

"Climategate"

Conflicting frames, patterns and policy implications of a controversy

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What's the climate controversy about?

- about the hijacking of science by interest groups on both sides?
- about the scientific foundation of climate policy?
- about the scientific peer review process?
- about the clash between progressive and conservative ideologies?
- about the IPCC as a science-policy arrangement?
- about the creation of doubt for political purposes?
- about escalation in the blogosphere?
- about open access to information?
- about the nature of science itself?
- ...

Patterns in the controversy?

- highly politicized
- highly mediated
- dichotomization of positions
- strong identity framing
- personal attacks
- within and across spheres of science, science-policy interfaces, policy, politics, traditional media, new media
- important role of the blogosphere
- ...

Frame conflicts of different kinds in the climate controversy?

Issue framing

About the content of the issue: is climate change occurring, and if so, is it because of human influence?

Ranging from well argued debate, over selective misrepresentation to sweeping generalizations.

Process framing

About the processes within science (e.g. peer review) or at the science-policy interface (e.g. IPCC)

Ranging from a search for improvements to conspiracy theories.

Identity framing

About the identities of self and others in the controversy: who are we and who are they?

Ranging from (few) mutually accepted designations (e.g. "sceptics"), over biased characterizations (e.g. "alarmists"/"deniers") to abusive language and strong metaphors (e.g. "ecofascism")

The controversy seems to **escalate** as the discussion shifts from issue framing towards process framing and identity framing

Who is who?

(from the **blogosphere**)

- "sceptics"? "alarmists"?
- "warmers"? "lukewarmers"?
- "deniers"? "fear mongerers"?
- "flat-earthers"? "ecofascists"? ...

What is the IPCC about?

(quotes from a hearing in the Dutch **parliament** about the IPCC)

"At the IPCC, it's about an interpretation of the available literature"

"The mantra of the IPCC is: policy-relevant but not policy-determining"

"About the IPCC I think you should institutionalize it"

"The general problem is that the IPCC has probably led us all astray"

"The IPCC is a wonderful system which possibly can still be improved"

"The IPCC is nothing else than a summarizing machine for literature"

"By the way, science and the IPCC are two completely different things"

"The the 2007 report the WWF report is cited 18 times and the Greenpeace report 8 times. How independent is the IPCC report then?"

"In principle I'm not at all interested in the IPCC. I'm exclusively interested in the scientific base of WG1"

"Nobody has seen that such a strong pressure group was present here, who actually didn't want to accept critique"

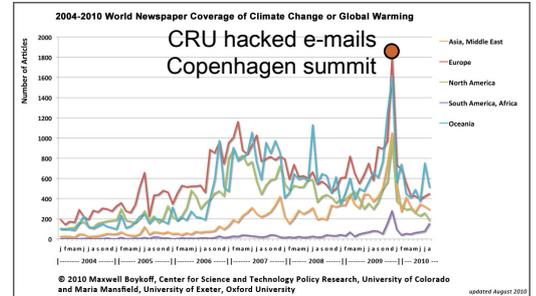
"The IPCC has made an enormous contribution to policy relevant knowledge"

Who's framing who?

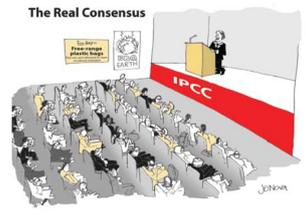
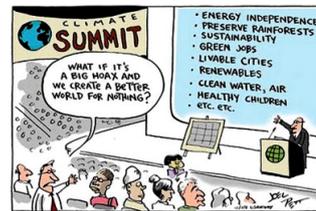
(post titles from a Dutch **blog discussion**, Dec. 2009)

- Labohm: "Climate fear on its way back"
- Hiemstra: "Magic with Hans Labohm"
- Labohm: "Gerrit Hiemstra has no clue"
- Strengers: "Under the hood"
- Labohm: "Selective shopping?"
- Strengers: "The precautionary principle"
- Labohm: "Climategate and Copenhagen"
- Strengers: "'Climate sceptics' are not marginalised"
- Labohm: "No marginalization of sceptics? Come on!"
- Strengers: "Question to Hans Labohm"
- Labohm: "If Copenhagen succeeds"
- Strengers: "I bet it will warm"
- Labohm: "I bet it will cool"
- Strengers: "The last word"

What is this all this media attention to climate about?



Which side is best at ridiculing the other?



What to think of the handbooks on both sides?



The Skeptic's Handbook

Rise above the mud-slinging in the Global Warming debate. Here are the strategies and tools you need to cut through the red-herrings and avoid the traps.

"There's a point about cost-benefit here. How many people are we willing to kill in order to protect us from the unproven threat of CO2?"

“2. Forget the climate change detractors
Those who deny climate change science are irritating, but unimportant. The argument is not about *if* we should deal with climate change, but *how* we should deal with climate change.”

Or are there more sides to it?

According to R. Pielke Sr., there are **three scientific** viewpoints on climate change:

- (1) Human influence on climate variability and change is of minimal importance, and natural causes dominate climate variations (This is the skeptics viewpoint)
- (2) Natural causes are undoubtedly important, but human influences are significant and involve much more than CO2 emissions (This R.Pielke's viewpoint, mostly ignored in the climate science/policy discussions)
- (3) Natural causes undoubtedly important, but human influences are significant and are dominated by CO2 emissions (This is the IPCC viewpoint)

Is there hope for the future?



“Climategate” debate: less meltdown, more well-mannered argument

Polemical and partisan characterises the climate debate online – but at last night's Guardian debate there was courteousness and a distinct warmth in the air.
Something remarkable happened last night in the polarised world of "warmists" versus "sceptics": a candid but not rancorous public debate. I'm sure you'll correct me if I'm wrong but, to my knowledge, never before have all sides of this frequently poisonous debate shared a stage. The outcome was illuminating.