# Frame Analysis: Overview and relevance for the critical study of environmental discourse

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## 1. The rationale for frame analysis

Back in 2008-9 it seemed for a brief moment as if there was an international consensus that climate change was a problem of paramount importance for the future of humanity. Al Gore’s film *An Inconvenient Truth* in 2006, the publication of the Stern Review and the Intergovernmental Panel of Climate Change’s fourth assessment report, commitments by the EU and the G8, and the award of the Nobel Peace Prize to the IPCC and Al Gore in 2007 “for their efforts to build up and disseminate greater knowledge about man-made climate change, and to lay the foundations for the measures that are needed to counteract such change" all suggested it was now accepted that dealing with climate change was a matter of great urgency, and that the international community was prepared to take the necessary steps, however painful, to avert disaster – including finally addressing the issue of patently unsustainbable ways of life and patterns of consumption in the advanced industrial societies and developing countries.

However, the UN summit in Copenhagen in December 2009 was a resounding failure. Its revelation of insurmountable discrepancies of interest between the negotiating parties marked the beginning of a new phase in environmental politics. It had become apparent not just that the balance of power in international ecopolitics had shifted noticeably towards China, India and other emerging economies, but also that the European understanding of the climate change problem and the European views on appropriate counter-strategies were not the only possible ones. The normative foundations hitherto underpinning international environmental politics were suddenly exposed as contestable value judgements rather than hard scientific facts. The Copenhagen summit was thus a dramatic reminder that environmental

problems are not simply ‘out there’, but selective perceptions and interpretations of environmental change, which are communicated in discourses in which they are framed in terms of human values.

The premise of this paper is that issues like global warming cannot be solved without a better understanding of how they are discursively constructed as problems, and that frame analysis can provide such understanding. The concept of framing goes back to the 1970s, but both scholarly analysts of environmental politics and political and interest-group actors themselves have recently begun to show a new interest in framing. Examples are Mike Hulme’s *Why We Disagree About Climate Change*, Tom Crompton’s report *Our Common Cause*, and articles by Ingolfur Blühdorn on the ‘politics of unsustainability’. However different their agendas are, all these argue that we need to know more about the normative frameworks on the basis of which environmental problems and remedial strategies are currently being formulated.

It used to be assumed that normative predispositions depend on the socioeconomic development of a given society, i.e. that it is the degree of modernisation in a country which determines the ways governments and social actors frame their concerns, and the extent to which these concerns find societal resonance. However, the ‘normalisation’ of environmental degradation since the 1980s and the transition, to quote the title of Frederick Buell’s book, ‘from apocalypse to way of life’, has made the situation more complex. In the 80s and 90s Bruno Latour, Ulrich Beck, Klaus Eder, Phil Macnaghten and John Urry and other thinkers showed that the categories of nature and naturalness are socially constructed entities. For a time, the concept of sustainability seemed to provide a scientific and economic grounding for what constitutes an environmental problem necessitating action, replacing the discursive framing of ecological issues in terms of doom and gloom. However, its ability to serve as a normative footing for action has always been questioned, and has as we have seen suffered considerably since Copenhagen. Starting with studies such as John Dryzek’s *The Politics of the Earth. Environmental Discourses* (1997), Eric Darrier’s *Discourses of the Environment* (1999), Fischer and Hajer’s *Living with Nature: Environmental Politics as Cultural Discourse* (1999), and more recently in

Mary Pettenger's *The Social Construction of Climate Change* (2007), and Mike Hulme's *Why We Disagree about Climate Change* (2009), the cultural coding, decoding and recoding of environmental problems and normalities has come centre stage in enquiry into the potentials and constraints of ecopolitics. Despite the indisputable physical dimension of environmental problems, it is clear that they are also to a large extent a matter of social construction, and that environmental politics is consequently not least a matter of cultural politics. While much academic effort is quite legitimately invested in trying to resolve environmental problems, it is also necessary to explore the strategies, mechanisms and narratives by means of which the problems are constructed - and sometimes reconstructed in processes of normalisation, in such a way that their implications can be managed and their real dangers masked and deferred to future generations.

Tom Crompton argues, in his report *Common Cause. The Case for Working with our Cultural Values*, that a hitherto neglected area of activity for the non-governmental campaigning organisations he is writing for lies in promoting "democratisation" of the way cultural values are shaped (p. 5). There is an urgent need for research into how cultural values are shaped and by whom, and into how values influence public responses to the issues that science tells us are of most pressing concern. Public interpretations of and responses to climate change are mediated by values and beliefs, personal experiences and cultural norms. Being informed is not the same thing as being concerned and feeling responsible: emotional associations and dominant cultural values have been shown by empirical research to play a key role. Individuals tend to reject information when it challenges their values and identity. Hence the need to develop expertise in laying bare the ways in which important public concerns such as climate change are related to values in environmental discourse.

Mike Hulme's book *Why We Disagree About Climate Change* argues similarly that resolving our disagreements over climate change goes beyond the reach of physical science and economic calculation, and requires debating our belief systems and social values. Climate change challenges us to think about the weight which we give to the welfare of future generations as against our own welfare, and about what store we lay by aesthetic and spiritual values

as against instrumental ones. It is thus a matter for humanities analysis, with dimensions in culture, language, and the history of ideas. Like Crompton, Hulme turns towards frame analysis, for frames are the principal vehicle by means of which real life issues are invested with value. Hulme argues not only that a knowledge of frames will help us to communicate the need to act of climate change better, but also that we can use stories of climate change to renegotiate our wider social goals, how and why we live on the planet. By telling stories about climate change, we can harness it to the desire for personal growth, self-determination, creative experimentation, relationships, and community. But to do this, we must first understand the discordant voices, beliefs, values, attitudes, aspirations and behaviours associated with climate change. Our valuation framework and the values we ascribe to activities, people, assets and resources are crucial when deciding what to do about climate change. We need to know more about how issues are framed, through political agendas, marketing devices, media norms, and more generally through language and imagery.

## 2. The origins of frame analysis, and definitions of framing

The American social psychologist Erving Goffman is usually cited as the originator of the concept of frame analysis. In his book *Frame Analysis: An essay on the organization of experience* (1974) he acknowledges prior use of the term in roughly the same meaning by Gregory Bateson back in the 1950s (in an article republished in Bateson's *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*), announcing in the introduction: "Much use will be made of Bateson's use of the term 'frame'. I assume that definitions of a situation are built up in accordance with principles of organization which govern events – at least social ones – and our subjective involvement in them; frame is the word I use I use to refer to such of these basic elements as I am able to identify. That is my definition of frame. My phrase 'frame analysis' is a slogan to refer to the examination in these terms of the organization of experience." (pp. 10f.)

The vagueness of the phrase 'definitions of a situation' and of the 'principles of organization' which Goffmen saw as involving the subject is symptomatic: his book was criticised by reviewers for failing to provide a workable definition of the key term or a methodology. The American

sociologist, political writer, novelist and cultural commentator Todd Gitlin's definition is punchier: "Frames are principles of selection, emphasis and presentation composed of little tacit theories about what exists, what happens, and what matters." (– *The Whole World is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press 1980, p. 6).

Though framing in the abstract was initially amorphous and weakly defined, the concept soon roused considerable interest in a series of practical fields. In the 1980s, advances in cognitive psychology giving new insight into how the brain works showed how our ways of talking about new things and experiences draw on what is already familiar to us, framing the new in analogies which retain and transpose onto it attitudes and assumptions, for instance about what's good or bad, right or wrong. Framing in cognitive psychology remains a hypothesis, but it received support from linguistics, where Lakoff and Johnston's *Metaphors We Live By* (1980) drew attention to the role played by metaphors in transferring elements of meaning from one sphere into another, less familiar one. Lakoff and Johnson touched on the links between language, worldview and culture, discussing the grounding of structural metaphors in our lived experience, and showing that the metaphorical structure of key concepts in a given culture reflect the fundamental values of that culture. Although they didn't use the word framing, their demonstration of the centrality of metaphorical speaking in human discourse gave linguistic support to the theory of framing, and frame analysis has since been developed in text linguistics and discourse analysis.

Some of the most interesting research into framing was however due to a gain in precision made possible by its limitation to particular kinds of framing, and in particular a theoretical shift towards conceptualizing frames as more actively adopted and manufactured. Writers and journalists are professional symbol handlers with a high degree of self-reflexivity, so it's no accident that media studies treat framing as a more conscious process. Taken up above all by social movement researchers, also in management and organizational studies, and media and communications studies (see Entman's definition: "[To] frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote

a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation" – 1993, p. 52). Researchers into political communication such as Jim A. Kuypers have written of frames as powerful rhetorical structures that induce us to filter our perceptions of the world in particular ways, by making some aspects of our multi-dimensional reality more noticeable than others. Frames are here seen as rhetorical structures found within narrative accounts of issues and events, serving to define problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgements, and suggest remedies.

The term framing is widely used in the broad sense of the perspective from which an issue is approached and represented. Framing directs our attention to certain features, it has implications for the interpretation of the issue, who is responsible for the situation having arisen, what alternatives there are for action, and who can take that action. Framing in the general sense of the relationship between the presentation of an issue and the intended cognitive and behavioural outcomes is not restricted to the originators of messages: transmitters and to an extent also audiences also frame them. Originators may frame according to their own world-view of their understanding, or according to the world-view of the audience they are trying to reach. The public filter information and arguments according to what accords with their own personal frames. And the media actively engage in reframing issues according to either their own ideologies and norms or audience preferences.

Since the 1980s, cognitive psychologists and linguists such as Fillmore and Lakoff have argued that framing is a universal process. There is no such thing as a message without framing in relation to either tacit or explicit assumptions. They have explored the relationship between frames and physiological structures in the brain, and the reflection of frames in language. The concept of framing has been taken up in discourse analysis, media studies, management, and social psychology. In media studies and political sociology, however, its meaning has shifted away from a universal structuring of information in relation to lived experience and values, to the conscious packaging of issues so as to tie them in with a target audience's world view. Frame analysis has emerged as one of the principal paradigms in Communication Studies in the past decade, alongside and to a certain extent

replacing older concepts such as Agenda-Setting and Priming (see Bryant and Miron 2004; Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007).

Tom Crompton refers to frames as the interface of our experience of the world and its conceptualisation. He cites George Lakoff's allusion to frames as "the mental structures that allow human beings to understand reality – and sometimes to create what we take to be reality". They "structure our ideas and concepts, they shape how we reason, and they even impact how we perceive and how we act. For the most part, our use of frames is unconscious and automatic—we use them without realizing it." (Chapter 3 of *Thinking Points: Communicating Our American Values and Vision*) This universal conception of frames is actually no more than a theoretical postulate. However, it is widely accepted in the scientific community as a necessary one if we are to understand the way humans think, communicate and act (p. 43). Linguistic evidence for frames has been identified in terms of statistically significant recurrence of words, phrases and collocations. However, the term is suggestive in its usage rather than being precisely defined.

Frames have been described as interpretative storylines which communicate what is at stake in a societal debate. As value-based systems of thinking, they play a crucial role in determining our responses to the issues they are applied to. (Scheufele 2000) Frames work by linking an unfamiliar object or field of experience with a familiar one, mapping the values associated with the latter onto the former.

### 3. Strategic or advocate framing

All efforts to communicate complex issues inevitably involve selection, prioritisation, and strategies of presentation, which may draw on the audience's personal experience, allegiances and social identity. However, the process takes on a different meaning in the media, which make conscious use of pre-existing frames as interpretative shortcuts. It is therefore common to distinguish between deep frames (cognitive structures usually forged in childhood, held in long-term memory, that associate an experience with particular values), and superficial, strategic or 'advocate' framing, i.e. application or activation of a previously established deep frame, by the

wording of an issue so as to resonate with particular values, in order to evoke a particular response. Nisbet and Mooney have defined framing in this sense: “Frames organise central ideas, defining a controversy to resonate with core values and assumptions. They allow citizens to rapidly identify why an issue matters, who might be responsible, and what should be done.” (MC Nisbet and C Mooney, ‘Framing Science’, *Science* 316 (2007), 56). The phrase “war on terror” for instance draws on the conceptual frame of war, which involves two possible solutions, a victor and a loser, and marginalises the possibility of multiple players and outcomes including mutual understanding.

Probably the most detailed analysis of frames has occurred in the study of social movements, where it became the dominant perspective for the conceptualization of the cultural aspects of these movements, facilitating a number of international comparisons and synthetic, theoretically grounded studies in the second half of the 1980s. Snow et al. 1986 and Snow and Benford 1988 in particular explained the emergence and development of social movements in terms not only of the structure of political opportunities confronting them and the forms of organization available to them, but also of their construction of meaning for participants and opponents, through collective processes of interpretation or framing. They demonstrated that movements were successful when the framing of a social issue which they projected aligned with the framing present in the larger belief system of a sizeable portion of the public sufficiently to arouse a resonance in them. This process of *frame alignment* is crucial to social mobilization, its success leading people who are not yet part of the movement to transition from one perception of the issue and one frame to another.

Snow, Benford and their co-authors distinguished between a) diagnostic framing for the identification of a problem and assignment of blame, b) prognostic framing to suggest solutions, strategies, and tactics to a problem, and c) motivational framing that serves as a call to arms and a rationale for action. To be successful, the framing of an issue must usually relate to the experience of the public (more precisely, including mediated experience), and fit in some way with existing cultural values, myths and narratives. The most attractive frames “resonate with cultural narration, that is with stories, myths, and folk tales that are part and parcel of one’s cultural

heritage" (1988, 210). They also distinguished between *frame bridging*, which links a movement to hitherto "unmobilized sentiment pools or public opinion preference clusters" (1986, p. 467), *frame amplification*, which recalls a latent interpretive frame and reinvigorates the values embedded in it, *frame extension*, which extend the boundaries of the movement's framing of an issue so as to encompass the views, interests and sentiments of targeted groups, and *frame transformation*, which is necessary when the proposed frame appears downright antithetical to extant interpretive frames and accepted lifestyles (p. 474), e.g. in religious conversion, the shift from communism to capitalism, or the adoption of the conservative conservationist movement into the more progressive environmentalist movement in the 1970s.

The crucial difference between these applications and Goffman's original conception of framing is that the concept has been narrowed down from universal, largely unconscious framing to conscious framing. The distinction between deep frames (in language and culture) and advocate frames (in political agendas, marketing strategies and media norms). Has proved a particularly useful tool in social movement theory. The role played by framing in the construction of collective identity in social movements. A series of concepts developed by Snow, in collaboration with Benford and others: frame amplification etc.

## 4. Methodologies of frame analysis

Frame analysis doesn't possess a single coherent methodology, but consists rather of a number of related, but sometimes partially incompatible methods for analysing discourses. (Scheufele 1999) In practice, most studies borrow techniques from sociolinguistics, text linguistics and discourse analysis, such as examining how the personal pronouns 'we' or 'they' are used, counting the frequency of keywords, collocations and lexical clusters. But also narrative structure, writing strategy, metaphors, visual symbols. One of the problems is that there is no universally recognised typology or taxonomy of frames, though there are, as we shall see, some widely recognised masterframes. Three generic frames have been shown to dominate media discourses, namely conflict, human interest, and economic consequences. And three

themes would seem to reoccur frequently in the literature on media framing and bee considerable as master frames: liberal individualism, ethno-nationalism, and harmony with nature. The first sees humans as rationally acting individuals, the second supposes the existence of primordial national groups, and the last assumes the different realms of nature and culture, and attributes to nature an intrinsic worth. (Gamson 1992) Journalistic articles favour conflict frames,

## 5. Relevance of framing for the network, and the concept of cultural framing

The remit of the network to see how arts and humanities research can feed into inter-council strategic initiative ‘Living with Climate Change’. The focus on communication, representation and cultural construction of environmental problems. A bundle of potential aims: First of all in general to further knowledge of how the more important social discourses frame specific environmental problems, a) because this knowledge can be implemented in environmental education as a means of furthering critical awareness, and b) because conscious reframing can be undertaken, or at least adapting current framing so as to take on board difficulties encountered in persuading people to adopt more environmentally friendly action which stem from the framing of the issues. More specifically, to investigate the role played by the arts in environmental discourse, by writers, artists and film directors, alongside journalists, scientists, politicians and spokesmen of industry. To what extent are the concepts and methodologies of literary and filmic criticism applicable to or complement media studies approaches.

If, as we have seen, the most sophisticated theorising of framing has taken place by dint of limiting the term to “conscious strategic efforts by groups of people to fashion shared understandings of the world and of themselves that legitimate and motivate collective action” (McAdams et al. p. 6), is it then possible to go beyond the strategic framing of advertising, and news media and social movements, without the concept becoming too vague? Can more be done in the neglected area of cultural framing – understood as a) how narratives (myths), writing strategies (genres and narrative structures) and thematic focuses influence framings, and b) the role of metaphors and

visual symbols in configuring representations and steering perception? How do these serve as framing mechanisms, i.e. as vehicles through which facts and arguments are connected with social experience and cultural norms? Perhaps into how frames draw on already existing cultural codes (Gamson and Modigliani, McAdam 1994, Snow and Benford), Here scope for comparative, studies, both cross-national and diachronic. Studies of shifting frames and the process of innovation might be particularly useful for attempts to foster critical awareness and to engineer changes in the direction of genuine sustainability. Another field of enquiry could be the filtering of messages through the media on the framing contests between the environmental movement, the state, and counter-movements. Focus less on the popular mass media than on the input of creative individuals, philosophers, writers, artists and political thinkers as 'moral entrepreneurs (Zald), reframing issues through use of new metaphors and symbols and iconic events, reattributing blame, defining tactics, providing new perspectives and problem-perceptions in processes of active cultural and movement construction? How do they use emotional impact, dramatize? Impact of developments in technology on potential for reframing demands and injustices. To what extent die the civil rights movement in the US and the student movement of 1968 provide a master frame and a language on which the later women's, disability, gay rights and environmental movements could draw? To what extent do historical ideologies (especially Christianity and Marxism) provide diagnostic and prognostic frames which are drawn on?

Cultural framing could be distinct from and in a sense between the universal human framing which is the subject of cognitive psychology and the conscious, ideologically orientated, strategic framing of political parties interest groups. The key question for an AHRC-based project seeking to engage with other disciplines and inter-council strategic initiatives is: how is the framing which is determined by cultures, and by the media through which they are communicated, i.e. languages, visual codes and so forth, relates to the usually more conscious framing processes in terms of ideologies? The symbols and slogans of losing movements as part of the archive of cultural memory, capable of reactivation, constituting latent networks of affiliation and reservoirs of experience for future use.

Can the frame concept be more extensively employed in intercultural comparisons of environmental discourse, in linguistic analyses of ecospeak, and in examination of narrative structures and writing modes by ecocritics, and can it provide a bridge between them? What deep frames there are, which are universal and which resonate in particular cultures, and why. Some hints to be found in research into a) the values underpinning quasi-universal deep frames, and the frames dominating environmental discourse, and b) the differences in framing experienced in different countries and cultures (e.g. why nuclear is perceived differently in Germany from the UK: relevant research on attitudes towards nuclear reflected in frames by Gamson and Modigliani 1989). Both Tom Crompton and Mike Hulme examine the relationship of frames with a) universal life goals, value clusters, and risk perception. Hulme's mapping of a selection of universal master frames onto emotions and specific narratives is particularly interesting for people working in cultural studies. Lamenting Eden etc. as five key frames for climate change privileging different values and emotions.

This ties in with research into cultural repertoires and the use made of stock elements of cultures. In 1996, Mayer Zald suggested that further research could be done on

- the cultural toolkits available to would-be insurgents and initiators of social movements
- the strategic framing efforts of movements groups
- the framing contests between the movement and other actors
- the role of the media in mediating these framing contests between social movement and state
- the cultural impact of the movement and how it has modified the available toolkit

"I believe that a major research agenda for the future is the study of frames and culture in comparative context" (Zald, p. 273) Need for comparative studies of cultural receptivity and resonance, to sharpen our understanding of the relationship of culture incorporation and transformation of master frames and symbolic imagery in social movements.

One could ask which ideational themes have proved especially resonant in which cultures and why, in a 3-way comparison of the US the UK and Germany. What role have historical events and the cultural contradictions they have brought out into the open played in providing opportunities for reframing issues? (The Fukushima disaster has crystallized opinion on ambiguous political and moral matter of nuclear energy, but affected perceptions of safety and the relative legitimacy of the nuclear industry differently, changing the perception of the costs and benefits more in Germany.) Why have some frames come to dominate? Examine similarities and differences between the framing strategies of the environmental movements in the 3 countries, and their frame packages. And how much the envt movement has succeeded in reshaping public discourse in the 3 countries. Culture, ideology and frames all deal with the content and processes by which meaning is attached to objects and actions,, but how do they relate to each other? Culture is shared beliefs and understandings, as constituted and mediated by symbols and language. Usually thought of as long-term, but actually always in flux. Ideology is the set of beliefs used to justify or challenge a given socio-political order and used to interpret the political world. Frames are the specific metaphors, symbolic representations, and cognitive cues used to render or cast behaviour and events in an evaluative mode, and to suggest alternative modes of action. (Zald p. 262) Ideologies are more complex, logical systems of belief than frames.

Ann Swidler's idea of cultures as repertoires of action and toolkits gave insight into how components of the cultural stock are assembled into specific models of socially defined behaviour (1986) See McAdam 1994. Social movements draw on the cultural stock for images of what is an injustice, a violation of what should be (e.g. the Holocuast). The framing of injustices also draws on societal definitions of social relations (what sort of family), rights and responsibilities (stern father or fostering parent). Movements also draw on the cultural stock of how to organise themselves and protest, e.g. in forms of writing. Van Gorp has since similarly called for the cultural element to be brought back into framing studies. There are parallels here with the theory figurations of cultural memory on the one hand, and with research into linguistic repertoires on the other.

In the 1980s it was shown that values cluster in ways that are surprisingly similar across cultures. Some values tend to be held simultaneously, while others appear for all intents and purposes incompatible. Statistical analysis of survey data by Grouzet et al. 2005) showed that individuals' life goals can be located along two principal axes:

FIGURE 1 (Grouzet et al., from Crompton p. 29)

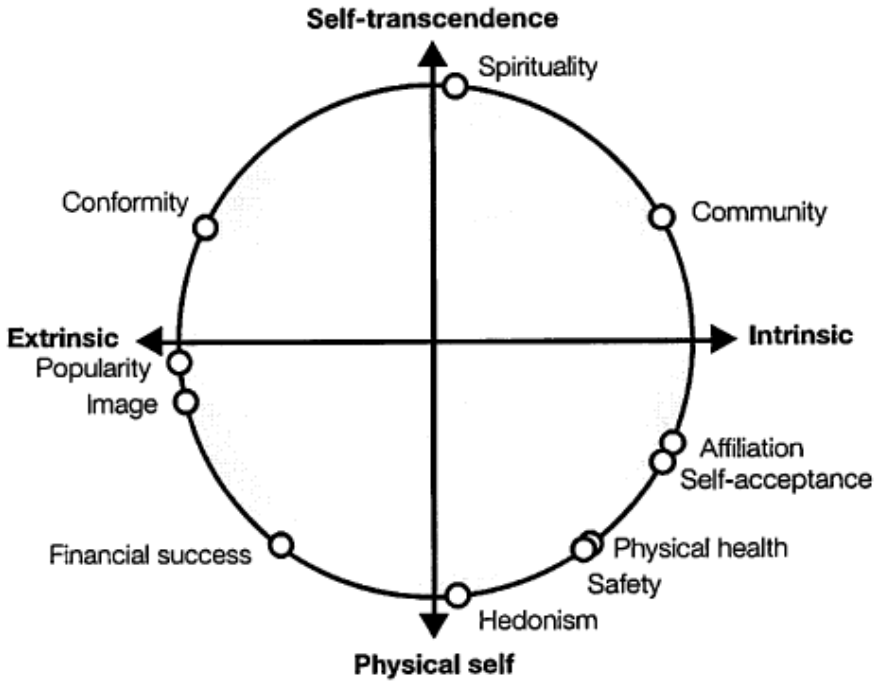



**Figure 1**

Circumplex model of values, based on a study examining how 1,800 students from 15 nations – both developed and developing – rated the importance of a variety of life goals (Re-drawn from Grouzet *et al.*, 2005). Goal contents and descriptions, also taken from Grouzet *et al.* (2005: 802), are described as follows:

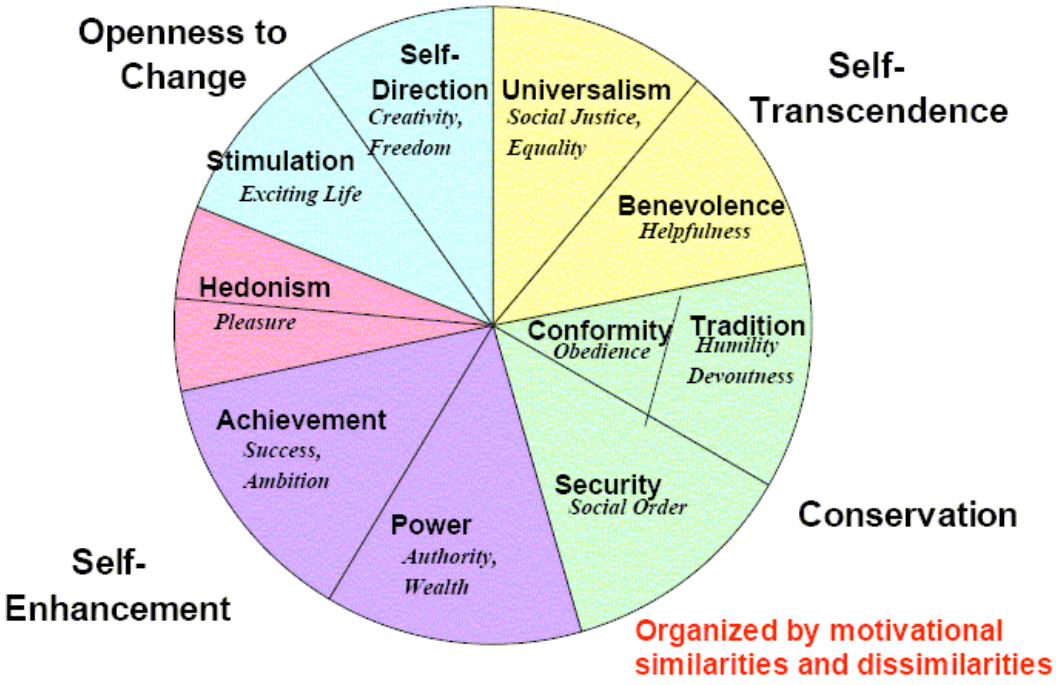
- extrinsic vs. intrinsic
- self-transcendence vs. physical-self.

*Extrinsic* goals are financial success, social recognition, and image. The satisfaction they confer is dependent on the responses of others ("popularity").

*Intrinsic* goals are personal growth, emotional intimacy and community involvement: these satisfy people's psychological needs ("self-acceptance"). *Self-transcendent* goals are matching society's desires, benefiting society and future generations, seeking out universal meanings and understandings ("spirituality").
*Physical-self* goals are maintaining and enhancing physical pleasure and health, safety and survival ("hedonism").

Values are closely related to life goals, but more abstract. They are conceptions of what is desirable, what is important in life. Tied in with emotions and beliefs, they are motivational constructs. Empirical research into the values held by individuals has shown that they also form an ordered system of priorities that characterise them as individuals. Shalom Schwartz et al. have identified ten basic values across cultures: Self-direction, stimulation, hedonism, achievement, power, security, conformity, tradition, benevolence, and universalism. In particular they identified four higher-order value types, arranged in pairs on opposite sides of a circumplex:

FIGURE 2 (Schwartz 2010)



- openness to change vs. conservation
- self-enhancement (hedonism, achievement and power) vs. self-transcendence (universalism and benevolence).

Although self-enhancement dominates in most societies, and is biologically given, it is worth noting that empathy with others and cooperation are not merely moral constructs arising out of social interaction, but also, according to recent research into mirror neurons, universal human qualities. We are innately sensitive to our interdependence with others in collaborative activities. As with life goals, the *structure* of values is quite consistent across cultures, despite differences in the *importance* attached to particular values. Activating certain values tends to reinforce those related with it. Schwartz's research revealed a strong correlation between benevolence/ universalism, intrinsic goals, and environmental concern and behaviour. Preference for harmony with nature, absence of social hierarchy, intellectual autonomy goes with valuing tolerance and peace. Whereas people who endorse self-enhancing values and extrinsic goals are more negatively disposed towards non-human nature. Power and achievement go with consuming nature, not being a part of it, with mastery and hierarchy. This research gives us insight into the challenges that responding to information about a particular issue may present to a person's values and identity. It also suggests the importance for society of activating and embedding universalist and benevolent values, be it through education, the media, or even literature and film. I now turn to some examples of the framing of climate change

Mike Hulme suggests there have been four principal historical shifts in the public understanding of climate change (pp. 61-3, 191f., 226?):

- As part of the environmental awakening in the 1960s, anthropogenic climate change was raised by scientists as a potential danger
- Revived as an issue at the UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972, generating public awareness for the first time. However, the threat was still widely seen as one of cooling rather than warming: this is reflected in popular science books by Lowell Ponte, *The Cooling* (Prentice Hall, 1976) and John Gribbin (*Forecasts, Famines and Freezes*, 1977).

- Idea of global warming gained public attention in the ‘greenhouse summer’ of 1988. ‘Klimakatastrophe’ had been coined in *Spiegel* in April 1986. The end of the Cold War led to a shift to climate anxieties. IPCC founded. In 1992 the idea of dangerous climate change at the heart of policy after UN Framework Convention of Climate Change.
- After 09/11 in 2001, a new vocabulary of catastrophe, chaos, havoc, doom, judgement and irreversibility.

He also writes of different framings, which are connected with these shifts, but exist alongside each other today. In the 1980s climate change was essentially an environmental issue concerning policy and science, bureaucrats and meteorologists. In the nineties it was reframed as a development issue, with the Rio Earth Summit 1992 and the Johannesburg Summit in 2002. The Stern Review recast it as an economic issue in 2006. It has been cast as an issue of national and global security since 2001, especially the UN Security Council debates in 2007. And as an issue of morality and social justice in statements by the World Council of Churches. Framing in these five contexts corresponds roughly to the different life goals and values I have already mentioned: health and survival, equality, materialism, power and safety, and communitarianism. The crisis is interpreted as resulting from over-consumption by the North, a failure of the market, a misguided security strategy, etc.

Frames, as I have already said, map values onto real life public debates. Values are articulated and promoted through the choice of frames. Drawing on a study of frames that dominate environmental debate (J.S. Dryzeck, *The Politics of the Earth*, 2nd edition 2005), Crompton puts forward three pairs of opposing value-related deep frames as structuring our perceptions and attitudes, which may be relevant to representations and understandings of climate change (Crompton 47-9, 53-7):

1. Whether we conceive of human nature as guided by *self-interest* or *common interest*. The first group of people see individuals as engaging in cost-benefit calculations. (And for psychological reasons, a deep frame conveying the importance of self-interest is also likely to establish the importance of assessing it in economic terms.) Others see value as not explained exclusively in economic terms. They believe

in an inherent value of other creatures and things, and they do things in the interest of others without anticipating personal material benefit. For them, key values are community feeling, fitting into nature, tolerance of ideas and beliefs, social justice, universalism and benevolence.

2. Whether we conceive of the family (and state) as led by a *strict father* or *nurturing parent*. Lakoff 2002 examined how models of family were mapped onto the nation, home and homeland, parent and government. They corresponded to different models of individuals' freedom and the role of the government. He associated this with two contrasting views of the role of parents. Strict father: authority and control, hierarchy, social power as guiding principle; nurturing parent: duty to love and nurture, teach children to empathise with others, show responsibility. The family frame has close links with the house/ home frame, and the health/ wellbeing frame. All are deep-seated, value-laden and emotionally charged. Transferring these frames to other domains can strengthen certain arguments, activating notions of responsibility and protection, including that of the environment as a shared living space. Community feeling and universalism values are instantiated in the common-interest deep frame, and can be conveyed in this domestic experience. But important not to reinforce the subordination of nature as children or women.
3. Whether we conceive of society as legitimately shaped by *elite governance* or *participative democracy* determines people's views of the role of govt in public decision-making. Are educated elites best placed to take decisions in the common interest? Elite governance implies need for leadership, hierarchy, values avoidance of mob rule, it takes acceptance of current order as the price. This framing is associated with image, pursuit of authority, power, observing social norms, conformity. Whereas participative democracy supposes exercise of power by the collective, which can be organised, collaboration with citizens, combination of personal transformation with collective development of ideals. Related values are self-acceptance and self-direction.

Time does not permit me to go into the further classifications of framing in terms of risk perception and theories of social amplification of risk which Mike Hulme devotes a chapter of his book to. More relevant for cultural analysis is the final set of framings of climate change which he presents in his final chapter. Here he proposes the use of four mobilising narratives of climate change (p. 329), rooted respectively in nostalgia, fear, pride and justice. Each is associated with key metaphors:

- lamenting Eden,
- presaging apocalypse,
- constructing Babel,
- celebrating Jubilee.

These four myths can link our thoughts, discourses and feelings about climate change with deeper sets of assumptions about the world around us, behind us, ahead of us, and our relationship with them (p. 341). They have the potential to be shared narratives binding together otherwise different people, because they capture some of our most enduring psychological instincts as human beings:

1. *Eden* loss, lament, yearning for restoration. Global climate is viewed as a last remaining remnant of the natural, the wild, pure and pristine. Fragile, needs protection. Suggests our concern with cc less rationally rooted in the diminution of human (or non-human) welfare than elsewhere, namely in its symbolic importance for us. Climate change is the destruction of the last stronghold of nature untainted by man. (p. 343) Underpins the Deep Ecology movement and some forms of eco-theology. Tells of our desire to return to a simpler era. Discomfort with our godlike powers.
2. *Apocalypse* Has dominated environmental discourse from *Silent Spring* to *The Limits to Growth* and beyond, in visions of impending disaster, species loss, tipping points and thresholds such as melting polar ice sheets, the collapse of the Atlantic heat conveyor, and massive methane release from no longer frozen tundra. Rooted in fear of the future and a view of nature as ephemeral. Indulges the desire to dramatise, call to arms. This informs radical ecology, ecological modernisation, social activism AND neoliberal conservatism. Fear has

been shown to change attitudes – but it doesn't necessarily increase active engagement. Tells of our fear of our voracious appetite for material things. Reveals anxiety over our loss of sense of mystery and gratitude. [He ignores apocalypse as guilt mechanism, punishment-wish, and the typical post-apocalyptic adventure narratives.]

3. *Babel* This narrative reflects our aspiration to God-like status, hubris, the desire to dominate. It mobilises the idea of climate utopias and our ability to engineer them for human benefit. Charles Fourier laid out the first blueprint of human-engineered climate in the 1820s, see Doblin 1928, and James Lovelock today. Mirrors in space, injections of sulphur dioxide, into the stratosphere, etc. Confidence in human ability to control nature is widespread, myth of climate mastery. [He ignores the destruction of Babel.]
4. *Jubilee* This myth derives from the idea in the *Torah* of the liberation of slaves and debtors every 50 years at the celebration of the jubilee. It is driven by our instinct for justice, and uses the language of ethics. Responsibility, echoing theological concepts of sin and repentance. Provides an idea around which our concern for social and environmental justice can be mobilised. Tells of our call to respond to injustice.

Some of these myths are likely to sound familiar to ecocritics. The first two correspond to two of the tropes or extended metaphors examined in Greg Garrard's *Ecocriticism* (Routledge New Critical Idiom Series 2004), as representing and reflecting on human interaction with the natural environment: the pastoral/ wilderness, and apocalypse. Garrard's other tropes (dwelling/ home, animals, the planet, and to a lesser extent pollution and health) can equally be understood as frames. Like Hulme, Garrard sees these schemata, which are anchored in centuries of cultural tradition, as determining our very perception of nature and environment. He describes them as preformed patterns, originating in Judaic and Christian narratives, Greek myths and works of world literature, and associated with powerful emotions (especially guilt, fear of punishment and longing for redemption or the good life). Their function in society is to invest our everyday experiences with meaning, to explain the relationship of humans with the natural environment, and to make

changes in the environment understandable. They are traditionally associated with corresponding literary modes and writing strategies, genres and narrative structures, metaphors and images.

This raises the question how frame analysis as practised in Communications Studies relates to ecocritical analysis, in terms of forms and themes. Perhaps the concept of framing can fruitfully inform literary and filmic analysis. Looking at it from the opposite perspective, there may perhaps also be a special expertise which ecocritics can fruitfully share with colleagues in media and communications studies, as a contribution to the study of cultural framing.

I have already indicated that frame analysis in practice employs methods quite similar to those used in literary and linguistic analysis. If one leaves aside a number of analyses of participant responses and some large-scale statistical analyses of patterns of words in word corpora, the empirical study of frames is on the whole a matter of close-text analysis: it identifies meaning clusters in documents, i.e. distinctive words and phrases with interrelated meanings. It extracts the underlying conceptual metaphors relating to frames, and examines tacit presuppositions and modal expressions implying obligation or prohibition, which presuppose a frame of values. (See Crompton Appendix 3, pp. 87-8.)

There is also research into the linguistic repertoires associated with different frames which might be of interest and relevance to ecocritics. These routinely used systems of language (vocabulary, style, metaphors, idioms and images) for describing and evaluating actions, events, and people have been examined in a study of the discourse of climate change published by the London-based Institute for Public Policy Research in 2006/ 2007. Their analysis of newspaper articles, TV programmes, radio and websites identified 12 different repertoires. These range from alarmism, sober alarm and conservative alarm, through reluctant belief and small actions to techno-optimism. Alarm and Resolve are two headings under which mainstream positions can be grouped, while outlying positions include comic nihilism, “warming is good”, rhetorical scepticism, expert denial, free market and free rider.

FIGURE Hulme p. 231

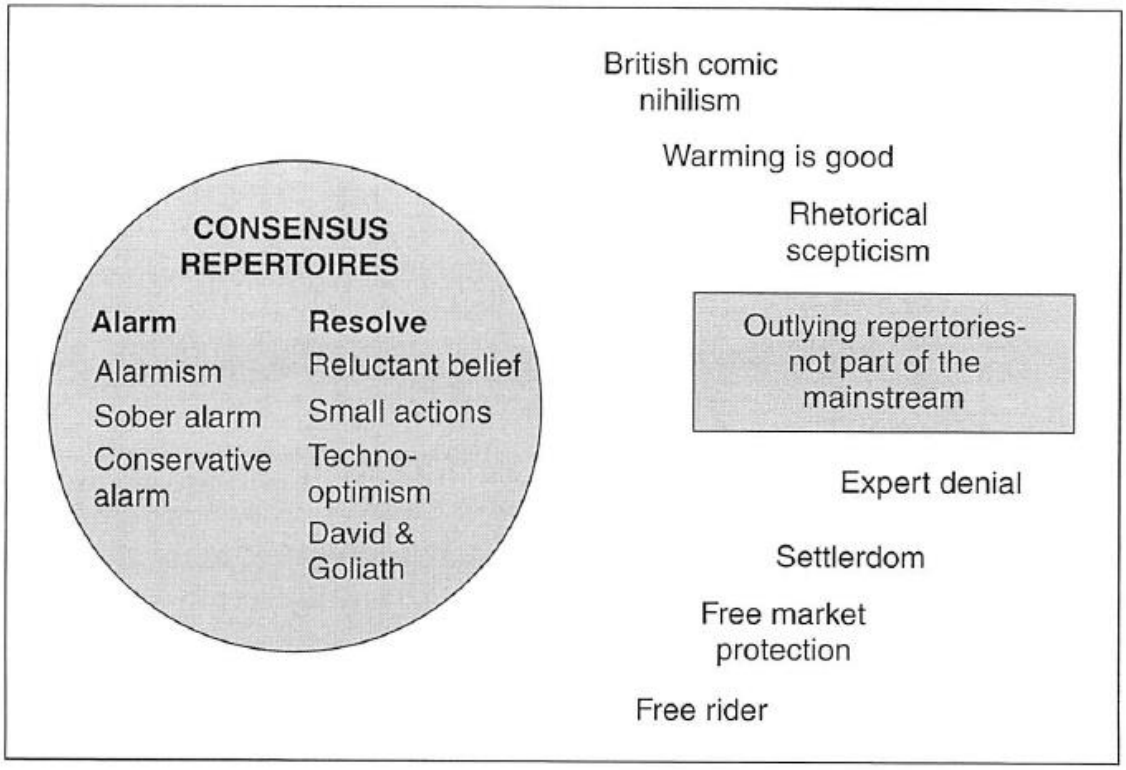



FIGURE 7.1: *Consensus and outlying 'linguistic repertoires' used in public discourses around climate change in UK society between March and July 2007. Source: Segnit and Ereaut (2007).*

Finally, Hulme also devotes a short section to the iconography of climate change. Climate change, he notes, is largely outside the capacity of unaided human perception. The symptoms are often invisible, and the most dramatic effects are scheduled in the future. But making climate change visual has a long history, e.g. in Pieter Bruegel's paintings of the small ice age in the early modern period, and early nineteenth-century engravings of frost fairs on the Thames. Similarly, palm trees and melting glaciers have become familiar emblems of global warming. Polar bears in particular have become hackneyed symbols of the disappearing North and the end of a climate we grew up with. In 2005, David Buckland's Cape Farewell Project sought to motivate contemporary artists and writers to find new ways of representing the implications of climate change, and there have been other interesting initiatives. Curiously, these have tended to address artists and performance artists rather than writers. (Goethe Institute website)

In the studies of the framing of environmental communication in political discourse and the media, only occasional mention is made of literature and film. Usually it is to say that novels and feature films are essentially alarmist in approach, and their impact is short-lived, if not actually counter-productive. This view is borne out by a study which Hulme cites of the impact of the film *The Day After Tomorrow* on viewers' environmental concern and behaviour in the United States, Germany and Japan. The underlying assumption here that literature and film are of marginal significance in environmental communication differs sharply from the conception of the function of literature in society in Hubert Zapf's theory of Literature as Cultural Ecology. Timo Muller summed up this approach and began to explore its links with frames in a workshop paper given in Bath last December. The key idea is that literature, or at least the works of great literature, act as an ecological force within the system of a given culture. It produces knowledge that can help restore the balance with nature which is needed for survival. The processes of literary ecology do not tend to offer concrete solutions, but rather to work within the reservoir of the collective imagination, where they represent and overcome problems symbolically, and thus change, indirectly, in the long run, the way we think about both nature and culture. They frame our notions of the natural environment, in a continuous process of adapting and reformulating existing frames and proposing new ones. In the writing of other ecocritics, claims are commonly made that literature

- Reaches audiences who are not accessible to normal science communication (drawing them in through entertainment)
- deautomatises our perception and interpretation of issues through innovative formulation, opening us up to alternatives,
- keeps alternative options open and present as an archive, and thus complements hegemonic understandings and representations,
- addresses the whole person holistically including the emotions, e.g. with role models (motivation)
- encapsulates ideas in striking and memorable figurations (cultural memory)

Can literature play a significant role, if not in providing new solutions to climate change, then in sensitising the public to it, and help change people's attitudes and behaviour? The key frames in American and British climate change literature would appear to be

- apocalyptic
- pastoral/ elegiac
- conspiracy and critique of elites

How does this compare with the framing of environmental discourse in media studies and environmental communication? Clearly, the literary framing has little in common with the political framing of climate change as an environmental issue, a matter of development, or an economic issue. There are some examples of framing as a security issue. But literature on the whole tends to frame climate change as a moral issue, a matter of social justice.

In terms of goals and values, some works model scenarios exploring the tensions between self-transcendence (spirituality) and physical self positions, or between extrinsic and intrinsic goals (i.e. community involvement). Representations framing climate change as an issue of hedonism versus conformity to tradition, and one of self-direction vs. security. Many of the linguistic repertoires in media discourse identified by Segnit and Erault are also found in literature, but the distribution between consensus and outlying approaches to climate change seems different. Crompton's three deep frames seem relevant to literary texts such as Fleck's *GO!*, in which self-interest is played out against common interest, the strict father frame against the nurturing parent, and elite governance against participative democracy. But these stand quite close to each other, and by no means exhaust the possibilities of framing in literature, as we have seen in Ilija Trojanow's essay. The most useful categorisation of frames is that outlined in Mike Hulme's final chapter, where he distinguishes between lamenting Eden, presaging apocalypse, construction Babel and celebrating Jubilee, and links these with the psychological phenomena of nostalgia, fear, pride and sense of justice.

Whereas media writers tend to apply a consistent range of frames, thereby controlling the number of alternatives open to receivers as they construct their social reality, literature and art are perhaps rather sites of experimental reframing. They represent environmental issues in more

complex, subtler and hence more powerful ways, which open discourse out to alternatives, ambivalences and ironies. This raises the question of the role played by Creativity. Is creativity usefully conceived of as a process of reframing, perhaps rather of *de-framing*? Are particular media and genres especially effective vehicles for informing members of the public, enabling them to participate more actively in policy debates, and empowering them to change society, e.g. through consumer choices? Can environmental education be enhanced by training young people to recognise the framing of environmental issues, whether approached through political discourse or works of literature and art?

Hulme's perspective: framing climate change – from visions of disaster, through strategies of normalisation, perhaps to climate change as an imaginative resource?

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