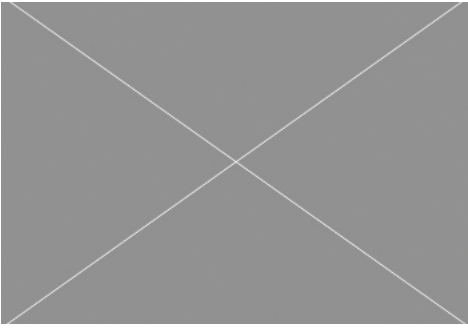
Communicating about the part of the solution your audience is responsible for and where they live makes it easier to isolate your messages from the national climate troll. Talk about the local challenges and benefits and why this audience should help solve this particular challenge.

Let People Have Their Opinions in Peace

It's tempting to interpret an individual's change in behavior as proof of a desire to live more climate-friendly. Don't do that. You might be driving an electric car because the emissions are lower, others because they are cheaper. You might bike to work because it's climate-friendly, while others bike to lose weight. Don't attribute others' actions to your motivations. Instead, enjoy that more and more people are changing their behavior and let people have their motivations in peace.

We know people who identify as far from the environmental movement but still drive electric cars, save on electricity, and make holidays without significant emissions. Telling these people that they are doing this "for the climate," that they support the environmental movement, or that they should identify with "climate-friendly" people can make them resist further changes.

Remember that some people make choices that break with social norms in the environments they belong to. Applaud them for that. Don't expect them to also break with the attitudes of the same group. Then, the cost of driving an electric car quickly becomes very high.



PART 2

CLIMATE STORYTELLING IN THE NORDICS

The Climate Story Lab Nordic was launched at CPH:DOX23 and we received an overwhelming response, with several dozen applications demonstrating the vibrancy and dedication of the climate storytelling community in the Nordic countries. This strong interest underscores the region's commitment to addressing climate issues through creative media. In curating the selection, we placed emphasis on expanding the diversity of climate narratives and reach diverse audiences. This approach reflects a growing recognition that effective climate storytelling requires a multitude of perspectives, nuanced impact strategies and storytelling techniques that resonate with diverse audiences. The resulting cohort of filmmaker teams represents multiple storytelling approaches, ranging from traditional film formats to immersive experiences. The projects were at various stages of development, from development phases to near-completion, providing a comprehensive snapshot of the evolving landscape of climate-focused media in the Nordic region.

In this next section we feature interviews with some of the filmmakers that took part in the Climate Story Lab Nordic 2023/2024 providing a snapshot of climate storytelling in the Nordics through the specific lenses of these filmmakers.

Wolly

INTERVIEW WITH REBEKKA NYSTABAKK, NORWAY.

Rebekka Nystabakk has studied acting at The Norwegian Theatre Academy and Oslo National Academy of the Arts. In addition to acting, she is also writing, directing and developing new ideas for film and stage. Wolly is her first film.

We sat down with filmmaker and director Rebekka Nystabakk to talk about her takes and experiences of climate storytelling considering her film and project "Wolly" which is about life on a small sheep farm in arctic Norway -the last one in the village - as it passes on to the next generation, from father to daughter. Although a climate film, it is also personal as the film is about her childhood family home

Climate storytelling should be part of all stories currently. Our film is about food production, animal welfare and how to use local resources, but that can all be incorporated in a wider theme of climate storytelling.

Part of the aim was to find hope and make the story hopeful.

"-Although the film is about my family, I honestly believe they have some kind of stubbornness and idealism that the world needs right now. Their love and care for the nature around them is very moving for me and gives me a lot of hope."

The film is about how we live with and from nature and there are many problems and perspectives around this. The farm is located in the north of Norway, where steep rugged edges of land and high elevation are defining the landscape. This particular context limits what can be produced here. The landscape functions well with husbandry of sheep due to vast grazing fields at high altitude in the mountains that can't be cultivated differently. Sheep production here functions very similar to how it was done generations ago. Thus this way of life is comparably more sustainable to other modern life. So one way of dealing with a future outlook of disaster, is in this case to look back and be humble towards the existent generational knowledge.

Considering modern western solutions to go vegan for sustainability, that might not apply in this particular context. The stories must be

more nuanced. I agree that we should not produce animal feed in areas where we can produce food for people. In Norway only 3% of the land is agricultural areas, and as much as 45% is good grazing areas in the outfields. That means that if we do not use these resources, a lot of our food production will disappear. Grazing also has a positive effect on biodiversity. Norway is one of the least self-sufficient countries in the world when it comes to food production, and it is a vulnerable position to be in, being dependent on other countries' food production in a time where it will be more and more difficult to produce food in the future.

"-The specific local context of the North seems to be lacking and could bring more nuance to the meat/no meat discussion when considering sustainability and food production."

This is very specific to for example the areas in the arctic. The growing season is very short, and the list of what is possible to grow there is also short. But these areas have other amazing resources. The question about sustainability is also about using local resources, import, export and transportation at large.

I had many thoughts and questions on these topics, reflecting on my own bias: is this story needed or relevant? I had to engage many researchers and experts to get a better objective understanding of the situation. Through that I am more confident now knowing that this way of farming is an important part of Norwegian agriculture. But I still wanted to question: How do we treat these animals? How do we treat nature? But I have learned that sheep are now an important part of our ecosystem. One third of the red listed species (animals, pollinating insects, plants and fungus) have their habitat in the cultural landscape where the grazing animals live.

Without them, the landscape would change into forest. Grazing resources would



PHOTO BY EIRIK EVJEN

disappear, the risk of forest fire would increase, and so on. I have been thinking of how we can be part of ecosystems instead of on top of them?

“-My starting point for this film was very political, I wanted to say something about all the farmers that have been forced to close down. But after working with the film, the relational and emotional aspect became additionally more important.”

I began seeing how this way of life, living so close to nature, is really special and connects with a lot of people. Most of us are so far away from this, and yet it appeals to most of us as meaningful and purposeful.

The connection between the emotional engagement and the political side of it was important to keep balanced, to try to make us want to change. It seems as the film succeeded in appealing to both farmers, making them proud and consumers wanting to be part.

And that's important because we all feel frightened and frustrated, wanting to do the right thing, so how do we inspire change?

“- It seems as though a lot of people long for a connection to nature, at least in Norway they do.”

In our second-hand online shops, the item most searched for is 'small farm', not that they are actually bought, they just search

and dream of it. It is a romantic dream of being close to nature, fishing by the fjord, growing your own potatoes, picking berries in the woods. It is this way of living. It is somehow where we came from, it is part of our heritage and history. Although not everything was better before you know, many things were done in a bad way, people used to give birth at home, it didn't always go well and so on.

In the film the way of life is not only romanticized, it is also authentic. It is in the middle of nowhere, there is no fast food, you will have to take the car to go anywhere. Another perspective is that it is also not possible for everyone to live in this way, so it is really important with locality and specifics and nuances. It is about having the discussion of where we are located, where we come from, what values to bring forward and what we should leave behind.

There is also the bigger context of power dynamics and politics of scale considering the yearly salary of a farmer is only a third of the average salary while distributors are among the richest in the country. So there are problems with power dynamics and government subsidies connecting the struggles in Norway to farmers struggles in the whole of Scandinavia but also Europe in some ways. Regarding the sustainability debate, this divides farmers and people as restrictions of pesticides and other production related structures unequally burdens the farmers to bear the costs while in reality, it is in everybody's interest to stop

poisoning our life sustaining environment. It needs to be reformed in a just ethical way.

I believe a lot of farmers would want to produce food in a sustainable way. In Norway farmers are now pushed to have 470 sheeps instead of 70 which is bad for all parts, sheep, humans and nature.

When my sister takes over the farm, she changes the breeding processes for example. She breeds on smaller rams to make the lambs smaller so as to make easier births for the sheep. And this is why it is important with female farmers, they do things differently as for example they relate to giving birth. Also she is working to reverse the number of lambs a sheep births, nowadays a sheep births five or six lambs although she only has two teats. Traditionally, they only ever had two lambs. So it is about needing different and multiple perspectives.

It will be interesting to see how this story is received in different places, and different generations. We are showing it to kids in school to discuss where food comes from and how we can make choices around that.

So climate storytelling is about the future and hope, about trying to find inspiration to change things. Making stories that are both global and local, rural, coastal and in the cities. And bring forward these different perspectives.

Wolly's impact strategy and reception

We have had over 30.000 audiences all over Norway, and about 120 cinemas have been screening the film. (In comparison our goal was 7000 audiences and 20 cinemas). So the film has reached a big audience in Norway. There have also been numerous special screenings, both with me present, and with other farmers or researchers present. There has been a big engagement around the film, and several organizations have helped us spread the word. Especially the small farmers union, and the nature and youth union. Woolly had its international premiere in Thessaloniki, Hellas in March, and

has also been screened in Ljubljana. In September we are part of RIFF, Reykjavik International Film Festival. We were also part of the Human International Festival in Oslo in March, and will have an outdoor screening during Oslo Pix now in August. So there is still a big interest in the film.

Our short film, Rowdy Flock that we made for The Guardian has had over 104K views on youtube. And our 58 minute TV version will premiere in Sweden and Denmark this autumn.

After talking to Sarah Mosses as

part of the Climate Story Lab, we are now working on a case study, to show what impact the film had made in Norway. This we will use in further work with impact internationally. We hope to be part of a big farmers conference in the UK in January, and maybe this can be part of a bigger work there.

Our 5 episode series will premiere on NRK (national broadcaster Norway) in September. And we hope that this will also raise the awareness of food production in Norway to an even bigger audience.

Society

INTERVIEW WITH THOMAS ØSTBYE, NORWAY

*Thomas is a director and producer, a distinctive voice among Norwegian directors. He's known to combine artistic reflections on the documentary genre with contemporary political dilemmas. He made his mark with formally challenging documentaries like *Imagining Emanuel*, *HUMAN*, and *In your dreams*, which received a dozen art and film awards, bought by the Arts Council Norway, and screened at venues ranging from the National Broadcasting to the Museum of Modern Art NY. Østbye also makes art installations, photography, interactive film, and runs the production company PlymSerafin. He is currently working with a *ClimateTrilogy*, and a feature doc: *SOCIETY**

We sat down with filmmaker and director Thomas Østbye to discuss climate storytelling and its relation to social change. Østbye is part of the Nordic Lab with his film "Society" which poses the questions of what you really value in society, and what you would fight to preserve? What can you let go of, even if it hurts? The film takes place in Norway and Indonesia in parallel.

“-Storytelling can be meaningful but it can also be a false pseudo-meaningful activity, in which it creates a sense of agency and responsibility without that necessarily correlates with any actual real change.”

Our starting point is that we are in the shit already, as humanity we are not facing a wave coming at us, we're in the water already... Doing what we have done before will never be enough.

Storytelling does however hold potential to create change, it could for example influence power since much power depends on its communication and film may present counter-visions. But clearly, it hasn't been effective until now in terms of creating change when it comes to the climate emergency.

We could perhaps talk about what it should be? But that is a much larger question. "Storytelling makes it possible to experience a different point of view and a different world. It also allows for us to have collective

experiences and common references, and this can help to build better fellowships and communities needed for the actual fight."

Further, storytelling holds potential regarding experiments with filmmagic, with potential ways to deal with catastrophe and new realities. It is essential that we test new stuff. Although this requires us to be open to failing a lot, as is the case with experimenting.

Film has, especially concerning justice struggles, been successful in helping draw up the battle lines, to visualize and define conflict and to help the fight.

"-People in power are escalating the emergency, they can only do this because we are failing to understand where the frontline is. Storytelling can help visualize who's in power, who's guilty, who is not, who has agency etcetera."

It can connect different struggles with each other, and empower those struggles. Storytelling can also help us perceive ourselves as part of a group that has the agency to act.

So how do we tell the difference between false or actual change-generating storytelling? There is no easy or singular solution, it is not like one film can stop the climate emergency, but people can't be part of a struggle if they don't have any perception of who the guilty ones are. Storytelling can help people identify

different power positions, and as such it has great potential and capacity for possible action.

But to be honest, in reality, it is not about "the climate". To be too focused on a conceptual word like that can be both limited and problematic. It is more accurately about the good and bad.

“-In reality it is about self defense.”

About being a destroyer or helping fight the system that kills innocent people. About some people harming other people for money and power. Climate is one arena, but the fight is bigger than that in my opinion.

Maybe we need a reframing? Climate in itself can be seen as a lens to approach inequality between people, extractivism, imperialism. To make it easier to address global scale problems and lift problems as systematic instead of singular cases. Different lenses can be valuable for different things, but the objection against the word comes from an overuse that causes a dilution of meaning.

Film has the capacity to create storytelling of experiencing reality in proxyform, to move us in time and between places. This makes it possible to connect with the consequences of our actions or inactions of today.





Elsa - a new reactive Earth

STORY WORLDING, NARRATIVES AND CHANGING THE WORLD...

INTERVIEW WITH LINA PERSSON & JOSEPHINE RYDBERG, SWEDEN

Lina Persson is a researcher and visual artist with main focus on landscapes, environments, world building, and natural elements as active agents. She often works with animation and with interventions in different organizations.

Josephine Rydberg is a cross media developer for Region Gävleborg (Gävleborg County Council), and a PhD candidate at Stockholm University of the Arts, working on projects that explore "Dramaturgy for Participatory Practices".

We sat down with Lina Persson & Josephine Rydberg who work together in different projects and are participating in the Nordic climate story lab with "Elsa - A New Reactive Earth", which is a speculative fiction story-world that drives transformation of stories and future realities.

The material context, and the space.

For storytelling to be authentic, relevant, mythical and transformative to us, it needs to come from lived experience somehow. We have found that doing things in a new way sometimes results in spotting new things, finding new forms and making us able to tell new things. We have tried to exercise degrowth by limiting our climate footprint while storytelling. So it is about form as well as content. So one could say we work with two different things, world building as a narrative practice and the participatory form.

"-The attempt to make other things starts with telling the stories about them differently."

Working with a place, world or the environment as a starting point as a driver of narratives, brings the possibility of decentering the human perspective. Working with generating imaginary worlds, we see what kind of meanings become relevant if we instead look at the connections between things.

Situating particular spaces are important. It

is important to acknowledge that this story is relying on this space, and to acknowledge that this space sustains me, and carries me. So space is important. In one film one time, I (Lina) credited all the natural resources exploited enabling the film down to the minerals in the computer. So the very long credit list of that film was a way to make this point regarding responsibility visible.

When it comes to world building, we came up with the term trans-topia, to emphasize how this story is a process and a way to transform through, instead of a place to arrive at, like utopia would be. We like to think that stories transform, affect and shape us. Especially, if participatory aspects are incorporated. It has a deeper impact if your body is activated, participatory storytelling can make people part of the story.

Related to this, we have also tried to get away from the 'hero's journey narrative' and the conflict oriented narrative because this just reproduces what already is. We much rather enjoy the 'carrier bag theory of fiction' where we can have multiple perspectives and stories. Here it is not about winning and overcoming, but living and dying together.

We simply try to work with a different logic.

We try to work with the lust of being dissolved. Holistic storytelling, both feeling yourself as a body of cells, but also documentary storytelling about how carbon

works in the world.

Regarding the participatory aspect, Josephine works a lot with live action role play to take the worlding one step further. So for example, imagine experimenting with the transformation by picking up an item and carrying it around a little bit and having it in your hand everyday. To let yourself be affected by it, allow yourself to be transformed a little, and just you know, use it as a tool for divination. This is one way to create links between one thing and the next, practicing imagining. It shows the power of charging things, how you point your awareness, what you invest your hope and desires in, and how you can make something come to life. Creating experiences and memories that even if fictional, becomes part of a personal makeup. Especially making it together with others makes it powerful.

We could describe it as a deceptive mind trick, but we can look at it in another way. The way we see it, we are already in a deceptive state. Just being an adult in this society, you already have so many deceptions in the forms of discourses, hegemonies and paradigms that we live with.

"-We see this work that we do as a process of 'off-boarding' these narratives just as much as on-boarding new ones."

That is another part of storytelling: how we enable new habits, new paths, and get rid of unwanted others.

That thing, when you realize and are suddenly reminded that it's a choice! Also the devastating and very problematic grip of algorithms in today's realities almost demands coaching programs or deprogramming more than films.

Regarding storytellings and hegemonies, it can be fruitful to use tools like the Bechdel test and check what kind of infrastructures do the production of this narrative rely on? Not only within the stories but underlying the production, like choosing not to rely on channeling our stories through patriarchal structures and so on.

So one component of our narrative is the climate calculator for film production that we made. The calculator is part of our story world but it is also a tool that enables others to reduce their footprints.

On a personal level the path to creating story worlds as an artist comes from a strategy for coping with the world that I call 'neuro queer coping mechanism' where I (Lina) fictionalize everyday situations to be able to open up for more radical ways of being true to myself. Creating a fictional trial setting. Applying a dramaturgical arc to my story world, I create my own radical version of society in which it is easier to find strategies to change or break patterns. Even though something might seem impossible, I treat it like transtopia and keep working towards it as if it might be possible, finding solutions or halfway solutions on the way.

Josephine has experimented with trying to reprogram the brain by learning a new

language, diving into that language also in culture, tv-programs and literature. Learning new tropes, new languages and communication forms, not just a new vocabulary to attempt creating new pathways in the brain.

“A motivation also for creating new story worlds is also to create new reference points and new baselines.”

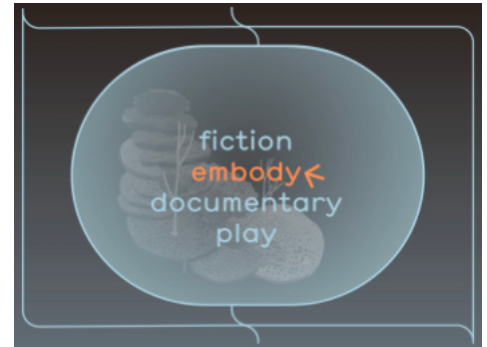
If we want to get as far away from where we are as possible, why do we depart from this world and use it as reference? We should use something very different as reference instead. Like the academic method of back-casting where one starts from a hypothetical scenario and moves backwards from there until the current position.

But at the same time consider the Tonga and the Moana Pacific knowledge which teaches us the perspective of walking backwards towards the future, facing history as the default 'frontal' position.

So for us, action doesn't need to begin with physical. An action can be to practice to look at things in a particular way, to prompt ourselves to look at things differently. This can be a beginning to materialize new realities. There are always small things everyone can do. One action at the time is how transformation starts.

We also try to narrate the opting out of things. To create things that are things that we just don't do anymore, collectively.

We have to make new connections and new logics together. We can't live in colonialist patriarchal logic anymore. We need to find new logics and collaborate to normalize those into viable alternatives.



A Nature Documentary on Dying Birds

PERSPECTIVES ON OURSELVES

INTERVIEW WITH MINA LAAMO AND RIITTA RYHTÄ FINLAND

MINA LAAMO

Mina Laamo is a visual artist with two decades long experience working in film. She is a director, screenwriter and producer known for creative documentaries Sorrow Tamers (Surunkesyttäjät, 2022), Becoming Me (Matka minuksi, 2015) and The Pests (Tuholaiset, 2007). In her films she has explored grief, the sense of inadequacy, and fear of otherness – emotions we seldom wish to encounter in ourselves. She has implemented impact campaigns with her latest films. In addition to documentary films, she engages in cooperation with Pia Andell, who is Laamo's co-artist in the documentary media art installation Four Trick Pony, exhibited at the Turku Art Museum 2020–2021 and at the Book Gallery Laterna Magica, Helsinki 2024. Mina Laamo graduated from Aalto University majoring in Documentary Film. She has also obtained an additional Master of Arts degree, majoring in Comparative Literature and Gender Studies, from the University of Helsinki.

RIITTA RYHTÄ

Riitta Ryhtä is a Helsinki-based screenwriter and filmmaker. Riitta has a Master of Arts degree in screenwriting from the University of Salford, Manchester UK. She has also obtained an additional degree in Cultural Management and another in Screenwriting in Finland. She has been writing and directing short films since 2013. At the moment Riitta is writing an episodic comedy series for the Helsinki-based Axis productions. She is also developing and writing her feature film screenplay Ebba as a participant of Arts Promotion Center Finland's project called Filmiapaja. Riitta has extensive experience in working in the various fields of the film industry: producing, film festival work, organising workshops, encouraging young girls to make their own films and teaching film both in university and workshops. With the film on the topic of dying birds, she takes her wide experience to the field of film impact. She also comes from a family of bird enthusiasts from Northern parts of Finland

We sat down with film director and producer Mina Laamo & impact coordinator Riitta Ryhtä to talk about Nordic climate storytelling and their film “A Nature Documentary on Dying Birds”

It is an exploration of the loss of bird species, where the focus of the film turns to us, humans, and the human tendency to resist change. It asks the question of what is needed for us to change our way of life?

“-Every film has a new language, in this particular case storytelling is about changing the way we see and understand nature.”

The film discusses how we could change our mindset about nature. We aim to help us understand how deeply connected and dependent we are on nature. We need to change our mindsets and our thinking, so we also experiment to shift the human-centered gaze (of nature documentaries, other media and generally how we observe the world around us) to be more ecocentric and nature-centered. We are filming birds as humans and main characters of the film, the humans in the film are therefore seen more as ‘the others’. We want to change the way humans consider birds, all animals and nature as ‘the other’ by the methods we have chosen for the shootings. We want to change the initial setting upside-down. We

want to change the perception that nature somehow exists outside our culture and way of living. What is happening to birds is happening to humans too, the destiny of the birds is the destiny of humans, as we are all part of the same fragile system.

It is like we have become numb about nature loss and climate issues. Maybe overwhelmed by the feeling that it is something we have no control over, and then it's a very human way to push it out of mind as a way to protect ourselves?

Film can help counter the numbness towards crisis and nature loss, reawaken our feelings and senses. Help us approach the



unpleasant feelings of sadness, ecological anxiety and shame. Film can also help engage communities to start these difficult conversations around mindsets and attitudes.

Poetic language and visual beauty is crucial to engage emotions. The idea was to make

explore and invent new languages, awaken numbness with aesthetic senses and challenge the othering process. “

Film can also act as a megaphone for activism. When regular politics fail, activism has accomplished change historically with for example human rights. And sometimes it

despite lack of funds; we are planning to have filmmaking workshops for young people, and the actual film(s) may have different forms, lengths and screening places.



such a beautiful film that everyone just have to see it. But it is also about trying to experiment with film and communication form, or language. Nature documentaries have a specific narration and language. We have gotten used to this, to the stories; when we watch a nature documentary, you know right away there will be a polar bear in the end suffering because there is not enough ice...

“-We need to find other ways and other languages, to bring people to see things from new perspectives. This is not only about the visual, it is also about the language and how we talk about humans and relating to the other, nature.

- In that way art can be activism, trying to

starts with just a small number of people. Activists and filmmakers should collaborate more, they share some of the same attitudes and willingness.

As storytellers and activists, we believe we need many many stories and narratives, but also many different channels. Unfortunately, it is frustrating with the difficulty to find funding for climate stories.

Despite the lack of funds, making films brings the feeling of doing something. Perhaps also the power of working with these things is the relief that there are also others working with these things, the feeling of not being alone. It brings hope. This can sometimes carry energy and willingness to experiment with different ways to work

We have found that we now have this lust to engage others in the filmmaking process, to expand collaboration and co-working with more people, organizations and activists. I have always been very aware of my own position as a filmmaker: I have never wanted to make films about other people, but rather with them. There is a huge difference in how to approach people. Now we want to take this idea even further, and make cooperation to be even more essential in our filmmaking and see what that will give to the process. We also long for building stronger foundations in the context we are working in. Hoping that film can assist in creating communities, and perhaps help with tools to deal with feelings, emotions and thoughts of the uncertain future we are heading towards.

Fire, Water, Earth, Air

COMMUNITY BASED RESILIENCE, STRATEGIES & PREPPING!

INTERVIEW WITH PHIE AMBO AND SOFIE FALTHER DENMARK

Phie Ambo (born 1973) was trained at the National Film School of Denmark, graduating as a documentary film director in 2003. Famous for her feature length documentary films true to the tradition of poetic, personal and cinematic language, Ambo deals with essential topics such as humans/robot relation and the relation between humans and nature.

Phie Ambo has directed a number of award-winning films for the cinema, including major works such as Family (2001), Gambler (2005) Mechanical Love (2007) and Free the Mind (2012) and Good Things Await (2014), Rediscovery (2019), 70/30 (2021) and Organized Wilderness (2022).

Phie Ambo is a member of The Academy for the documentary branch. She founded the production company Danish Documentary with Sigrid

Dyckjær, Pernille Rose Grønkjær and Mikala Krogh in 2009 but now has her own company.

She is one of the founders of The Green Free School in Copenhagen, chair of the board from 2014-2021

As a junior producer at Tambo Film, Sofie Falther has assisted with the production and post-production of titles such as The Last Human (2022), Silent Sun of Russia (2023), and The Lost Notebook (2024). With a background in literature studies focusing on environmental humanities, she is invested in promoting stories that challenge the status quo, and developing sustainable impact strategies while working towards greener production methods and concepts.

We sat down with filmmaker and director Phie Ambo and her producer Sofie Falther to talk about their film project "Fire, Water, Earth, Air" which is a poetic portrait of climate change in the Global North, weaving together four stories of everyday life in small communities in Denmark, Sweden, Norway, and the Faroe Islands and scientific findings to show how we live with the unprecedented environmental changes and prepare for them.

Sometimes, Climate storytelling is the most effective when the climate theme is something subtle or invisible and not in your face judgemental or educational. When it is just a story and then the climate theme is layered behind or inside the story.

Climate storytelling can also be happening behind the screen, in how we produce, choices we make and how we work materially.

"We have found that this aspect is not only conceptual and concretely material as in reducing the CO2 footprint, but it actually affects the storytelling in that it helps with representation and thus mediation."

The project is taking shape through collaboration with a research project. We are conducting a lot of workshops on climate change resilience in the North. So the film is science based about the different elements.

The story and project takes place in four countries simultaneously, and is conceptual because we use four production teams, but with a four-headed director and under a joint visual concept so in the end it will be edited into one film.

It really helps that each team is local and doesn't get swept away by postcard scenic big landscapes or romanticizing the beauty of the Nordic temperament, but are able to go deeper underneath such aspects that could have distracted outsiders. Each local director is connected and embedded in the context and thus has benefits that would be impossible for an outsider to obtain.

So we are learning to work in teams and become more collaborative. Figuring out ways to make films that are global stories, engaging with different places in the world, with local teams is something we will continue. And this is also about realizing the

privilege we have here, for example the freedom of speech, that enables us to create films here that perhaps cannot be done in other places. So this is about pooling different privileges and trying to accomplish positive impacts that go beyond just the making of films.

It is a different time to be a storyteller, and there is so much we can do that we haven't tried yet, so many nuances of green transitioning. It is not simple, so we need to be brave enough to look at the whole spectrum of stories!

In the transition, narratives are so important. It is important to show positive ways of dealing with a crisis situation and not just create dystopian stories. We have so many of those and there'll be more of them. But it's a very comfortable place to sit in, as a director, to make a dystopian story, because we know them and we know people are getting hooked on it. But are they really carrying us into something that can rebuild a society? I doubt it.

Conversely, a lot of broadcasters and financiers means that climate stories don't

sell, and they are scared that stories might be too dystopian, or too scientific. We try to challenge that but it can be hard to convey the message to the audience in a 'good way' and still be true to the science.

The public service broadcasters mismanaging is problematic in Denmark, they are paid by the citizens to take care of the citizens, to tell them important news, whether they like it or not. That's what they do about war, and every other aspect, but not with the climate situation. They say that this is too abstract and people don't want to hear about it, and that is failing their responsibility. And that is part of the explanation to how little people know in Denmark which is a big democratic problem and a generational failure of 30 years lost where we could have acted differently.

And to nuance that a bit, about how people know or not knowing what they don't know, take the example of "the big bake-off", a tv-show that is immensely popular in Denmark. They use non-organic dairy and animal products, and it is set in a big tent in a park that is completely dead with no biodiversity whatsoever. This is something all danes watch, and it creates a baseline for their way of experiencing reality. This is what reality looks like. It is a normalizing process of unsustainable existence.

"-That is normalizing a very damaging way of being in the world."

And it doesn't matter how many graphs of sea-level rising you are shown in the news when 2 seconds later, the person you identify with in a drama does something that goes against that knowledge.

So storytelling is also about the choices that characters make in the film.. like are they driving? What food are they eating? Those subtle framings of reality are important: how

to put climate angels on all stories. Just to start somewhere with something!

It is no wonder people get confused, the whole city is plastered, filled with commercials for flying, filled with meat and dairy. Filled with a lot of reasons why we're in this situation to start with. We are trapped in it with no chance of escaping it. In the film Industry the financing system is set up and created for us to travel the globe constantly in the industry. both for meetings, but also regarding distribution, holding Q&As and workshops etcetera.

"Everything in the system is pulling you into being a citizen in this fossil dependent community. It leaves us as storytellers with a big responsibility."

We have to make every mass media product aligned with reality. It is all about these supplementary signals. We know all about propaganda and how it works, and still we call it freedom of choice? it is all about the angles of things...

Take the farmers in Europe blocking roads, the narrative would be quite different if they were climate activists. Then it would have been terrorism and not understandable discontent. There are people though playing with reversing the narratives like for example stop big oil and yellow dot studios on instagram. Here News anchors explain climate activism factually and calmly in a different framing and creates another reality. We as filmmakers could be better and use what's in the toolbox.

The time frames between making films and direct activism is very different, but it would be interesting to see more collaborations and experiment on how to narrow the gap between activists and storytellers. We have a climate choir where we sing in front of

fossil fuel investors and tag them in films on linkedin for example. This is also about doing things that make us feel good and laugh, smile and build community while doing something. Because that is also important.

We are not trying to make a scary catastrophic film, but a film that teaches us how to be in a catastrophic time and situation. How do we cope with this situation? We need to dance with it instead of fleeing it. A beautiful conclusion, as it turns out, is that the best tools we have are probably not technical solutions, but actually, strong communities.

We hope that the film will end up being an invitation to the audience to participate in the green transition, not be scared but instead encouraged to engage and act.

The film:

FIRE, WATER, EARTH, AIR is a multi-plot story, exploring climate change resilience in small communities of the North, told by four local teams of filmmakers - Rogvi Rasmussen (Storms in the Faroe Islands), Ewa Cedersam (Wildfires in Sweden), Janne Lindgren (Mudslides in Norway) - who, in close collaboration with the Danish director and initiator of the project Phie Ambo (Sea level rising in Denmark), create one coherent film from the unique stories of their lands. Working with local teams to bring their first-hand knowledge to the project, minimizes the film's carbon footprint, heavily reducing transportation while ensuring a richer representation of the diverse climates, cultures, and languages in that specific region. This model adds authenticity and nuance that surpasses what one director could achieve by traveling the world and directing the film alone.



PART 3

MOVING FORWARD

A love letter

BEADIE FINZI

Beadie Finzi is one of the founding directors of Doc Society, a non profit foundation with teams based in Europe, East Africa, the Americas and Australia, dedicated to supporting independent filmmaking globally. Within Doc Society Beadie also has her shoulder to the wheel behind the Climate Story Unit and now the Democracy Story Unit. Two major global narrative strategy experiments - focused on unleashing transformative storytelling to advance a just future. Beadie joined us via link in Stockholm and wrote and sent this love letter as a pre recorded speech for our public event at CPH:DOX24.

This is a love note but it is also a rocket.

One written to funders, to commissioners, to curators, publishers.

Here are some things we know today:

The worlds largest ever survey of public opinion on Climate Change undertaken by UNDP showed that Sixty-four percent of people believe climate change is a global emergency. That the majority of people are calling for wide-ranging action.

We know that filmmakers and storytellers around the world are responding to the changing conditions they are experiencing in their own territories.

At Doc Society we have run a dedicated climate fund over the last 4 years and received over 1600 applications for non-fiction stories from over 100 countries.

Why is this important?

Because it turns out that non-fiction is one of the most influential sources of information about climate change.

In June 2022, Reuters Institute and University of Oxford published a paper evidencing that more people say they pay attention to documentaries than to major news organisations for information about this topic.

Documentaries are twice as influential as celebrities and activists on social media and three times more influential than politicians and political parties.

This is the case across all markets in the aggregate, as well as across age groups.

So we know that publics are really worried.

We know that the storytelling we need is out there.

We know these narratives are more trusted than any other form of media.

And yet.

The film and television industry, the national film funds, the public service broadcasters and corporate streamers are not taking sufficient responsibility or meaningful action.

Yes we've seen folks signing climate pledges, showing up at the COP conferences. Using the 'greening' of the physical process of production as a fig leaf to prove their climate credentials - whilst not actually prioritizing content on screen.

We know personally and anecdotally from our storytellers that really really good projects are being turned down. 'It's a little 'politically sensitive right now' - 'we don't think this will rate' - 'we did one or two of these last year'.

I am sorry but this is not acceptable.

We gatekeepers have to work a little harder.

If the stories aren't strong enough - then we work harder with the creatives.

If there is reluctance amongst our

colleagues, amongst the schedulers or channel controllers - well let's be much more persistent.

Is this really worth fighting for? Making trouble for yourself? Yes.

It is actually an emergency.

By the way - all our governments signed up and have a formal duty - embedded in article 6 of the UNFCCC - to educate their citizens on climate change, involve them in policymaking and ensure they have all the necessary information.

Are we - as some of the custodians of public interest media in our respective countries - are we doing our part? Are we doing enough? I don't think so.

Friends - we have ceded the public square to the oil and gas industry.

So while we can't find the slots, they are spending around a billion dollars a year messaging mis-info and delaying tactics - it's no wonder that citizens are confused and worried.

Climate is being actively weaponised by special interest groups and populists here in Europe. It is the one issue - the data scientists tell us - that can galvanize young and progressive voters to actually come out and cast their votes and stop what could be a devastating swing to

the extreme right in the upcoming European elections. So what are we waiting for?

We can decide that from this day forward - we are going to prioritise, to insist on more climate storytelling inside each of our organisations. And there are so many ways to do this - in so many forms and genres. Waves of beautiful, creative, journalistic, poetic, romantic, comedic storytelling about the climate.

Because we in the media industry actually have a critical role to play in how the transition to net zero will go.

No we are not engineers, we are not scientists. We are not campaigners or activists. But we influence the culture, we shape imaginations, we populate the information ecosphere. We educate and inform and inspire.

What we prioritise now - will help determine whether the transition is a peaceful and productive one. Or whether it is one mired in suspicion and fear and even violence.

The choice is still ours.

**With love and respect
- it is time to show
more creative
leadership and more
political courage.**

**Let's do this
together.**
**Come and join a
coalition of allies
- creatives,
funders, festivals
and platforms -
who are
committed to a
climate just
future.**

Towards an ecology of climate stories

DIEGO GALAFASSI

Diego Galafassi is a transdisciplinary artist, director, producer and researcher. Diego has developed a practice at the intersection of arts and sciences of global change. Diego has directed and produced a collection of works including feature films. In partnership with Julie's Bicycle (UK), Galafassi led the Creative Climate Leadership program in Scandinavia, focusing on capacity building for transformations in the creative sector. He is a member of the advisory committee for the Global Climate Storytellers network and has hosted the Climate Story Lab Nordic.

The stories we tell about our changing climate fundamentally shape how we address and act on this existential crisis. Through their craft, storytellers render stories that help us grapple with the magnitude, the depth and the reach of what it means to live through planetary systems in transition. Climate storytelling is not just a tool for raising awareness or promoting action; it is a crucial piece of infrastructure that underpins our entire response to climate change. The narratives we construct and disseminate through film and media deeply influence public perception, policy decisions, and collective action.

The power of the story is undeniable. In fact, unfathomable amounts of resources have been invested in storytelling by the oil industry and the industrial complexes seeking to perpetuate the systems driving the climate crisis. Unsustainable living is only seen as natural and inevitable due to the stories told by these industries that won the imagination of billions around the world. We must re-ignite the imagination towards a sustainable world that respects the rights of generations to come.

Over the years I have been working with film and more broadly in seeking to understand and develop the various roles the arts and culture can play in the transformations towards sustainability. In hosting the Climate Story Lab Nordic, we learned how crucial the film industry is but also how much it needs to advance to fulfill its true potential within the climate crisis. "Greening the production" although very important will not be enough. We need to invest in a "storytelling ecosystem" fit-for-

the-task of a world in transition. This will require bold action across all levels of the film and media industry.

First we must create support structures and opportunities for independent filmmakers working on the frontlines of the climate story. Despite the critical importance of their work, many climate storytellers in the film industry are struggling. Independent filmmakers often face immense challenges in financing their projects, leading to a scarcity of diverse climate stories on screen. The pressure and emotional toll of engaging with the climate crisis has also led to mental health issues amongst filmmakers. Independent documentary filmmaking stands apart from corporate documentary production in crucial ways. As the DISCO network articulates, independent documentarians work free from both market and state pressures, allowing them to pursue stories and perspectives that may be overlooked or suppressed by more mainstream outlets. This independence is vital for climate storytelling, as it enables filmmakers to tackle politically sensitive topics, challenge powerful interests, and amplify marginalized voices on the frontlines of the climate crisis. At a time when streaming platforms are narrowing their appetite for creative and politically bold content, and government censorship is on the rise in many regions, we must actively cultivate spaces that nurture and showcase independent climate documentaries. The Climate Story Lab serves as one such incubator, providing independent filmmakers with resources, connections and strategic support to bring urgent climate stories to audiences around

the world.

In terms of distribution and exhibitions, curators and programmers hold immense power and a broader understanding of "climate stories" is needed to increase the presence and reach of this work. Many distributors still view climate as a niche topic rather than the all-encompassing and intersectional issue, limiting the availability of space, reach and impact of climate stories. Contemporary filmmakers are demonstrating that climate storytelling is often not about climate at all. The climate crisis intersects with every aspect of our lives – from our health and livelihoods, to social justice and cultural identity. After all, terms like "climate-smart", "climate action" or "sustainability" are all expressions of how to create a world where living a healthy, fair, creative and thriving life is possible. Climate stories can take many forms, from personal narratives of resilience and adaptation, to imaginings of alternative futures and explorations of our complex entanglements with nature. The frontier of climate storytelling is rooted in a vast range of human experiences and perspectives.

Climate justice is a central pillar of this expanded view of climate stories. As highlighted by filmmakers throughout this handbook, climate change disproportionately affects marginalized communities. By lifting these voices and experiences, we not only tell more authentic stories but also address the root causes of the crisis. This approach allows us to explore the intersections of climate with social justice, economic inequality, and cultural identity. Filmmakers have a responsibility to navigate this territory with care, avoiding the pitfalls of greenwashing or perpetuating green colonialism. We need stories that center climate justice, highlight collective action, provide essential context, and dwell in the messy realities of forging a path forward.

At the same time, to inspire and galvanize change we need stories that give us a vision of what's possible – that show us glimpses of a regenerative, equitable, and thriving world. These may be small, place-based stories of communities coming together to build resilience and heal ecosystems. Or sweeping, imaginative sagas that allow us to feel viscerally the potential for a radically altered future. We need stories grounded in love, empathy, and interconnection – the forces that will ultimately drive a just transition.

Climate storytelling is also moving towards co-creation and more participatory types of storytelling that forge collaboration and community involvement. By engaging with

local communities, activists, and local communities, we can develop more authentic and resonant narratives. In the future we also hope to see more spaces of storytelling within areas of society where aesthetics and imagination have been shut out such as science, policy and political arenas.

Inevitably, we also see climate storytelling as multiplatform. From podcasts to immersive storytelling, audio-based storytelling, installations, cinema, emergent stories and all that is to come. These new formats and communicative shapes influence the ways we tell stories, but also how we reach audiences, echo-chambers, misinformation, attention deflection - there are many new dynamics we need to contend with, and cannot escape from. And filmmakers and new media artists are already responding to it. By harnessing the power of emerging media, we can create story spaces that foster dialogue, reflection, and meaningful action.

There is also so much potential to develop novel strategies for audience engagement (the film industry calls it impact strategy). Several cases around the world demonstrate how a climate film can have a multi-year long distribution strategy reaching specific communities, catalyzing place-based conversations and initiating local action. The design and implementation of such strategies require new skills that are only starting to emerge in the film industry, so more capacity building is required for professionals able to orchestrate learning journeys centered on films. It's no longer enough to create compelling content and hope it finds its audience. We need to be as strategic and innovative in our outreach as we are in our storytelling.

Crucially, the way forward also demands that we rethink what "impact" means. Success isn't just about festival accolades or streaming numbers. It's about sparking conversations in new communities, inspiring tangible actions, and slowly but surely shifting the cultural narrative around climate change. As an industry, we need to embrace this more holistic view of impact. It means collaborating more closely with impact producers from the outset, not as an afterthought. It means being willing to experiment with hybrid distribution models that might prioritize reaching specific communities over maximizing profits. And it means measuring our success not just in views, but in changed minds and mobilized communities.

Research from Yale's Program on Climate Change Communication offers a crucial insight: there's a vast "moveable middle" in

the climate conversation. These are individuals who are neither climate deniers nor activists, but rather people who are concerned yet uncertain how to engage. This group, comprising over 60% of the population in many countries, represents our greatest opportunity for impact. The Climate Story Lab in the US has emphasized this point, urging filmmakers to focus less on "preaching to the choir" or trying to convert hardened skeptics. Instead, we should craft narratives and engagement strategies that speak to those who are open to climate action but haven't yet found their way in.

This approach requires nuance. It means moving beyond moving beyond simplistic apocalyptic or utopian visions and beyond the binary of fear and hope. The most plausible climate futures exist on a spectrum between "the world below 1.5°C warming" and "total climate collapse". In this warmer than 1.5°C world, narratives need to embrace nuance, ambiguity, and the full spectrum of human experience. From grief and anger to joy and wonder, these emotional landscapes can help audiences connect more deeply with the issues at hand. It challenges us to find fresh angles, relatable characters, and unexpected entry points that can draw in viewers who might otherwise scroll past climate content.

Ultimately, the future of climate storytelling hinges on our ability to cultivate a vibrant, polyvocal story-space that holds the full spectrum of human responses to a rapidly changing world. If we are to navigate the transformations ahead and write a new ending to the climate story, we must first author an inclusive, imaginative, and emotionally resonant story-space that embraces the interconnected complexity of the Anthropocene.

As we conclude, let's dare to imagine a yearly climate storytelling summit, gathering filmmakers, artists, industry leaders, scientists, policymakers to share insights, forge unexpected collaborations, and develop strategies for creating impactful climate stories across all media. Our collective future depends on the stories we tell today. It's time to reset the climate narrative – to support brave storytellers, expand our climate imaginaries, and trace the way toward a just and sustainable world. This is the great creative challenge and responsibility of our time. May we rise to meet it with courage, compassion, and unwavering commitment to the transformative power of story.



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