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## ***Discourses in Norwegian Climate Policy: National Action or Thinking Globally?***

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**Report**



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# 1 INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

## 1.1 Theme

A source of contention in international climate negotiations has been whether greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction should take place through national quantified targets, or through the use of internationally more cost-effective mechanisms such as quota trade. The Kyoto Protocol states that national action may be supplemented by the use of flexible mechanisms, but no quantitative requirements for national action are stipulated. Broadly, the disagreements on this issue have been fronted by the US and the EU (Westskog, 2001), the former seeking a more flexible Protocol and the latter placing more emphasis on national action. Similar debates have ensued nationally among parties to the Kyoto Protocol. In this article, the international context and the question of exactly how a party may fulfil its obligations under the Protocol, forms a backdrop for a more detailed analysis of Norwegian climate policy debates from 1989 until today.

Norway is often recognized as a pioneer in environmental politics, with Gro Harlem Brundtland in a central and dual role as former Norwegian Prime Minister and Chair of the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) (Langhelle 2000). A broad political consensus developed in Norway in the late 1980s and early 1990s, where climate change was viewed as a serious environmental problem where national action for reductions in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions was required. Today, however, the focus on national action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions has been replaced with an equally committed focus on the so-called Kyoto mechanisms and more generally, the supposed positive international climate effects of the Norwegian petroleum industry.

Our point of departure is this change in focus from “national action” to “thinking globally”. In this article we draw on *discourse analysis* to deconstruct the story of climate policy in Norway from 1989 until today. We propose a perspective which highlights the discursive manoeuvring around political and scientific considerations. This makes visible how central actors in the public debate relate to, and seek to influence, the discursive context. Through the actors’ active use of the discourses, the discourses are continually reproduced and developed further in the field of climate policy. We aim to show how central actors, inadvertently perhaps, use discourses in their very public struggle to be heard, understood and validated.

This article is not by any means unique in its empirical focus. Several studies have discussed developments in Norwegian climate policy in the 1990s, some with a broader scope than what follows below. Nilsen (2001) is a historical work, while authors such as Reitan (1998), Bolstad (1993) and Sydnes (1996), to a greater or lesser extent, employ an interest-based perspective. The analysis below differs in that it does not begin with interests as such, but rather ideas and concepts manifested in discourses. This focus is necessary if we are to unveil the important and independent role discourses play in the development of Norwegian climate policy throughout the 1990s.

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<sup>1</sup> The authors would like to thank William Lafferty, Marit Reitan and Heidi Ø. Haugen for commenting on earlier drafts of this report.

The article is divided into three sections. In Part One, we describe the emergence of the two main discourses in Norwegian climate policy, the “national action” discourse and the “thinking globally” discourse. In the second part (‘Part Two’), we discuss three national policy debates related to climate change – the debates on the Heidrun project, the building of gas-based power stations and the Kyoto Protocol – and show how the two discourses have been instrumental in shaping these debates. In the final section, we conclude on the overall role of the discourses and how they stand today.

Before we continue, however, a few comments on discourse analysis as an applied methodology are required, as is a brief overview of the situation with respect to Norwegian GHG emissions.

## **1.2 Discourse Analysis as an Applied Methodology**

This article will draw on *discourse analysis* to show how Norwegian climate policy has developed from a situation where Norway concentrated on unilateral Norwegian targets and measures, to a situation where climate change has first and foremost come to be understood as an *international* problem where national action is less significant. Based on Foucault (1972), discourses will be viewed as broader sets of linguistic practices embedded in networks of social relations and tied to narratives about the construction of the world. In particular, we have founded our understanding on pioneer work done on the social constructions of environmental problems (see Hajer 1995; Litfin 1994; Dryzek 1997). Hajer defines discourse as:

a specific ensemble of ideas, concepts, and categorizations that is produced, reproduced, and transformed in a particular set of practices and through which meaning is given to physical and social realities (Hajer 1995: 44).

A discursive approach stresses framework of meaning. Discourses define the range of policy options and operate as resources which empower certain actors and exclude others. They also serve as sites of resistance, fomenting the emergence of counter discourses. Discourses imply prohibitions since they make it difficult to raise certain questions or argue certain cases; only certain people are authorized to participate in a discourse (Hajer 1995: 49). Policies are here viewed as products of discursive struggles, rather than merely as products of institutional factors (Allison 1971) or actors’ interests (see Sabatier (1999) for a thorough overview of different actor-driven theories of the policy process). However, without the agents promoting them, struggling over them or identifying with them, discourses would not exist (Litfin 1994). Institutions and individuals can thus reproduce, maintain and “carry” discourses, highlighting that discourses are not text and speech “floating around”, but have a material and institutional anchoring (Neumann, 2001: 92). Actors act within the framework of discourses, which exist independently of the particular intentions and motives of these actors.<sup>2</sup>

In climate change politics, the establishment of key reference points in the debate – contextual factors such as certain concepts, terms and phrases – plays a crucial role in terms of strengthening the arguments associated with these contextual factors, and correspondingly weakening the arguments that does not make use of the same contextual factors.

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<sup>2</sup> Discourse analysis can take many forms. Following Foucault, our main purpose is to uncover the structures of the discourse, the rules for what can be said and for what is “true” and “false” (Foucault 1972, Phillips and Jørgensen 1999). The search for underlying interests and motives is thus not of central importance, as the discourses as such and their development are the subject of our analysis.

This is the *power of discourses*, namely to determine the linguistic frame of reference within which the debate takes place. Following Hajer (1995), our discussion is primarily focused on the continuous discursive struggle between various groups and political coalitions, where politicians, scientists, activists and the media participate in the debate on climate change. These can be divided into different groups that uphold or develop new ways of approaching the problem; in other words, they are part of various discourses. The actors do not necessarily know each other, or may not even have met, but they place themselves around certain discourses which they employ when they engage in the discussions about climate change.

In the paper we identify two principal climate change discourses: The *national action* discourse (NA) and the *thinking globally* discourse (TG). The NA discourse emphasizes a national climate policy based on domestic GHG emissions cuts in order to fulfil an international obligation and to demonstrate willingness to be an environmental pioneer. The TG discourse shares with the NA discourse a concern for climate change, but emphasizes the need to think globally and to help secure the internationally most cost-effective GHG emission reductions. A strong focus on the need for GHG reductions to be internationally cost-effective will mean that domestic emission reductions in Norway will be very limited.

The power behind discourses, behind the ability to determine the frame of reference and the key terms to which every other participant in the debate must refer, is perhaps underestimated at least in the context of Norwegian climate policy, and it is the aim of this article to draw attention to this factor in the policy making process.

### 1.3 Norway and the challenge of GHG emissions

In 1989, Norway became the first country in the world to set a stabilization target for CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. *The aim was to stabilise CO<sub>2</sub> emissions at 1989 level by the year 2000.* In 1991, the Norwegian Parliament adopted the use of CO<sub>2</sub> taxes as a principal instrument for achieving this target. Four years later in 1995, the stabilization target was officially abandoned (MoE 1995), and no new target for domestic CO<sub>2</sub> emission reduction was set, although a general aim of curbing emissions was expressed. By 1994, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions had increased by 9.9 per cent from 1989 levels<sup>3</sup>, and were projected to rise to 40.9 million metric tonnes by the stabilisation year 2000 (a 19.2 per cent increase since 1989). The policy for stabilisation of domestic CO<sub>2</sub> emissions had therefore, by 1994, been unsuccessful, despite implementation of the CO<sub>2</sub> tax.

Throughout the 1990s, Norway's CO<sub>2</sub> emissions continued to rise.<sup>4</sup> In 2001, total Norwegian CO<sub>2</sub> emissions were 20 per cent above the 1990 level (SSB 2002). According to State of the Environment Norway, the business-as-usual scenario for 2010 estimates an increase of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions of no less than 40 per cent above 1990 levels (SFT 2002).<sup>5</sup>

Today, climate policy concerns more than CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. With the so-called 'comprehensive approach', climate policy concerns the reduction of all GHG emissions, and not merely CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. CO<sub>2</sub>, however, remains the most important GHG and the debate on climate policy internationally and in Norway primarily concerns CO<sub>2</sub>. Norway's current

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<sup>3</sup> CO<sub>2</sub> emissions were 34.3 and 37.7 million metric tonnes in 1989 and 1994 respectively (SSB 2002).

<sup>4</sup> The annual figures for CO<sub>2</sub> emissions showed small reductions from 1989 to 1990 and from 1999 to 2000. These reductions were the result of mild winters and all other years showed an increase in emissions (SSB 2002).

<sup>5</sup> The Kyoto Protocol commitments concern GHG and not just CO<sub>2</sub>. While Norway does not look likely to meet its obligations through domestic action, reductions in non- CO<sub>2</sub> GHG will make the situation somewhat less dramatic.

climate policy objective is to comply with Norway's international obligations stemming from the Kyoto Protocol (MoE 2001: 28), namely to reduce emissions of GHGs to 1 per cent above 1990 levels by the period 2008-12. Even if non- CO<sub>2</sub> GHG emissions are expected to continue to fall, national GHG emissions will, with a business-as-usual scenario, be significantly above the Kyoto target by 2010. This is primarily because of increases in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, especially from the petroleum sector. If one views climate policy as a question of national action to reduce emissions, Norway is facing a substantial, and some would say, insurmountable challenge to fulfil its obligations under the Kyoto Protocol. However, if Norway makes use of flexible mechanisms for which the Kyoto Protocol makes provision, it could still fulfil its Kyoto obligations, in spite of national emissions increases. Such a strategy would require extensive use of the Kyoto mechanisms. There is a broad consensus in Norway today that some use will be made of these provisions, although there is disagreement as to the extent to which the provisions should be used, and thus how much GHG emission reductions should take place through national action.



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## 2 THE FORMATIVE PERIOD: TWO DISCOURSES ON CLIMATE CHANGE

It is important to stress at the outset that the TG discourse and the NA discourse have developed over time, and part of the aim of this article is to show this development and how discourses at times incorporate new arguments as part of this development process. Even though the discourses only appeared in full some years into the period we have studied, we have nevertheless used these discourses as organising principles for much of the climate change debate from 1989.

The NA discourse can be traced back to the setting of the national stabilisation target in 1989, and has also been employed in connection with the Montreal Protocol. The TG discourse emerged in Norway as a response to the NA discourse and the stabilisation target it produced. The stabilisation target of 1989 is therefore a natural starting point for this discussion.

### 2.1 National Action: The Stabilisation Target of 1989

Climate change entered the contemporary Norwegian environmental debate in the aftermath of the Brundtland report. Norway was among the leading bidders for national commitments to CO<sub>2</sub> emissions reduction. During the Toronto Conference on the Changing Atmosphere in 1988 Norway was among the few countries in the world agreeing to work for a 20 per cent reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 2005 “as a primary goal” (Bang 2003).

In the parliamentary debate of June 14<sup>th</sup> 1989, it was generally accepted that Norway should take the lead on the climate issue internationally. Throughout the debate, the role Norway had played internationally with Brundtland as Chairman of the WCED, was a key reference point for those who took part in the debate. Norway had consequently an obligation to take the lead. Central politicians argued along the lines that, “It is of utmost importance to be a forerunner, so that we can preserve our credibility in the effort to establish an internationally committing agreement in this area” (Norwegian Parliament 1989: 4571, our translation), and furthermore, that, “the signal effect of a Norwegian target is significant...It is therefore important that we also establish a target for CO<sub>2</sub> emissions” (Norwegian Parliament 1989: 4573, our translation). The Minister of the Environment at the time, Sissel Rønnebeck, could not have emphasised the need to be a front runner more clearly:

It is great to be two rounds ahead of the main field if the purpose is to set a new world record. But if the main purpose is to help the main field to perform well, this is a mistaken strategy. In such a case it is better to lie just ahead of the main field. This is the government's policy, to be an efficient aid to the main field. (Norwegian Parliament 1989: 4591, our translation)

Furthermore, the point behind all of this was to make considerable changes to Norwegian society, as she argued that the policy of the government would lead to “significant changes to Norwegian society during the 1990s” (ibid: 4590).

What evolved in Parliament was not a discussion about whether to act or not for it was clear that national action was required – there was a price to be paid and “significant changes” to Norwegian society had to be expected. The debate mainly concerned the extent

of national action and how it should be implemented (with much focus on emissions from the transport sector). The stabilisation target was adopted after a debate in the *Storting* where virtually all political parties had been engaged in a “beauty contest”, each proposing the most ambitious target. The stabilisation target was, therefore, a considerable tightening of the original proposal of White Paper 46 (Reitan 1998: 121; Bolstad 1993: 11-14). When the Parliament adopted the use of CO<sub>2</sub> taxes in 1991, Norway confirmed its role as a front runner in the climate change issue and willingness to take action and be a pioneer.<sup>6</sup>

In retrospect, one can question the extent to which those involved in the setting of the stabilisation target in 1989 fully appreciated the implications of the commitment, nationally or internationally (Nilsen 2001: 104; Reitan 1998: 121-122).<sup>7</sup> Consequently, in this early phase, the framing of the climate change issue in Norway may well have been based more on a moral obligation to take action than whether such action was economically feasible or realistic. At the time, few, if any references were made to “thinking globally”. There may, have been politicians and interest groups who were critical to the stabilisation target and who favoured an international approach to climate change, but these were not particularly vocal. Furthermore, the entire debate on policy instruments was focussed on national measures (especially within the transport sector), and not international cost-effectiveness.

## **2.2 “Thinking globally” about the 1989 Stabilisation Target**

The principal instrument for reaching the stabilization target was the CO<sub>2</sub> tax. Although there was initially not much opposition to the tax (Nilsen 2001: 108, 109), Norsk Hydro, a company which would be affected by the tax, voiced its opposition in 1990, less than a year after the stabilisation target was set. Hydro’s objections were based on a totally new discourse that exclusively focused on international cost-effectiveness to the exclusion of any concern with national moral obligations to “lead the way” as an environmental pioneer. Hydro warned that a CO<sub>2</sub> tax would lead to increased costs and loss of competitiveness, and that it might cause Norwegian industry to move some operations abroad where environmental regulations are less strict. Eventually, it was argued, this policy could lead to negative environmental effects (Aakvaag 1990). This is perhaps to be expected from a company that stood to lose out if the CO<sub>2</sub> tax was introduced. However, Hydro took the argument one step further; rather than securing national emission reductions, Norway could contribute through making environmental investments in Eastern Europe. It was also claimed that the export of Norwegian gas could be recognized as an emissions reduction measure. On a short term basis, the best Norway could do was to sell natural gas on a commercial basis to the European market. This could replace the much more polluting coal-based power in Eastern Europe, Hydro argued (*ibid.*).

This was, needless to say, in stark contrast to arguments from the parliamentary debate the previous year, where reference to the need to be a pioneer and “head the field” as a

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<sup>6</sup> Although the tax was not universal and a large proportion (40 per cent) of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions was exempt, this policy nevertheless showed a willingness to take action and to be a pioneer: the tax was introduced even though neighbouring countries did not introduce similar taxes.

<sup>7</sup> Indeed, one is left to wonder whether at least some of the parliamentarians actually understood much of the climate issue at all. Bolstad cites one staggering example in a parliamentary debate in 1991, where a representative (whom we, out of courtesy, chose not to name) clearly has problems getting to grips with the idea of per capita emissions as opposed to total emissions: when it was pointed out that Norway had relatively high per capita CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, the representative retorted that this was to be expected, since there are only four million people in Norway and most other countries had a greater populations (Bolstad, 1993: 55).

nation was the key reference point. Hydro did *not* ignore climate policy as such, but rather proposed that Norwegian export of gas would be a more cost-effective way in which Norway could help to reduce emissions internationally. The break with the 1989 stabilisation target could not be made more clearly, and although the CO<sub>2</sub> tax was introduced as planned, Hydro's intervention was important in that it was one of the first substantial contributions to the TG discourse in the public debate in Norway.

At about the same time as Hydro presented its case, it became clear that meeting the stabilisation target would be a considerable challenge indeed. This ought not to have come as a surprise, since the background material upon which the 1989 decision was based clearly assumed a stabilisation of energy consumption as well as greater growth in mainland Norway than the offshore sector.<sup>8</sup> Neither of these assumptions turned out to hold true. As a result, questions were raised regarding the idea of having a climate policy based solely on Norwegian national action and the ideas first put forward by Hydro began to take root in political circles. In November 1990, the Prime Minister, Gro Harlem Brundtland described the challenge of climate change as one of international cost-effectiveness and a question of, "how to achieve as much GHG emissions reduction as possible per dollar" (Brundtland, cited in Nilsen 2001: 135, our translation). Brundtland underscored this by pointing out that a regime requiring uniform reductions in all countries would be much more expensive for Norway than for other countries with much higher GHG emissions (*ibid.*). Only a few months earlier, Brundtland had described the climate issue as an ethical issue, "an emission per capita problem, which indicated that the industrialized world had a CO<sub>2</sub> emissions 'debt' to the developing world" (cited in Nilsen 2001: 135, our translation). Research communities on climate change in Norway<sup>9</sup> also emphasised the need to think globally, and argued that it was unreasonable that the unavoidable emissions from oil production for export should only be debited Norway, since Norwegian petroleum products were *less pollution intensive* than fossil alternatives such as coal. The solution would have to be an internationally binding regime where Norway could be "credited" with the emission reductions that resulted in other countries from their use of Norwegian gas rather than coal to run their power stations. This would be cost-effective internationally, and, incidentally, make Norwegian petroleum exports acceptable as a form of climate policy (Nilsen 2001: 135-136).

As we will document below, key national climate policy actors in Norway, such as Gro Harlem Brundtland, Thorbjørn Berntsen (Minister for the Environment 1990-96), and Jens Stoltenberg (State Secretary under Berntsen, later Minister of Petroleum and Energy Affairs 1993-6) adopted the essence of this position in the first half of the 1990s. One can identify a gradual shift towards an understanding of the international climate challenge as one of international cost-effectiveness. Before we describe this shift, we need, however, to elaborate slightly on the two discourses that we have presented thus far.

### 2.3 Identifying discourses

In the early 1990s, we thus see both the NA and TG discourses in operation. The NA discourse has its origin in the aftermath of the Brundtland report. Its credibility comes from

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<sup>8</sup> The first comprehensive national macro-economic study of the climate change problem was lead by Statistics Norway and completed in 1989 (SSB 1989). This study formed the basis for the national stabilisation target for CO<sub>2</sub> emissions of 1989.

<sup>9</sup> CICERO and its Director, Ted Hanisch, were especially active in these debates. Hanisch had in the period 1986-89 been Brundtland's State Secretary while she was Prime Minister. In 1990, he had become part of the Norwegian delegation to the climate negotiations as an observer.

new scientific evidence of global warming and the resulting demand for immediate action. Climate change is viewed as a problem that requires immediate attention through responsible government acting to cut their emissions. In Norway, this discourse focused primarily on setting a national, and if necessary, a unilateral goal for reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. This would demonstrate how Norway led the way as an environmental pioneer, and how Norway took its moral obligation to act domestically to “save the planet” seriously. In the late 1980s, this idea was shared among all the different parties in Parliament (except the right-wing Progress Party). The stabilization target was also applauded by the environmental movement. NA views the argument about international cost-effectiveness with scepticism and argues that, in any case, Norway will have to demonstrate substantial national action first (e.g. Naturvernforbundet (1992) and Willoch (1992)).

The TG discourse shares with the NA discourse the view that climate change is a serious problem that needs to be addressed. However, the focus of the TG discourse is international cost-effectiveness rather than a moral obligation to act nationally. The principal argument is that the climate issue has to be viewed in an international context; rather than prioritizing (unilateral) emissions cuts in Norway, one should make sure that total global emissions are as low as possible, and reduced at the lowest possible price. At the national level, business leaders and later, politicians argued that Norway could contribute to reduced emissions globally by replacing coal with gas and oil production. Climate policy initiatives would in this way *not* be in conflict with continued Norwegian oil and gas production.

These are the two main climate policy discourses of the 1990s. It is important to stress that the two discourses are not mutually exclusive, and that they share an overall concern with climate change and the view that action is needed. It is also the case that the NA discourse does not reject the idea of thinking globally as such, i.e. the idea that it is most important to secure GHG emission reductions internationally. The NA discourse first of all questions the validity of claims that increased emissions in Norway will actually lead to reduced international emissions, and second, it argues that national action will have to take place in any case.<sup>10</sup>

There is a third discourse on climate which is sceptical to the entire thesis on climate change, and which stresses the scientific uncertainty surrounding the climate issue. This discourse advocates a wait-and-see approach until further scientific evidence is brought to market. In Norway, as opposed to the US, for example, this discourse has been extremely weak. Only the Progress Party, which in the mid- and early 1990s was quite marginal, subscribed to this discourse. We will therefore not discuss this any further in this article.

Below follows a discourse analysis of three climate change controversies in the 1990s. The aim is to show how the policy change that came about in the mid-1990s was made possible by a gradual discursive shift from NA to TG. Only through the latter could Norway maintain both an expansive petroleum industry *and* international credibility in environmental matters.

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<sup>10</sup> This argument was put forward by the ENGOs (Naturvernforbundet 1992), but also by others, such as Kåre Willoch, a former Prime Minister (1981-86), (Willoch 1992).

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## 3 CLIMATE POLICY AND DISCURSIVE STRUGGLES

So far, we have identified two main discourses in the climate debate in Norway. The purpose of this paper, however, is not merely to describe two sets of discourses. While we believe this to be important for a comprehensive understanding of Norwegian climate policy, the crucial issue is how these discourses operate in the public domain. We have chosen three issues that provide good illustrations of how the two discourses are employed in national debates relating to climate change. By far the most important of these has been the debate on gas-based power stations, a debate which stems from the early 1990s and continues as we write. It is hard to over-estimate the importance of this debate for the broader Norwegian debates on climate change. The following section will therefore place more emphasis on this issue than the Heidrun project and the follow-up of the Kyoto Protocol. However, we turn first of all to the Heidrun project, as the first petroleum development to become entangled in a climate change controversy.

### 3.1 The Heidrun Project

In 1990, a debate ensued in Norway concerning the development of the Heidrun oil and gas field in the North Sea. Until this point, questions regarding the opening of new oil and gas fields had been viewed as questions that were relatively uncontroversial and technical in character.<sup>11</sup> However, with the Heidrun debate there appears to have been a “politicisation” of an, until then, relatively uncontroversial policy field.

The opening of the Heidrun field brought to the fore the conflict between the 1989 stabilisation target and domestic use of natural gas. The Heidrun field contained both oil and gas, and the initial plan submitted to Parliament was to open the oil field and bring the gas on-shore (Hansen 1991: 7), where gas-based power stations would be built to supply industry with power. The centre-right government of Jan P. Syse in 1990 was in favour of the plan, although Syse’s Minister of the Environment dissented (Aftenposten, 1990a; 1990b). The Syse government resigned on an unrelated matter later that year, however, and a new Labour government came to power to take the plans further.

Upon taking office, the new Labour Minister of the Environment, Thorbjørn Berntsen, stated that he was against the building of a gas-based power plant because “with a 5 per cent increase in [CO<sub>2</sub>] emissions [it will] not...be possible to reach the national CO<sub>2</sub> target” (cited in Hansen 1991: 21, our translation). In the debate which followed, two quite distinct groups of actors could be identified. On the one hand, those against the building of the gas-based power station were ENGOs, political youth parties (except the Progress Party Youth), the Centre Party, the Christian Democratic Party, the Socialist Left Party, and the environmental opposition within the Labour Party and the MoE. Those in favour of building the gas-based power station were Statoil, Norsk Hydro, trade unions, NHO, local politicians, the majority of the Labour Party, the Conservative Party, the Progress Party and the MoPE

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<sup>11</sup> Of course, there had been debates in the early 1980s regarding the environmental implications of petroleum operations north of the 62nd parallel. However, these debates concerned the danger of oil-pollution in an environmentally sensitive area, and not climate change.

(Bolstad 1993: 51; Nilsen 2001: 154). The opposition to the gas-based power station prevailed, and no gas-based power station was built in connection with the Heidrun oil field (although the Heidrun oil field was opened).

The debate on the Heidrun project was an early indication of what was to come in Norwegian climate policy over the next decade. In itself, it could not be placed entirely under the NA or the TG discourse. Those who opposed the power station retained a national reference with the national CO<sub>2</sub> stabilisation target as their main cause for concern – Minister of the Environment Berntsen, being the prime example. This was familiar reasoning for all those who had followed the debate on the 1989 stabilisation target. Those in favour, presented a new dimension to the climate change debate in Norway, and drew on the TG discourse. In the White Paper which formed the basis for the initial positive evaluation by the government, a clear tendency to downplay national emissions reduction objectives and emphasize international aspects has been documented (Bjørnæs 1996). Furthermore, local politicians argued that gas-powered aluminium production in Norway was more environmentally friendly than German gas-based aluminium production (Nilsen 2001: 154). Not to build the gas-based power stations would, it was argued, lead to extremely costly emission reductions in Norway, when the same reductions could be secured abroad at a lower price. A version of the argument was also employed by the trade union, LO. They stated that there would be an increased need for energy in the future and that Norway, as an energy-producing nation, should develop gas as an alternative to the vast amounts of coal and nuclear energy already being used (Nilsen 2001: 155).

Although the debate about the Heidrun project was not just about national and international environmental issues (employment considerations were also important), one could still see the two discourses engaged in “battle”. We thus see the contours of later debates - one discourse defends the National Action line, the other refers to the international context. Furthermore, a Labour Minister of the Environment, as well as his deputy, the State Secretary,<sup>12</sup> opposed the gas-based power station *on the grounds that it would compromise the 1989 target*, placing their argument firmly within the NA discourse. This is of crucial importance, as we shall see, for later debates on climate change.

Until the Heidrun debate, the NA discourse had been presented as the official policy in Norway. The arguments of the TG discourse were known, but had not been tested in the public domain. Although the Heidrun debate was not limited to be a debate on climate policy, it marks the beginning of a “politicisation” or “climatisation” of Norwegian gas and oil policy. From Heidrun onwards, it was clear that those involved with oil and gas production (in Norway) would have to assess Norway’s responsibilities with respect to climate policy. Ignoring Norway’s international obligations was clearly not an option; oil and gas extraction would have to be in harmony with an active and high-profile Norwegian climate policy. Squaring this circle became a more complex exercise with the debate on gas-based power stations.

### **3.2 The Debate on Gas-based power**

In 1996, it emerged that the Minister of the Environment, Thorbjørn Berntsen, and the Minister of Energy and Industry, Jens Stoltenberg, held positions on gas-based power

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<sup>12</sup> In the Norwegian political system, a “State Secretary” is the highest political office in a Ministry before the Minister. Many State Secretaries later become ministers, so being a state secretary can almost be viewed as a ministerial traineeship.

diametrically opposed to those they had both been arguing in 1990 (Nilsen 2001: 198). In 1990, as we saw above, Berntsen (and by implication Stoltenberg, who was then Berntsen's State Secretary in the Ministry of the Environment), opposed the building of gas-based power plants in connection with the Heidrun project. In 1996, they had changed their minds and become some of the most active advocates of gas-based power stations in Norway. Of course, one should perhaps not be surprised that politicians occasionally change their mind. However, this was a case of two central, national politicians (Berntsen being the Deputy Leader and the "grand old man" of the Labour Party and Stoltenberg later becoming Prime Minister and Leader of the Labour Party), changing their minds on arguably the most important and controversial environmental issue in Norway in the 1990s. Neither Berntsen nor Stoltenberg had abandoned their environmental concerns, and both were advocates of an active Norwegian policy on climate change. What made gas-based power part of such a policy in 1996, and a threat to such a policy in 1991?

As discussed briefly in the introduction, an international rather than national orientation towards Norwegian climate policy began to take root in the early 1990s. First, two official reports from government Ministries were published in 1990 and 1992: one of an inter-Ministerial climate group on climate change (MoE, 1991), and the other a Government of Norway report from an expert group on instruments for a cost-effective environmental policy (Government of Norway 1992). The former, outlined a number of principles that was to form the basis for Norwegian climate policy in the 1990s. Among these were cost-effectiveness across sectors, nations and different greenhouse gases, profitability where this was possible, and equitable burden sharing among countries at the same level of development (MoE 1991). The Government of Norway report stated clearly that an internationally cost-effective regime for a reduction in GHG emissions would allow high-cost countries like Norway to increase their emissions while other low-cost countries reduced their emissions correspondingly (Government of Norway, 1992: 33, 35, *passim*). Both of these important reports came out very strongly in support of an international orientation to climate change, and the Government of Norway report further advocated abandonment of the two-and-a-half year-old 1989 stabilisation target. One of the main reasons given for this position was that abatement in Norway would be very costly compared to abatement in other countries.

### National book-keeping as an "incantation"

At the same time, central politicians began to shed doubt on the value of the 1989 stabilisation target. Already in 1991, the then Minister for Petroleum and Energy Affairs, Finn Kristensen of Labour, referred to the international context and argued that oil and gas expropriation could not be limited on environmental grounds:

We cannot be occupied with national book-keeping to a degree that we do not do our utmost to achieve the best possible international effect. We should export as much gas as possible...and even our oil is more environmentally friendly than other oil that it could replace on the world market (Kristensen, quoted in Nilsen 2001: 160).<sup>13</sup>

The Minister of the Environment, Thorbjørn Berntsen, initially maintained a commitment to the stabilisation target, but later shifted towards a much less committed position, "the stabilisation target should not become an incantation [*besvergeelse*] requiring disproportion-

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<sup>13</sup> Our translation

ately greater efforts from Norway than from other nations” (Nilsen, 2001: 164 ).<sup>14</sup> This statement of May 1992, clearly signalled a less committed attitude from the MoE towards the stabilisation target. Moreover, and perhaps more importantly, it classifies those who wished to maintain the 1989 target as viewing the target as an “incantation”. In Norwegian, this word “*besvergelse*” brings associations with an honourable, but not necessarily rational approach whereby one does something because one has promised or sworn to do so and not necessarily because it is the rational and sensible thing to do.

Finally, Gro Harlem Brundtland – the “global Minister of the Environment”, as she has so often been called by at least the Norwegian media – appeared to perform exactly the same shift from the NA discourse to the TG discourse as we have pointed to above. By the end of 1990, Brundtland began to signal the importance of cost-effectiveness. She argued that the traditional approach of insisting on equal national quantified targets was “antiquated” and that a cost-effective policy internationally could mean that Norwegian emissions may increase if it leads to emission reductions elsewhere (Aftenposten 1990c). The rhetoric involved here is not unusual - those who disagree are “old fashioned”.

A year later in 1991, Brundtland gave a speech to a Labour Party Youth Environment Conference (Brundtland 1991). This was amidst controversies that raged about the Heidrun project, discussed above. About a quarter of the 13-page speech concerned climate change, and the Labour Youth had traditionally been committed opponents of gas-based power. Yet the speech that Brundtland gave to the conference did not contain a single reference to the Heidrun project as such, and only a very brief mention of the 1989 stabilisation target – the official Norwegian policy on climate change at the time. However, the speech contained numerous references to the importance of the international context, emphasising how it was total GHG emissions that were of interest, rather than whether an individual country could meet a specific obligation. Further, cost-effectiveness and the positive international results of Norwegian emission increases were discussed extensively, as are the high costs of abatement in Norway compared to many other countries. It is hard to find a better example of discursive manoeuvring; in her speech, Brundtland avoided the political “hot potatoes” of Heidrun and the 1989 stabilisation target, and concentrated fully on the overarching premises for the debate and its linguistic references. If these references were accepted as valid to the exclusion of all others, the position on gas-based power and the 1989 stabilisation target followed as a logical necessity. Accepting Brundtland’s premises meant opportunities for gas-based power, rejecting them meant gas-based power was out of the question. Thus, when Brundtland implicitly argued for a more international orientation to the climate issue, she opened the way for gas-based power stations – despite the fact that official government policy at the time was against gas-based power stations.

### **Thinking Globally: Gas-based power stations as an international abatement measure**

In August 1994, plans were drawn to build gas-based power stations in Norway. The business idea behind *Naturkraft* – the company behind the plans – was not just to build gas-based power stations; it was to build gas-based power stations that would produce power to replace Nordic coal-based power (Naturkraft, 1999: 3). The company’s Director presented a *substitution argument* in relation to Norwegian oil and gas production, similar to that presented by Kristensen a few years earlier, but now with regards to gas-based power:

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<sup>14</sup> Our translation



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We believe that the emission reductions among our neighbours more than cancel out the increase in Norwegian emissions. We cannot view this in such a narrow manner and not see the Nordic region as one.” (Lont, Director of Naturkraft, cited in Nilsen 2001: 177)

The logic was that Norwegian gas-based *electricity* would replace coal based electricity in the Nordic Region (Norway has no fossil fuel power stations on-shore). The export-oriented approach was underscored when Naturkraft claimed that the idea of using such power in Norway had “never struck their minds”. Norwegian gas-based power was therefore only for export that would make coal based power in Sweden and Denmark superfluous (Nilsen, 2001: 176).

The Minister of Industry and Business, Jens Stoltenberg had, while working in the Ministry of the Environment in 1991, been an opponent to the building of gas-based power plants during the Heidrun debate on the grounds that it would compromise the 1989 stabilisation target. However, by 1994 he had clearly begun to question the extent to which gas-based power in Norway was environmentally problematic:

Environmentally, such a project is very interesting, not least because it will reduce the polluting emissions in our neighbouring countries by replacing coal and oil. (Stoltenberg, cited in Nilsen 2001: 177)

These arguments were given a more formal status when White Paper 44 (1994-5) stated that Norwegian gas-based power would be an alternative to building coal-based power stations in the Nordic region (MoIE, 1995). This White Paper was drawn up by the Ministry of Industry and Energy Affairs,<sup>15</sup> by then headed by Jens Stoltenberg, who had been promoted from his position in the Ministry of the Environment. The White Paper presents an environmentally-based argument for the continued export of gas and the use of gas for power generation domestically, “Norwegian gas exports that replace oil and coal in Europe, give considerable GHG emission reductions. “ Furthermore,

Building a gas-based power station domestically that replaces increased use of oil- and coal-based power, could contribute to a reduction in GHG emissions, even if the Norwegian emissions, viewed in isolation should increase. GHG emissions must be viewed comprehensively and across borders. (MoIE 1995: 10, our translation)

This was, in principle, the same argument that had been employed by Norsk Hydro to define oil and gas exports as climate change abatement back in 1990, except that (in the case of gas-based power) it was gas-based electricity that was to be exported, not the oil or gas itself. By 1995, this was not only the view of a large company with a significant stake in the petroleum industry, but official government policy. At the same time, the government abandoned the stabilisation target of 1989, “it is not possible to prepare for a policy that would ensure the stabilisation of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 2000” (MoE 1995, our translation). By 1995, the NA discourse had received a double whammy - the stabilisation target was abandoned and the government was in favour of building a gas-based power plant because this would be internationally cost-effective. The shift away from the NA discourse could hardly be more evident.

In this period, therefore, we see how politicians, with reference to macro-economic research, begin to refer to the international dimension in order to re-frame the climate issue, and thereby justify both the expansion of Norwegian petroleum operations and the building of gas-based power stations. At the same time, the 1989 stabilisation target is abandoned and thus weakened as a central reference point in the debate. The concern about climate change

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<sup>15</sup> In 1997 this ministry changed name to Ministry of Petroleum and Energy Affairs.

and the view that Norway should play an important role is unchanged. However, the way this view is translated into politics changes as the international context becomes a central reference point – taking the place of the national obligation to meet a national stabilisation target. There are, by the mid-1990s, fewer and fewer references to the idea of being an environmental pioneer, of showing the way and leading the world in emission reductions. Rather than being exceptional by progressive climate policy, the emphasis is on Norway being part of the international community. The maintenance of this discourse was central if gas-based power stations were to be built.

### **Mobilisation around National Action**

The TG discourse was by no means sovereign, however. The ENGOs mobilised heavily in order to make visible the consequences of expanding petroleum production and increased emissions, in order to put pressure on Norway in the upcoming negotiations in Kyoto (Bang 2003; Tjernshaugen 2001). After Parliament approved the plans in June 1996, the opposition to gas-based power intensified, culminating with mass demonstrations and the collection of 100.000 signatures against the plans. The effect of this mobilisation was considerable, and in May 1997 opinion polls showed that as much as 44 per cent of the population were opposed to the building of gas-based power stations, with only 28 per cent in favour - a doubling of the opposition to gas-based power stations in one year (Aftenposten 1997a). Prime Minister Jagland (Labour), at times ambivalent in his attitude towards gas-based power stations<sup>16</sup> and the continuous problems the plans faced with respect to the planning permissions,<sup>17</sup> led the company behind the plans to postpone the building of the power stations (Nilsen, 2001: 226). Consistently low prices for electricity also meant that the gas-based power stations would not be profitable.

The important aspect of this particular development is that the ENGOs managed to mobilise opposition to the gas-based power plants based on the NA discourse. The ENGOs argued that Norway had an obligation to reduce its own emissions and that there was great potential for energy saving and development of new renewable energy sources which could make gas-based power superfluous. The ENGOs worked to make specific linguistic references unavoidable in the debate, linguistic references which framed the debate in such a manner that gas-based power became almost indefensible. It is worth taking a closer look at how the ENGOs promoted the NA discourse.

In May 1996, the “Climate Alliance” (Klimaalliansen - an alliance of organisations opposed to the gas-based power stations) presented a report on gas-based power plants.<sup>18</sup> The report contains numerous implicit references to the NA discourse, which is used effectively to form the framework within which the discussion takes place. One contributor, for example, opens his contribution as follows, “The question is really quite simple: does Norway intend to fulfil its climate objective?” Not only is it the question, it is “quite simply” and thus commonsensically presented as the paramount and all-important question. Once this is established, it is rather

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<sup>16</sup> Jagland pointed to the similarities between this and the Alta-case in 1980, where demonstrations and on-site action of civil disobedience had hampered the development of a hydro-electric power plant in northern Norway. Jagland wanted to avoid similar conflicts over the gas-based power stations (Nilsen 2001:226).

<sup>17</sup> Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s ENGOs have lodged complaints against virtually every step in the process to grant all the necessary permits, thus maintaining public focus on the issue and at times contributing to delays.

<sup>18</sup> It has not been possible to obtain a paper copy of the report, but the contributions, of which we cite those from Støylen and Dahle, are available on line, albeit in Norwegian (<http://www.nu.no/energi/gasskraft/motmelding/>).

difficult to argue for a radical increase in national CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, unless you can change the frame of reference just established. The contribution continues with an analysis which does not reject the international dimension as such, but which argues that Norway in any case, at some point, will need to reduce its national CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (Klimaalliansen, 1996). Building gas-based power stations does not reduce the already considerable challenge presented by this objective. Again, as long as the national stabilisation target is central to the debate, concessions may confidently be granted to the opposition's argument: one would still have to reduce domestic emissions, so why make it harder than necessary?

Another contribution to the report on gas-based power stresses what is considered to be the fundamental error of assuming that there will be an ever-increasing demand for electricity. If, it was argued, one is to take the challenge of sustainable development seriously, one needs to make do with the already large amounts of electricity available. Again, if one accepts the "Brundtlandesque" assumption that the developed world should stabilise its demand for energy (WCED 1987: 173-4), then it becomes very difficult to argue for emission increases to provide Norway and Europe with more energy (Klimaalliansen 1996).

The petition that collected 100,000 signatures is also a very good example of how the NA discourse was mobilised. The headline says, "Say 'No' to gas-based power stations – Save energy!" Already in the headline of the petition, therefore, the *premise* is given: either build gas-based power or save energy. Again, the energy relativism of the WCED and UNCED is brought to the fore. Furthermore, in the text, it says that, "The gas-based power stations will increase the Norwegian emissions of the greenhouse gas CO<sub>2</sub>, equivalent to the emissions from half of all of the country's cars. The gas-based power stations are breaking with our international obligation to stabilise CO<sub>2</sub> emissions". The focus is immediately directed at Norway's international obligation to reduce emissions.<sup>19</sup> The theory that gas-based power would reduce emissions internationally is not considered credible, and the petition text points to the possibility that emissions from the gas-based power stations will be in *addition* to already existing emissions internationally, rather than replacing more damaging emissions elsewhere. With the petition, the opponents to gas-based power mobilised a significant portion of the Norwegian population around the NA discourse.<sup>20</sup>

### **Discursive struggles and the resignation of the Bondevik Government**

In 1998, Norsk Hydro, one of the companies involved in the plans to build gas-based power stations, announced plans for building gas-based power plants with new technology and zero CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. This took the sting out of the debate on gas-based power for about a year, since it appeared possible to develop gas-based power plants without the environmentally problematic by-product. By 1999, however, it became apparent that the technology needed for the zero emission power plants would take time to develop, and that Norway's power production increasingly failed to meet domestic demand. The Parliament had to vote on whether or not to require that the gas-based power stations were to be CO<sub>2</sub> emission-free. In effect, this was another vote about whether or not to build gas-based power stations in Norway, as zero emission power stations were, and still are, some years away.

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<sup>19</sup> It is questionable whether such an obligation actually existed. Norway had, by then, officially abandoned the stabilisation target and the 1992 Climate Convention is unclear, to say the least, regarding any individual obligation that parties may have to stabilize emissions.

<sup>20</sup> The petition collected 100 000 signatures from a total Norwegian population of 4.3 million.

In 1997, however, the government changed from a minority Labour government in favour of conventional gas-based power stations, to a minority centre-coalition government opposed to the building of gas-based power stations. Suddenly, gas-based power stations became a high-politics issue and the stakes were raised even more. The new Prime Minister, Kjell Magne Bondevik of the Christian Democratic Party, made it clear that he was not prepared to accept the building of conventional gas-based power stations as this would lead to unacceptably high CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and make fulfilment of Norwegian Kyoto commitments correspondingly harder. The opposition, led by Jens Stoltenberg of Labour – the same Stoltenberg who had been Minister of Industry and Energy Affairs until 1997 – argued that building gas-based power stations in Norway would reduce the need for imported power based on for example coal, which had higher CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per unit of energy produced than Norwegian gas-based power. Internationally, therefore, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions would be reduced if Norway built gas-based power stations, even if national emissions should increase.

The Bondevik government argued that one should take responsibility for national emissions and the idea of buying quotas to compensate for increased national emissions was presented almost as a morally inferior course of action. Even today, the Christian Democratic Party clearly uses this rhetoric in their discussion of gas-based power on their web pages:

It may be tempting to buy yourself out of the problem, however life is not that easy. If only money could buy us out of environmental problems. Our “no” to gas-based power is based on a “yes” to taking responsibility for our polluting emissions (CDP 2002, our translation).

This is an extraordinary reasoning, ripe with moral undertones of temptation and condemnation (perhaps not surprising coming from a political party partly with roots in the Lutheran Protestant movement). It implies that those not in agreement are morally inferior, as they believe any problem can be solved by money, when the real solution lies in increasing the feeling of “responsibility” for our emissions. The point here is not to determine who is right or wrong, but rather to see how the discourse of national action is employed to gain a rhetorical upper hand in a controversial and difficult debate. Once these parameters of the debate are secured, the conclusion can more or less be drawn. If you *don't* accept these premises, the outcome of the debate is less predictable.

The Labour Party, on the other hand, alludes to the naivety of thinking that the demand for power will stabilise or that we can solve the climate problem by acting nationally, and that the deciding factor should be the effect on global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, “Whatever we do, the demand for power will increase. We can choose between increased imports or increased national production”.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, “[In Norway] we use more electricity than we produce in an average year. This deficit will increase in the coming years. I do not know of anyone who will turn out the lights”.<sup>22</sup> Whatever the WCED may have wished for, in other words, there will be increased demand for energy in Norway.

In March 2000, the Bondevik government resigned after the Parliamentary majority voted in favour of building gas-based power stations using currently available technology. Jens Stoltenberg formed a new minority Labour government immediately afterwards.

The gas-based power debate shows how the two discourses TG and NA conflict with respect to the relationship between Norwegian petroleum production and climate policy. For

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<sup>21</sup> Minister of Petroleum and Energy Affairs, Olav Akselsen, in *Aftenposten* (2000a).

<sup>22</sup> Olav Akselsen, in the Norwegian Parliament (2000).

NA petroleum operations represent a significant problem for Norwegian climate policy, while for TG the petroleum operations *are* a form of climate policy. Whether through the direct export of oil and gas, the direct export of gas-based electricity, or as domestic use of gas-based electricity, the TG arguments essentially revolved around the same line of reasoning: *since Norwegian petroleum products are internationally relatively clean, Norwegian oil and gas production is good climate policy internationally*. Furthermore, the energy-relativistic perspective that was so central in the Brundtland Commission – the need to produce more with less – is supported by the NA discourse, but has seemingly been abandoned – and even ridiculed – by the TG discourse. Central in this discrediting of the energy-relativistic perspective of Brundtland was the Labour Party, which was in government with Brundtland as Prime Minister as late as 1996.

### 3.3 Norway and the Kyoto Protocol

The Kyoto Protocol of 1997 marked a fundamental break with the past as far as international environmental agreements go. For the first time, national quantified targets were differentiated so that each signatory had different obligations. This would arguably be the more cost-effective manner in which reductions could be achieved internationally. The sum of the national obligations amounts to a 5 per cent decrease in global GHG emissions from 1990 levels. However, the other remarkable aspect of the Kyoto Protocol was the flexibility with which national obligations could be fulfilled. Flexible mechanisms – quota trade, clean development mechanisms and joint implementation – were introduced and could be employed as cost-effective “supplements” to national action for abatement.

Norway had long worked for an international climate change treaty with exactly these types of characteristics (Hovden and Lindseth 2002: 149-151). While there had been a debate nationally about whether national stabilization of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions was a sensible way forward, Norway had worked hard for an international treaty that would allow for extensive use of flexible mechanisms, thus potentially reducing the importance of national action in Norway. Even a change of government in October 1997 did not affect the Norwegian position noticeably. This is quite extraordinary, given that the incoming government had been active proponents of the NA discourse and opposed the building of gas-based power plants. The new Minister of the Environment, Guro Fjellanger, was no less than a former head of the biggest ENGO in Norway (*Naturvernforbundet* – Norwegian Friends of the Earth). However, the Norwegian negotiating mandate in Kyoto was not changed, and Norway still worked for a Protocol that was as flexible as possible.<sup>23</sup> Hence, one could argue that as far as the international arena goes, the Norwegian view was firmly placed within the “thinking globally” discourse, so much so that even an ardent NA Minister of the Environment could not change this.

The conclusion of the Protocol was at first sight a new devastating blow to the NA discourse and its proponents. With the Kyoto Protocol in place, the entire “game” of climate change politics changed. One could now see the contours of exactly the type of international regime Norway had been in favour of since the early 1990s. The entire concept of a national target became contested, as national obligations could be fulfilled through action abroad.

<sup>23</sup> In other words, Norway came to the negotiations as one of only three developed countries without a national target for GHG emission reductions (the others being Australia and Iceland), and Norway, together with the USA, and as opposed to the EU, opposed quantifiable limits to the use of flexible mechanisms. This generated fierce criticism from Fjellanger’s former colleagues among the Norwegian ENGOs, see *Aftenposten* (1997b; 1997c).

International cost-effectiveness gained the importance that Norway had wanted all along. By placing a question mark in the margin by the national stabilisation target set in 1989, the Kyoto Protocol effectively placed the 1995 failure to reach the stabilisation target in a new light. It was by no means certain that this strategy for emission reductions - that is, national quantified targets - would prevail.

Before the ink had dried on the Kyoto Protocol, PM Bondevik, who led the centre coalition government that had taken over in October 1997, declared that the Protocol imposed national emission reductions. It would therefore be “distinctly unwise” to proceed with the gas-based power stations that would increase national emissions of CO<sub>2</sub>. He argued that for Norway to build gas-based power stations and at the same time comply with the Protocol, one would effectively have to cease all road traffic in the country (Aftenposten, 1997d). In other words, as soon as the Kyoto Protocol was concluded, a central NA actor in Norway entered the public arena with a powerful defence of national action, effectively trying to gain legitimacy for the NA discourse by “appropriating” the Kyoto Protocol as an intrinsic part of it.

Not surprisingly, the leader of the Labour Party, Thorbjørn Jagland, quickly responded with an equally powerful defence of the TG discourse. The Kyoto Protocol was exactly the type of Protocol Norway would want, he argued, because it opened opportunities for burden sharing, quota trade and joint implementation. With these options available, it would be possible to build gas-based power stations and fulfil Norway’s international obligations (Aftenposten, 1997e).

Bondevik and Jagland each read the Kyoto Protocol with exclusive reference to “their” discourse. Bondevik gives an interview about the Protocol without mentioning words like “burden sharing”, “joint implementation” or “quotas”. His focus is exclusively on the Norwegian emissions target and the consequences for national emissions of the building of gas-based power stations. Jagland, on the other hand, does not mention the binding national emissions target for GHG that has just been agreed, and spends the entire interview talking about exactly the type of issues which Bondevik ignores: “burden sharing” and “quota trade”. One could be forgiven for thinking the two politicians are speaking of two different Protocols.

While it is today generally accepted, even by many ENGOs, that Norway will make *some* use of the Kyoto-mechanisms, the *extent* to which these mechanisms shall be used is a moot point. The Stoltenberg government 2000-2001 argued that a “reasonable” share of the obligation should be met with domestic action (MoE 2001). “Reasonable” could of course almost mean anything, there is even no guarantee that “reasonable” amounts to any national action at all. The government that took over in 2001, however (a new centre-right coalition government led by Bondevik), argued that a “significant” amount of the obligation should be met through national action (MoE 2002a). With this most recent policy modification, it is clear that the NA discourse still maintains a position within the MoE. Børge Brende, the current Minister of the Environment, has been very clear in arguing that the way in which his policy differs from that of his Labour predecessor, is by placing greater emphasis on national action to reduce GHG emissions. In addition, it is quite clear that the rhetoric is NA-inspired as it again contains references to being an environmental pioneer country and to lead by example (Brende 2002b; MoE 2002b). This rhetoric was considerably weaker with the preceding government.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> For example, the annual King’s speech to Parliament (where the main lines of government policy for the coming year is presented) did in 2000 not contain the customary reference to Norway being a pioneer in environmental policy. This reference was brought back into the same speech in 2001 (Aftenposten 2000b).

The interesting point about Norway and the Kyoto Protocol is that the Protocol is, on face value, a full vindication of everything that one of the two discourses – the TG discourse – stands for. In addition, large parts of the environmental administration, most political parties, trade unions, and last but not least, the entire business community and oil industry, are ardent supporters of the TG discourse and the maximum use of the Kyoto mechanisms. Furthermore, Norway has, with the Kyoto Protocol, an opportunity to invest in developing countries, purchase emission quotas, and engage in joint implementation to the extent that we need not even think about GHG emission reductions in Norway. Finally, Norway has the cash to pay for this with its vast petroleum reserve fund.<sup>25</sup> Despite all this, NA manages to keep its place as a reference point in the debate, and thereby provides a basis for Brende's proposals for more national action to cut GHG emissions.

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<sup>25</sup> Norwegian revenues from oil and gas production are placed in the Norwegian Petroleum Fund, which on 1 January 2002 stood at 613.7 billion NOK, which is approximately 16,000 USD for every Norwegian adult and child. The fund grows rapidly: by the end of 2002 the fund is expected to be 776 billion NOK, and by the end of 2003, to grow to 955 billion NOK (Central Bank of Norway 2002).





## 4 CONCLUSION

### 4.1 The Nature of the arguments

In Table 1, we have attempted to present the two discourses through a number of key characteristics. This is, necessarily, a very “blunt” instrument for describing the discourses, but nevertheless gives a more comprehensive overview of the discourses and the debates between them. The aim of the two discourses is the same, although for NA the focus is on curbing national emissions while for TG it is explicitly the international emissions that are targeted. The motive is for NA to lead by example, invoking moral imperatives to lead the way and do one’s share of the work. For TG, the motive is to achieve international emission reductions as cost-effectively as possible. The policy focus is consequently international for TG, while NA focuses on national policy (albeit viewed as part of an international effort). The actors associated with each discourse can also be identified quite easily, as discussed in the body of the article, ENGOs, youth political parties, the Socialist Left Party, the Centre Party, the Liberal and Christian Democratic parties, as well as elements of the Labour Party, actively employ the NA discourse, while the oil industry, the business community, trade unions, the Conservatives and the majority of the Labour Party, all employ the TG discourse actively. In terms of policy instruments too, each discourse appears distinct: the TG discourse wishes to make extensive use of Kyoto mechanisms, while the NA discourse views this as a mere supplement to substantial national action to curb national GHG emissions. These aspects have all been discussed in the article.

Table 1: Discourse characteristics

	<b><u>National Action</u></b>	<b><u>Thinking Globally</u></b>
<b>Aim</b>	Curb (inter)national emissions	Curb international emissions
<b>Motive</b>	National moral obligation to lead by example	Cost-effective emission reductions internationally
<b>Policy Focus</b>	National/international	International
<b>Principal actors</b>	ENGOs, Socialist Left Party, Centre and Christian Democratic Parties, youth parties	Business, trade unions, Labour Party, oil industry
<b>Main policy instrument</b>	National instruments for GHG emission reductions	Kyoto mechanisms
<b>Complexity</b>	Low: e.g. reduced national emissions	High: e.g. increased national emissions lead to decreased international emissions
<b>Brokerage</b>	High and completed	Low and unfinished
<b>Ethics</b>	Deontological	Consequentialistic

There are three more aspects, however, that may be drawn out as concluding remarks and which point to deeper dilemmas within the field of climate policy. First, the two discourses operate at very different levels of complexity. The NA discourse is by far the simplest, i.e. there is too much of GHG gases in the atmosphere and so everybody has to reduce their emissions. This logic is simple and powerful. The TG discourse is a little more difficult to communicate; it is a mouthful to have to argue that yes, we have a national target for GHG emission reductions, but at the same time it may not necessarily mean that we have to reduce our domestic GHG emissions. Add to this the complexity of the Kyoto mechanisms and the uncertainty that has reigned as to how they will operate and you uncover a huge shackle around the ankles of the TG discourse. For academics and those especially interested, it may not appear all that complicated, but for the wider population who generally spend very little time on the politics of climate change, the issue is becoming increasingly incomprehensible. A national target for emission reductions, however, is in isolation, much more easily comprehended. This gives a significant discursive and not least rhetorical advantage in the public sphere, which goes at least some way to explain why the NA discourse has maintained its position.

This leads us to the second issue, namely that of “knowledge brokerage”. Karen Litfin’s (1994) work on ozone diplomacy emphasises the crucial importance of translating scientific results into a language and a context that policy makers can use. With climate policy, this process of knowledge brokering appears perhaps even more important. The theory behind climate change itself has been brokered for about 15 years, and in general, this has been successful. This is, in principle, all that the NA discourse needs. The TG discourse, however, relies on brokerage of the macro- economic research upon which it is based. We have in this article sought to focus on how the TG discourse has won more and more ground through out the 1990s. However, given the background, where Norway stands to gain substantially from minimising national action, and where all major interest groups and political parties accept this, it is remarkable that the TG discourse still has to compete for political space with the NA discourse. One could speculate why this is so, but one can at the very least conclude that the need for Litfin’s *knowledge brokers* is at least as strong in cases where macro-economic social science needs to be mediated as a premise for policy, as in cases where natural scientific uncertainty needs to be mediated as a premise for policy. Further research may shed light on the importance of knowledge brokerage in different phases and sectors of international environmental policy.

Third, the two discourses can, broadly speaking, be said to represent two distinct philosophical traditions. The NA discourse emphasises the need to act nationally to address a common problem. The emphasis is on the intrinsic problematic nature of emitting GHG into the atmosphere. The TG discourse, on the other hand, emphasises the instrumentality of climate change policy. The emphasis is thus on the global consequences of a given policy, rather than its intrinsic qualities. The TG discourse is thus prepared to complete what the NA discourse views as an unethical course of action, if it can be shown that this – the increase or maintenance of domestic GHG emissions – contributes to lower emissions internationally.

It is here, perhaps, that we see the clearest and most commanding division between the discourses, and an important clue as to how the NA discourse manages to maintain its position against all odds. Since 1995, the NA is suffered loss after loss, and is seemingly without grounds for existence after the Kyoto Protocol. Yet, a discourse will remain effective and significant as long as there are actors who continue to insist on the right frame of reference, and on the right terms being used. It is not just dependent on the extent to which

its conception of reality is accepted, but needs agents that can project the discourse into the public domain with power and credibility. Are people really willing to accept that climate policy is, as Gro Harlem Brundtland argued back in 1991, simply a matter of achieving the greatest amount of international GHG emission reductions per dollar? Or is it also, as Børge Brende says in 2002, a question of responding to the special moral obligation Norway has as a vastly affluent oil nation to lead by example and show the way ahead for others? (Brende 2002a). The tensions between these two views of the climate issue will remain at the centre of climate politics, not only in Norway, but also internationally. As Westskog (2002: 15, 16) has argued, it is quite possible to see the international dispute on whether to place quantitative limits on the use of flexible mechanisms as a reflection of a conflict between consequentialist ethics based in the US tradition, and a deontological ethics based in the European tradition.<sup>26</sup>

## 4.2 Discourses and climate policy

In this article we have used discourse analysis as an applied methodology in order to shed light on the distinct characteristics of the field of climate politics and its development in the Norwegian context. We have traced two distinct discourses in this policy field from 1989 until present day and drawn attention to the way in which the two discourses have emerged and developed through the 1990s. Through three public debates – over the Heidrun field, gas based power stations, and Norway's follow up of the Kyoto Protocol – we have identified the central and critical moments of discursive change. The term “discursive struggle” is, in this context, used to signify a systematic comparison between the competing discourses in the field of climate politics. In such a context, the key challenge in Norwegian climate politics has been how an expansive petroleum industry could be combined with an active and progressive climate policy. Only within the TG discourse could this circle be squared. We have further identified and summarised the discourses with reference to a number of characteristics which they possess. Making these characteristics more visible helps to explain the relative position of the two discourses and sheds further light on the core elements and controversies in the field of climate policy.

To account for this complex policy field is, needless to say, a tall order, and well beyond the scope of a single article. Our purpose has been to provide another pair of lenses – discourse analysis – with which the developments in this policy field may be viewed and which can broaden our understanding of the processes at work, supplementing the more actor- and interest-based accounts already available. We have seen how central actors actively make use of discourses as a resource, in that they actively employ the ideas, concepts and linguistic reference points of the discourses in order to make their points of view commonsensically accepted. At the same time, actors may at times move from one discourse to another. Actors do not necessarily change viewpoints as such, but seek subtle changes in the frame of reference of the debate and their position within it, so that different policies may be adopted. Such changes affect policy through the (re)production of arguments and the interpretive framework within which policy is developed. Recognizing the importance of the discursive context of climate policy developments is a necessary condition for providing complete and comprehensive understanding of the twists and turns of this policy field in Norway and internationally during the 1990s.

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<sup>26</sup> Broadly speaking, a de-ontological ethic emphasises a personal responsibility to abide moral rules, whilst a consequentialist, or utilitarian ethic, places emphasis on acting to maximise good consequences, even though the acts themselves may be unethical.



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