



Sveriges lantbruksuniversitet  
Swedish University of Agricultural Science

Collaboration, communication, and climate change:  
A participant observation study of



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Master Thesis – 15 ECTS

Environmental Communication and Management

Department of Urban and Rural Development

2009

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- Title:** Collaboration, communication, and climate change: A participant observation study of European Climate Foundation
- Keywords:** Climate Change; Collaboration; Communication Strategy; Environmental Advocacy Campaign; Society
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- Program:** Environmental Communication and Management; 60 ECTS (1 year master program)
- Course:** Practice and Thesis Work in Environmental Communication and Management, EX0409; 15 ECTS
- Paper:** Master Thesis in Environmental Communication and Management, 15 ECTS / 15 hp  
Advanced (D) level  
Uppsala  
2009

## **Abstract**

This study seeks to understand how collaboration in policy-influencing institutions, who share the same goal, works through a case study. By conducting participant observation at European Climate Foundation (ECF), the author has been able to identify the characteristics of collaboration between ECF and policy-influencing institutions that receive grants from them (grantees). This is made possible by examining the collaboration through the use of symbolic interactionism theory on society. Communication strategy ECF and grantees utilize is mainly in the form of environmental advocacy campaign. This strategy is the outcome of their collaboration and, at the same time, it is what makes up the collaboration. All in all, these results strive to highlight matters that support effective communications.

## **Acknowledgement**

This paper allows me to demonstrate the knowledge I have gained at Environmental Communication and Management master's program. My brief internship at European Climate Foundation has left me with a taste of the complex yet fascinating world of environmental communication. To these people, I owe a debt of gratitude.

My utmost thanks to Armin Mayer and Stephen Boucher who have given me the amazing opportunity to get involved on their daily activities. The lunches were great, too!

A special thank you to Lars Hallgren whose feedback and advice guided me throughout the writing process. Similarly, my deepest appreciation to Vanessa Coronel and other staff at Environmental Communication unit for sharing your knowledge and experience.

To my dear friends in this program (you know who you are!), we are in this together. Thanks for exchanging what's on your mind; your input has been more than helpful on finalizing this paper. We are all going to shine and I hope our reunion one day in Bali will come true!

Last but not least, my parents. Mama and Ayah, none of these would happen without your everlasting support. Thank you for always believing in me and allowing me to be anything I want to be.

Let's continue the ever-challenging work to save this planet!

Natasha Alexandra Kindangen

Uppsala, June 2009

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# 1. Introduction

In recent years, climate change has been the “it” topic. While skeptics argue that it is a part of natural cycle, more and more scientific data proved that the today’s climate change are largely induced by human activities. Actions are taking place on various levels in society across the globe; from educating common people to influencing governmental policy. As a student of environmental communication (EC), this topic catches my attention and the opportunity to conduct participant observation at European Climate Foundation (ECF) has made it possible for me to explore the “art” of EC through their perspective.

In his article *Nature’s “Crisis Disciplines”: Does Environmental Communication Have an Ethical Duty*, Robert Cox argues that EC practitioners have an ethical duty through their work to identify and recommend practices that enhance the ability of society to respond appropriately to environmental signals relevant to the well-being of both human civilization and natural biological systems (16). Consequently, this article provides me with normative basis which becomes my motivation to conduct the study.

At ECF, they collaborate with their grantees to achieve their objectives. For that reason, I want to learn how collaboration in policy-influencing institutions works because I believe they have the capacity to influence government who has the legitimate power to “move” its citizens, both individuals and organizations, to act more environmentally friendly. At the same time I challenge myself to engage in a more of political conversation, an area that I usually prefer to avoid yet over time I am becoming more curious about it.

## 1.1 Aim

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to learn how the collaboration between ECF and institutions that receive grants from them works; as well as to investigate the communication strategy they use to communicate with their audience<sup>1</sup>. The study is limited within the working area of ECF Brussels – with a focus on EU Climate and Energy Package<sup>2</sup>.

Deriving from the aim, questions on the next page serve as analysis guidelines and eventually will be answered based on my interpretation of the situation.

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<sup>1</sup> see sub-chapter 5.1 for explanation of the word *audience* within communication strategy discourse

<sup>2</sup> see sub-chapter 4.3 for outline of the Package

## **1.2 Central question**

What characterize the collaboration between ECF and their grantees?

## **1.3 Sub-questions**

How does the collaboration take place?

How does the role of each institution influence others and the situation?

What are the results of the collaboration?

## **2. Methodology**

### **2.1 The thesis**

This paper is qualitative, interpretive, and reflective; and due to these traits, the author is often found using first-person singular personal pronouns – I, me, and myself. Qualitative means that any discussions are not measured in numbers. Interpretive suggests that the analysis is based on the author’s interpretation and carried out by applying theories acquired through her education that she finds able to making sense of the empirical situation. Reflective refers to the author’s effort to elaborate the analysis of her experience yet, at the same time, she is aware of her bias (see the following sub-chapter).

All of these choices are pre-determined by education the author obtained in Environmental Communication and Management program – as the author perceives that the program emphasizes on the traits mentioned above – and therefore the theories-in-use are taken for granted. Moreover, the author is aware that, at first glance, some parts in this thesis look somewhat repetitive. The repetition occurs given the nature of interpretation in which dialectical relationship between interaction that creates perspective (for interpretation) and perspective that creates interaction are constantly taking place. As a result, it is almost impossible to treat them separately even when they are not explicitly mentioned.

### **2.2 The study**

This study should be seen as a case study given that it is not able to portray the ECF and grantees’ relationship as a whole. As a result, whenever I mentioned “ECF and grantees” in this paper, this refers to ECF Brussels and the following institutions:

- Friends of the Earth Europe (FoEE) [www.foeeurope.org](http://www.foeeurope.org)
- Climate Action Network Europe (CAN-E) [www.climnet.org](http://www.climnet.org)
- Institute for European Environmental Policy (IEEP) [www.ieep.eu](http://www.ieep.eu)
- The Centre [www.thecentre.eu](http://www.thecentre.eu)

The participant observation study was conducted for 10 working days at ECF. During this period, I went to a number of meetings between ECF and their grantees; one ECF internal meeting; as well as listening to conference calls. In each situation, I strove to identify the features of ECF and grantees’ relationship. This was carried out by making a note of each meeting. For the most part, I wrote down the issues brought up during the meetings. I was



also able to identify word usage<sup>3</sup> in their discourse; yet, I chose not to further investigate micro-level of the communicative act e.g. misunderstanding and power relation. In the meetings the individuals' views and ideas were, in my opinion, complementing each other – meaning that each idea is able to mutually complete other ideas that were expressed beforehand; together, they create a bigger picture that helps ECF and grantees in setting up strategies.

Another question that may arise is how two different positions, ECF as granter versus the institutions as grantees, can have the same perspective on the goal of their collaboration. I argue that this is the consequence of examining them as a society<sup>4</sup>, based on symbolic interactionism, wherein the emphasis is put on finding similarities rather than differences. I am aware that in doing so I overlook differences that inherently exist in the collaboration; which have potentials to be problematized.

After gathering the empirical materials, the next phase was to interpret these raw data by means of using a series of theories. This phase began with narrowing down theories – discussed in the next chapter – and wisely synthesizing them. In the analysis (Chapter 4 and 5), most parts can be seen as divided into three components: pragmatic theory, description of situation, and interpretation of situation. Moreover, I choose to follow structures available in the text books I have been reading because I consider them being able to make this paper appears coherent to me and the readers. I realize the weakness of doing so is that, sometimes, I am not able to express reflection of my experience which may be relevant to that particular section directly. Nevertheless, I deal with this situation by writing the reflection down if I find it very crucial; and there is a separate reflection chapter at the very end of this paper.

The justification above can also be translated as my bias affects the research validity in a way that I do not challenge the legitimacy of theories-in-use. Instead, this thesis is merely a systematic elaboration of the theories-in-use through analyzing and reflecting upon my experience.

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<sup>3</sup> see sub-chapter 4.3.3 for discussion on shared language and word usage

<sup>4</sup> see sub-chapter 3.1 for definition of society

### 3. Theory

Through providing theoretical background, this section attempts to give account to my perspective which affects the interpretation process. These theories have led me to be able to decipher my observation; in the later analysis part, some theories can be found within the domain of other theories since they are able to complement one another.

#### 3.1 Charon on Symbolic Interactionism

Charon’s model of interpretation process (Figure 3.1) serves as the basis for this purely qualitative thesis. As we see the world through our perspective, I use my perspective as EC student which is undeniably influenced by my reference groups<sup>5</sup>. Through this perspective, I believe that the theories I am using fit my idea on how this thesis should look like. In the process of writing this paper, my reference groups are classmates (who are also working on their theses), thesis supervisor, ECF staff, and environmentalists at large. My perspective is then utilized to construe ECF and the grantees’ perspectives; the use of interpretation process will be revisited.

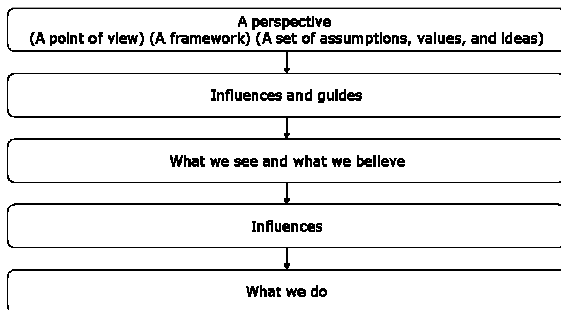


Figure 3.1: Interpretation process

ECF and their grantees are treated as a “society” in this study. Charon defines society as any instance of ongoing social interaction that is characterized by cooperation among actors and that creates a shared culture (167). By treating the institutions as a society, I expect to gain a sound understanding of sociological social psychology<sup>6</sup> of their collaboration; the analysis part attempts to critically analyze the theory-empirical materials coherence.

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<sup>5</sup> Reference groups are groups whose perspective the individual borrows to see reality. Each individual has a number of reference groups and he chooses one or more reference groups based on the role he is taking on a specific situation (qtd. in Charon 37-38, 78).

<sup>6</sup> Sociological social psychology (SSP) in comparison to psychological social psychology (PSP) emphasizes on social interaction and researching real-life events. PSP focuses on the developments of attitudes and attitude change and is more likely to use surveys or laboratory experiments (Charon 23-24).

There are two views on society: statics (structure) versus dynamics (change). In this study the view that emphasizes society as structure will be disregarded as it fails to show how society is ever-changing through interaction. Nevertheless, I am aware that by choosing to investigate society as dynamics, I choose to neglect predetermined hierarchical power structure that might exist.

I would also like to touch upon the nature of "reality"; though it will not be further investigated, it is useful to know how a society sees reality. Symbolic interactionists recognize "reality" as social. Though they acknowledge a physical objective reality exists independent of human beings' social definition, we do not respond to this physical objective reality – the situation "as it exists" – directly; the definition of the situation "as it exists" is highly influenced by our social life (44).

I attempt to explain this notion by constructing an example: dogs and two kids. Two kids, X and Y, were asked by their teacher to describe how they feel about dogs. X grew up in a family where dogs are considered parts of the family. Y grew up being taught dogs are animals that should be avoided. As a result, X describes dogs as loveable and faithful animals while Y describes dogs as scary and filthy animals. When this description turns into a real situation, X and Y would act differently toward a same dog (and perhaps the dog-owner, too). This creates different experience of a same object. A dog "as it exists", the body, is out there. But their definition of dogs is influenced – in this case – by their upbringing, their social life.

By acknowledging that reality is social, it makes me aware of bias that subsists in individuals (including myself) and the society.

### **3.2 Linell on Dialogism**

Dialogism is a bundle of theoretical and epistemological assumptions about human action, communication, and cognition (6). While dialogism will not be utterly scrutinized, two of many elements within dialogism, contextualism and situated meaning-making can be found in the discussion about society. This theory is needed to support the explanation about word usage in the ECF and grantees' collaboration. By doing so, I am able to further explore features of their collaboration.

### **3.3 Cox on Environmental Communication**

Cox reveals that EC serves two different functions: pragmatic – educate, alert, persuade, mobilize, and help us to solve environmental problems; and constitutive – on a subtler level constitute or compose our understanding of nature and environmental problems (12). This paper may look more pragmatic at first glance, yet I perceive the functions above overlap each other.

Pragmatic is particularly evident when it comes to the discussion about environmental advocacy campaign – the theory I bring into play to elaborate ECF and grantees' communication strategy. The traits of pragmatic such as communication-in-action and a vehicle for problem solving and debate are made clear in the discussion. Constitutive, owing to its subtleness, may not always be explicitly indicated; nevertheless, I am conscious that this function exists in my analysis.

### **3.4 Nitsch Environmental Communication**

Nitsch stated that "the answer to question of how we can most effectively perform EC is – it depends!" Nonetheless, the following should be kept in mind when working with EC: problem perception, commitment to environmental issues, and human imperfection (206-207). I consider these notions as essential guidelines to reflect upon ECF and grantees' communication strategy.

## **4. ECF and grantees as a society**

### **4.1 About ECF**

ECF was founded in late 2007 as an initiative of six Anglo-American funding partners to boost Europe's capacity to mitigate climate change. ECF's current funding partners are: Arcadia, The Children's Investment Fund Foundation, The ClimateWorks Foundation, The Ecofin Research Foundation, The McCall MacBain Foundation, The Oak Foundation, and The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. These foundations' assets come from past business revenues e.g. The Oak Foundation from an interest in the Duty Free shoppers business or The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation from private wealth of William R. Hewlett – the co-founder Hewlett-Packard Company. Most of ECF's fund is re-granted to NGOs engaged in trying to bring about meaningful policy change. They also work to build alliances with individuals in government and business sector.

The work of ECF is mainly divided into four programs: energy efficiency, low-carbon power generation, transportation, and EU climate policies and diplomacy. ECF Brussels focus its operation on the fourth one, EU climate policies and diplomacy.

### **4.2 The grantees**

While ECF is continuously re-granting their fund to a number of grantees, the grantees discussed here are limited to the specific context of my research as mentioned in Chapter 2 (Methodology); the grantees are FoEE, CAN-E, IEEP, and The Centre.

- FoEE receives grants for its Big Ask campaign – persuading EU member states make legally binding commitments to cut emissions year-on-year.
- CAN-E receives grants for two projects – to scale up its core activities on the EU Climate and Energy Package and capacity building in Central and Eastern Europe; and to provide administrative and coordination support in order to free up senior staff capacity to focus on strategy and implementation around the EU Climate and Energy Package.
- IEEP plays a role advising and analyzing policies scientifically in which statistics perform a vital part.
- The Centre is more appropriate to be referred as a consultant – the relationship between ECF and The Centre is on a consultancy basis. The Centre is hired to provide intelligence and communication advice.

### **4.3 EU Climate and Energy Package**

On January 23, 2008, European Commission put forward a far-reaching package of proposals that aims to reduce EU's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and promote renewable energy by 2020. The targets are:

- Cutting GHG emissions by at least 20% of 1990 levels (30% if other developed countries commit to comparable cuts)
- Increasing use of renewables (wind, solar, biomass, etc) to 20% of total energy production (currently  $\pm$  8.5%)
- Cutting energy consumption by 20% of projected 2020 levels – by improving energy efficiency

(See *Citizen's Summary EU Climate and Energy Package* for details)

Pertaining to the reduction of GHG emissions, ECF and their grantees are advocating at least 30% cut instead of 20% as the Package suggested.

### **4.4 ECF and grantees as a society: interpreting the phenomena**

Based on Charon's view on society, it is for every organized stable continuous social interaction we might call "society." The collaboration between ECF and grantees is examined step-by-step by using the following qualities:

1. Society is symbolic interaction
2. Society is symbolic interaction that is characterized by cooperative action
3. Society is social interaction that is symbolic, that is characterized by cooperation, and that develops culture

I reckon the first quality as the initial phase of interaction; the second one is when the interaction starts to develop; and the third one as the state which is sustained in the long run.

#### **4.4.1 Society is symbolic interaction**

Society is symbolic interaction because it involves communication and interpretation by the actors (Charon 158). They start by taking one another into account – for instance, ECF acknowledge the existence of FoEE and CAN-E as well-established institutions and their grantees. ECF consider what FoEE and CAN-E are doing matter to ECF and vice versa. They believe their acts are intertwined – in terms of combating climate change. Their acts are not imitating one another but one's acts matter to the others. Subsequently, ECF, FoEE, and

CAN-E intentionally communicate about what they are doing and about to do. Through meetings, e-mails, and phone calls, these institutions are exchanging information. Exchanging information means that they are communicating. The communication takes place by using symbols and that is why society is symbolic interaction. The symbols here are words in English language. Individuals representing ECF and grantees are either native speakers or fluent in English and therefore misunderstanding in the word usage can be reduced. Because they are able to re-interpret one another's acts, the interaction continues.

#### **4.4.2 Society is symbolic interaction that is characterized by cooperative action**

This continued symbolic interaction has a cooperative trait which contains five processes that must occur in the interaction (Charon 160):

1. Ongoing communication

*For cooperation to take place, actors must be "co-present."*

In today's world, this does not necessarily mean that the actors must be in the same place at the same time as the current technology allows us to do so. E-mails and phone calls incl. conference calls are being used as primary means of communication between ECF and grantees in addition to scheduled meetings.

2. Mutual role taking

*Actors must be "mutually responsive."*

The society's belief that their acts are intertwined has developed even more and by now ECF and grantees are in the position of observing each other's acts and making a good guess concerning the future acts in order to know what they should do. This process is rather implicit (taking place in mind) and consequently it is difficult to give a concrete example. Nevertheless, the bottom line is that the communication will not continue unless each actor in the society mutually takes role of one another.

3. Defining the others as social objects

*Actors must develop "congruent functional identities."*

Cooperation involves each actor recognizing that the other actor has an identity that is useful for completing task that they are facing. The identity here is essentially based on the evident institutional roles:

- Grantees recognize ECF as an institution that provides funding to grantees' projects and therefore ECF's existence is relevant to them.

- ECF see FoEE's Big Ask campaign as one of many instruments to reach ECF's aim – to promote climate and energy policies that greatly reduce Europe's GHG emissions.
- ECF see CAN-E's coordination is important because their function as a network working on climate and energy issues.
- ECF see the significance of IEEP's capability to provide scientific results on supporting ECF's campaign-style strategies (in collaboration with FoEE and CAN-E).
- ECF see The Centre as the consultant who should be able to provide further communication advice.

#### 4. Defining social objects together

*Actors must develop a "shared focus of attention."*

The object must be important to each actor. Thus, the object that becomes ECF and grantees' shared focus of attention is the topic of their conversation – around the efforts to combat climate change.

#### 5. Developing goals in interaction

*Actors must develop goals that are either the same or complimentary.*

Based on the mission statements mentioned earlier, I perceive ECF and grantees share the following goals:

- Macro level – the society aims to mitigate climate change.
- Meso level – the society strives to mitigate climate change by cutting Europe's GHG emissions by at least 30% by 2020
- Micro level – the society attempts to make EU and government of each member state government committed to the 30% cut. The focus for now is around the coming European Parliament elections, Swedish EU presidency, and COP15 in Copenhagen.

#### **4.4.3 Society is social interaction that is symbolic, that is characterized by cooperation, and that develops culture**

Culture is made up of versatile and multifaceted pieces that are interwoven one to another. In this case, culture is assessed as a shared perspective; a generalized other; and ever-changing.



## **Culture is a shared perspective**

The cooperative symbolic interaction eventually creates culture. Culture means the “consensus” of the group, the agreements, goals, knowledge, understandings, shared language and values that emerge together (Charon 162). The goals described earlier (macro, meso, and micro levels) are accepted by the society and thus becoming ECF and grantees’ agreements. Consequently, the agreements form a shared perspective – a viewpoint from which people in the society see reality<sup>7</sup>.

The reality in ECF and grantees’ shared perspective is that “climate change is happening and we need to take actions to prevent it from being catastrophic.” Moreover, shared perspective is also something that separates “us” from “them” – setting standards for the society and using the standards to judge others. The standards are generalized other discussed in the later part.

Another aspect that was looked into is shared language. In the meetings, words such as *intelligence*, *capacity building*, and *narrative* are often being used. These words seem to be taken for granted and the meanings have been pre-determined. For instance, *intelligence* refers to the information obtained from each (involved) EU member states about what is going on politically, initiatives from local NGOs, etc. that may hinder or contribute to ECF and grantees’ overall efforts. *Capacity building* refers to the effort to improve one’s skills on climate change issues e.g. the suggestion to fund media trip to UK for Polish journalists so that they can be “green” communicators. *Narrative* concerns the way stories on climate change should be presented so that the stories are compelling to the decision makers.

Pertaining to the word usage, it is impossible to avoid talking about contextualism and situates meaning-making which can be found within the domain of dialogism. According to contextualism, there is no such thing as a message without a context. One cannot make sense of a piece of discourse outside of its relevant contexts and – at the same time – these contexts would not be what they are in the absence of the (particular) discourse that takes place within them (Linell 7). Taking example from the word *intelligence*, in ECF and grantees’ discourse, they are using *intelligence* to indicate information about current political landscape of each EU member states. Intelligence is used differently in another discourse, for instance, in IQ (intelligence quotient) test where *intelligence* represents the

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<sup>7</sup> see sub-chapter 3.1 for definition of reality

ability to apply knowledge to manipulate one's environment or to think abstractly as measured by objective criteria ("Intelligence", def. 1).

Drawing on myself as an example, the first time I heard *intelligence* in the meeting, the word confused me as I have not immersed myself in ECF and grantees' discourse; since the discourse I mainly use *intelligence* in is around epistemology. The word made sense as soon as I could follow their conversation.

Situated meaning-making validates the above explanation by revealing that meanings can never be made unless parties have access to (sociocultural) resources for making meaning: language, concepts, knowledge about the world, social knowledge, norms, identities, etc., which govern expectations and efforts for meaning in concrete situations (Linell, p. 12). This is the theoretical basis of what I was suggesting earlier that the words (*intelligence*, *capacity building*, and *narrative*) seem to be taken for granted and the meanings have been pre-determined.

### **Culture is a generalized other**

Furthermore, culture encompasses the so-called generalized other – a guide to appropriate behavior in the group: formal and informal rules, procedures, taboos, traditions, morals (Charon, p. 163). Each actor in the society perceives a comparable generalized other in the situation they are all in. I would define the society's generalized other is the one that provides them with support to take actions in a diplomatic way. This signifies that ECF and grantees are not engaged in radical actions – their taboos; they use political and legal channels – their traditions; they use a proper, inoffensive language – morals.

### **Culture is ever-changing**

Society deals with an ever-changing environment. While culture represents the stability of the society, this stability cannot be complete as situations always involve some adjustment on the part of the cooperative group (Charon, p. 166). To begin with, the ever-changing changing environment of ECF and grantees is divided into two: external and internal factor. The external factor is principally around what is happening in the EU. Such events as rotating EU presidency every six months and the upcoming European Parliament elections are affecting the stability of the relationship in a way that ECF and grantees have to redefine their strategies to communicate climate change issues.

The internal factor would be the fact that people representing the institutions are coming and going to develop their professional experience i.e. when one moves to a new job, someone else is coming to take his position. Another instance would be when an institution decides to expand its operation and brings more people in the institution. Each individual brings his own personality traits that affect the society's culture as much as the culture affects him.

#### **4.5 Chapter conclusion**

This chapter strives to answer research questions "How does the collaboration take place?" and "How does the role of each institution influence others and the situation?" by treating ECF and grantees as a society.

In the beginning, ECF and grantees take each other into account, believe that their acts are to some extent intertwined, and then start interacting. The interaction undergoes a series of processes that are identical to what is meant by cooperation; in this stage, collaboration is taking place and the influence of institutional role becomes visible and relevant. This is due to each actor recognizing that the other actor has an identity that is useful for completing task they are facing – the identity is essentially the institutional role.

The question "What are the results of the collaboration?" can also be answered under the discussion of this chapter. Over time, the collaboration results in the creation of culture wherein ECF and grantees share common goals, language, values, etc.

## 5. Communication strategy: insight and hindsight

This chapter consists of two parts as indicated above. Insight refers to understanding about communication strategy I obtained by observing meetings while hindsight suggests reflection I have on the chosen communication strategy.

### 5.1 The insight

Through the meetings, I gained practical insight of what ECF (and grantees) do and are planning to do; the diagram below summarizes the insight (Figure 5.1). This diagram is based on my interpretation of meetings I have attended. Instead of treating each meeting as a separate entity, the overarching ideas of all meetings are merged together. Nevertheless, as I strive to make this piece coherent, I draw on one particular meeting to provide a loose structure to the text.

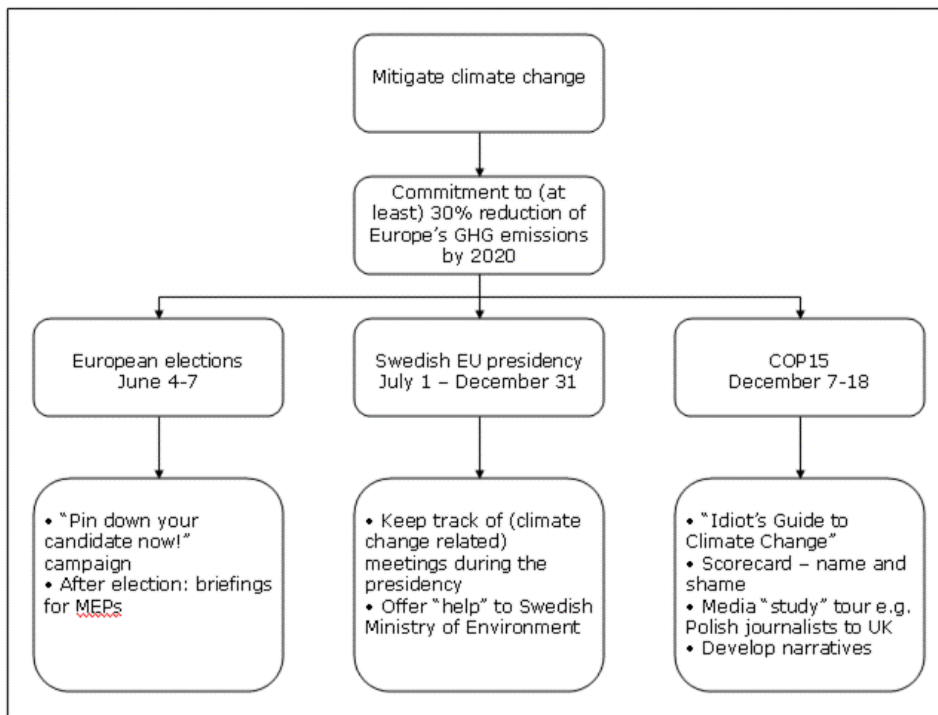


Figure 5.1: 2009 second semester action plan

Before moving on to the content of this chapter, there are two points I would like to highlight. First of all, what is meant by communication strategy here is not about how ECF and grantees communicate to one another; instead it is about how ECF and grantees sketch out a communication strategy that, eventually, makes it possible for them to reach their

goals and objectives. Secondly, this piece is not about assessing the effectiveness of the communication strategy. This piece attempts to describe and elaborate what kind of communication strategy the society chose to use.

According to David Orr, there are four broad ways to think about strategies that might lead to large-scale environmental change (qtd. in Cox 259):

1. Strategies that regard change as inevitable and strategy as a kind of midwifery
2. Strategies that rely on markets and economic self-interest
3. Strategies that rely on public policy, government power, and regulation
4. Strategies that aim to change values through education

It is apparent that ECF utilizes the third one – strategies that rely on public policy, government power, and regulation. Generally, in communication strategy the terms *goal* and *objective* are not synonyms. *Goal* refers to a long-term vision or value; while *objective* refers to a specific action or decision that moves a group closer to a broader goal. Time-span and content of goal and objective is quite flexible depending on the context we choose to observe. For instance, if we take “to mitigate climate change” as the goal, then the objective would be “30% GHG emissions reduction by 2020”; alternatively, we could take “30% GHG emissions reduction by 2020” as the goal and the objectives (for 2009) will include “to raise climate change issue on EP elections” and “to leverage discussion around COP15”. Both options are qualified as good objectives: concrete, specific, and time-limited action. Yet, I take the second option to deal with goal and objective, given that my knowledge in this issue is rather partial and the illustration provided through the second option is more tangible. Below is the illustration of the meeting about leveraging discussion around COP15:

During the meeting, it was mentioned that it is important to have synergy among the stakeholders of this event (NGOs, institutes, media, etc.); in particular those who are engaged in EU Climate Package discussion. One of the ideas was on the plan to make some kind of Complete Idiot’s Guide<sup>8</sup> to Climate Change. This guide is an easy-to-use two pages leaflet containing information on why governments must commit to reduce GHG emissions. The leaflet should be made in as many EU official languages as possible; there should be a reading committee to proofread and ensure

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<sup>8</sup> The Complete Idiot’s Guides is a line of how-to (instructional) books that each seeks to provide a basic understanding of a complex and popular topic.

appropriateness of the content. This can be executed by using, for instance, CAN-E for coordination (organizing briefings and debriefings), IEEP for scientific back-up (providing scientific facts in the leaflet), and The Centre for additional communication advice and graphic design. Another raised issue was about media outreach. In my point of view, there are so many interesting points brought up within this issue and they have normative traits; such as developing subjective yet influencing narratives or the proposal to publish scorecard – “name and shame” on each country’s environmental performance.

The illustration can be analyzed using Cox’s design of environmental advocacy campaign. An environmental advocacy campaign can be defined as a strategic course of action involving communication undertaken for a specific purpose; this purpose defends the well-being of life both natural and human environments sustain (244). There are three basic questions that serve as a guideline in designing an environmental advocacy campaign (Figure 5.2). Over the next few paragraphs, each question will be described including its corresponding communication task.

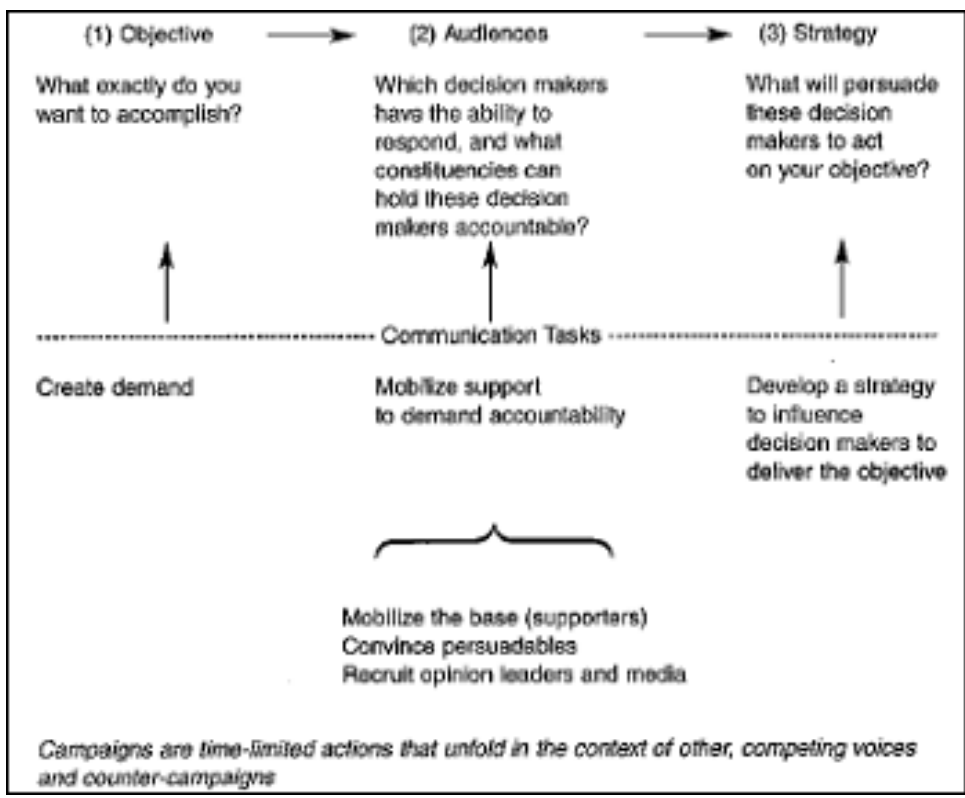


Figure 5.2: Design of the environmental advocacy campaign

**Question: What exactly do you want to accomplish?**

**Task: Create demand for a campaign objective**

Answering “what exactly do you want to accomplish?” means defining objective. Again, the objective in this case is to leverage discussion around COP15. The task to create demand means to create a broader “public” demand for the objective. ECF recognizes this need by indicating that it is important to have synergy among the stakeholders.

**Question: Which decision makers have the ability to respond, and what constituencies can hold these decision makers accountable?**

**Task: Mobilize support to demand accountability**

On this subject, ECF have two types of audiences. Before proceeding to the discussion about the audience, it is worthwhile to notice the use of the word *audience* within the discourse of communication strategy. *Audience* in communication strategy is often used interchangeably with the word *target group*. Following the relevance model of communication, *audience* in this discourse should not be seen as a passive group without its own initiatives, a mere receiver that only responds to the acts of the sender. Instead, audience must be regarded as an active group that has perceived needs; and in order to communicate effectively with the audience, the information content from the sender must relate to the audience’s perceived needs (Nitsch 205).

The primary audiences are EU politicians and politicians from each member state, specifically the ones who are going to be the representatives in COP15. The secondary audiences include media and opinion leaders. Some of the opinion leaders are already engaged in designing the communication strategy together with ECF – they are ECF’s grantees e.g. CAN-E, WWF, FoEE, and IEEP. Another opinion leader that was particularly mentioned is Rajendra Pachauri – chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). His statements are reckoned to have substantial influence on media and members of the primary audiences. Accordingly, the primary audiences are essentially the decision makers who have the ability to respond and the secondary audiences are those who can mobilize the support of relevant constituencies to hold the primary audiences accountable for their decisions.

## **Question: What will persuade these decision makers to act on your objective?**

### **Task: Develop a strategy to influence key decision makers**

In the context of the environmental advocacy campaign, strategy is a specific plan to bring about a desired outcome; it is the identification of the specific steps or means to an end (Cox 258). To begin with, as described in the meeting illustration, ECF recognizes the importance of having synergy with other stakeholders; and therefore collaborating with their grantees is a strategy per se. In response to the question “what will persuade these decision makers to act on your objective?” the communication task is the identification of the appropriate educational and persuasive messages, spokespersons, materials, and media for communicating with the primary audiences. The “Complete Idiot’s Guide to Climate Change” and the scorecard serve as the materials in this instance; the message delivered through these materials must be formulated in such a way that it becomes a powerful drumbeat<sup>9</sup>. Spokespersons here are mainly the opinion leaders e.g. Pachauri and the representatives from well-established NGO (whose also ECF’s grantees). In addition, average EU citizens – such as farmers from Spain whose lose their crops because of drought or residents in a near-dam area in The Netherlands that might have to move because of rising sea level – can be trained to present their stories in a compelling way.

Moreover, media as in news media across EU member states have to be able to convey comparable influential media coverage (though to some extent the context depends on local situation of each member state). This means some sort of training should be given to those who are not persuasive enough. For instance, Polish media has been indicated for not being proactive on climate change issues. To deal with this situation, it is proposed that ECF funds media “study” tour for Polish journalists to United Kingdom so that the journalists obtain another perspective and hopefully there will be more influential media coverage on climate change in Polish media.

## **5.2 The hindsight**

Clearly, ECF and grantees develop those strategies with certain expectations which are encapsulated in the objective – to leverage discussion around COP15 that leads to Europe’s commitment to cut its own emissions by 30% by 2020. With regard to the strategies, I seek to reflect upon them through the following notions proposed by Ulrich Nitsch: problem perception, commitment to environmental issues, and human imperfection.

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<sup>9</sup> Drumbeat: Vociferous advocacy of a cause (“Drumbeat” def. 2)



In *the Art of Environmental Communication*, Nitsch reveals the condition for communicating environmental problems:

A fundamental requirement for dealing with environmental problems is that we recognize and understand them properly – how we deal with a problem is affected by our perception of it; thus people perceive environmental problems in different ways ... environmental communicators cannot claim that they have the appropriate values but what they can and should do is to engage in a dialogue with people to reflect on our problem perceptions with the aim of clarifying and reviewing what we know, value, and believe. (207, 210)

I perceive ECF recognize the importance of engaging in a dialogue with people (their audiences) to reflect on ECF's problem perceptions. Dialogue in this sense does not only refer to *dialogue* in traditional sense – the strategies mentioned above can be interpreted as forms of dialogue. ECF notice that some of the decision makers have the perspective that they have to choose between environment and economy. For that reason, ECF strive to establish dialogue that allows the decision makers (and the rest of the audiences) to see through ECF's perspective – that it can be both environment and economy.

Nitsch also points out that the source of environmental commitment lies within people ... respect for, and believe in, people's potential for "doing good" are fundamental prerequisites for EC. I assume this notion has been embedded as a part of ECF's values; and ECF (together with grantees) communicate in such a way that they promote compelling narratives that emphasize on what we can do (to mitigate climate change) rather than narratives that merely give information about threats and destruction. This is relevant as overdoing narratives on threats and destruction often activate psychological defenses that discourage people to take actions (211-212).

Last but not least is about human imperfection. In comparison with two earlier notions, this notion brings us back to a wider discussion on climate change. According to Nitsch, human beings are often trapped in the roles and contexts they are in; as a result we are resistant to change. Therefore, when looking at environmental issues, it is important to focus on and reinforce the *role of the citizen* – meaning environmental communicators must create a room for people to feel that they are responsible of environmental issues and strengthen

people's norms on taking that responsibility in the long-term and of solidarity with a global society and future generations (215-216). Pertaining to what ECF do, this "room" is created in political and legal arena.

### **5.3 Chapter conclusion**

This chapter answers the question "What are the results of the collaboration?" in a pragmatic way. Communication strategy in the form of environmental advocacy campaign is the collaboration's result. The communication strategy comprises a range of detailed actions designed to fit a specific situation with a specific audience. Simultaneously, the collaboration between ECF and grantees is a strategy per se given that the institutional role of each actor plays a significant role in achieving their goals and objectives.

## 6. Conclusion

By looking at ECF and grantees as a society, the analysis reveals that shared goals and objectives are at the heart of their collaboration. Recognition of interdependency based on identity (institutional role) of each institution confirms the need for collaboration. This interdependency includes such aspects as exchange of information, coordination, and financial issue. The collaboration creates culture that exposes both stability and instability of collaboration between ECF and grantees. Stability is present when normative values are examined; instability appears every time change is taking place around the society, internally and externally.

Analysis on communication strategy has been able to complement the argument above – the need for collaboration – by providing a concrete example that is applicable to other situations yet we have to bear in mind that each situation is unique and thus some adjustment is always required. Communication strategy, in the form of environmental advocacy campaign, has been able to conform to both pragmatic and constitutive functions of EC – pragmatic regarding its form per se (persuading and mobilizing); constitutive given that the message aims to compose the audiences' understanding of climate change. Communication strategy is the result of the collaboration as well as what makes up the collaboration.

In a nutshell, the collaboration between ECF and their grantees is characterized by shared goals and objectives; recognition of interdependency; culture that includes shared language and values; and designing communication strategy.

In my point of view as an EC student, what makes this discussion relevant to EC as a whole is that we, as environmental communicators, need to be aware of matters that are able and potentially able to support effective communications – and sometimes these matters demand us to adopt back-to-basics approach i.e. understanding perspective. Again, as Nitsch points out, environmental communicators cannot claim to have the appropriate values; but what we can and should do is to engage in a dialogue with people to reflect on our perspective on environmental problems – climate change in this case. By doing so, we fulfill the ethical duty of EC practitioners.

Climate change will continue to be the “it” topic over the next decade and prospect for Europe to meet 30% GHG emissions cut is viable. Further ethnographic study that allows a more in-depth, holistic approach to matters that are able and potentially able to support effective communications on achieving this goal is worthwhile to be considered.

## **7. Afterthought**

This chapter should be regarded as independent from the overall discussion in this paper. The purpose of this chapter is to briefly reflect upon my learning from experience – as it is greatly encouraged in Environmental Communication and Management program.

Writing this thesis has enabled me to continuously redefining my experience, from “basic and direct” to “transformed and complex”. The basic and direct one is obtained during the meetings and written down in my notes; the transformed and complex one is essentially the experience of writing this thesis. Similar to my fellow classmates, in the initial stage of writing I experienced the difficulty to interpret my experience during the meetings into something that is sound, readable, and coherent. For instance, selecting theories to use is a challenge per se since I have to ask and re-ask myself: “is the theory relevant to what I am trying to say?” and “what will be the difference if I use this theory instead of that one?”

Recalling my experience during the internship (participant observation study), I become aware of the society’s influence on me. The society has enabled me to gain a deeper understanding – transformed my knowing into knowledge; confirmed my pre-assumption that individuals working on this field are passionate about dealing with environmental problems; facilitated my growing interest in politics. Undeniably, this experience opens up a new perspective for me to explore the art of environmental communication in the future.

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