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Turbulent Climate Discourses in Northern Sweden[1]

Flora Mary Bartlett (Goldsmiths)

Abstract

I examine how tensions between locals, environmentalists, and State politicians in a small town in northern Sweden are reinforced through national discourses of climate change and sustainability. Turbulence emerges across different scales of responsibility and environmental engagement in Arjeplog as politicians are seen by local inhabitants to be engaging more with the global conversation than with the local experience of living in the north. Moreover, many people view the environmentalist discourses from the politicians in the south, whom they deem to be out of touch with rural life, as threatening to the local experience of nature. These discourses pose a threat to their reliance on petrol, essential for travel, and are experienced locally as a continuation of the south's historical interference in the region. Based on thirteen months of field research, I argue that mistrust of the various messengers of climate change, including politicians and environmentalists, is a crucial part of the scepticism towards the climate change discourse and that we as researchers need to utilise the strengths of anthropology in examining the reception (or refusal) of climate change. The locals' mistrust of environment discourses had implications for my positionality, as I was associated with these perceived 'outsider' sensibilities. While the anthropology of climate change often focusses on physical impacts and resilience, I argue that we need to pay due attention to the local turbulence surrounding the discourses of climate change, which exist alongside the physical phenomena.

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[1] Based on a paper given at the 'Anthropology in London Day: Turbulence' Conference at UCL, June 18th 2019.

Introduction

National conversations about climate change ignited in Sweden in 2018 as summer heatwaves sparked forest fires and media responses embraced scientific predictions of record-breaking temperatures. National headlines warned of unprecedented weather extremes, cautioning that this was 'only the beginning' of what was to come (Aftonbladet 2018). It was the year when Swedish student Greta Thunberg became a global icon of environmental activism, inspiring worldwide 'school strikes for the climate' following her weekly demonstrations outside the Swedish parliament. This type of engagement with climate change discourses was, however, not shared universally across the country.

My PhD fieldwork in the rural north of Sweden came to an end that same summer, just after the forest fires and merely months before Greta's voice gained international recognition. My research took place in Arjeplog, a vast and sparsely populated municipality straddling the Arctic circle, where I examined local relationships to landscape, nature, and climate change. Building on my research with mostly 'non-Sami' [2]Swedish Arjeplogare[3], this paper examines the rejection of national and global discourses of climate change by my research participants[4], who view them as threatening to their way of life. The locals' rejection of

[2] I worked mostly with people who were not officially Sami (the indigenous population of Sweden and Sápmi) due in part to the historic and sometimes problematic interest of researchers in 'Sami life', but also given their own vocal responses to climate change in the region both in media and in research. I decided instead to focus mainly on the Swedish response to climate change narratives in Arjeplog while also not discounting those who identify as Sami. Defining oneself as Sami is not a straightforward task, and the Sami have been defined by others in the past variously through ethnicity, language, lifestyle, and occupation as reindeer herders – all of which can be problematic in various ways (Green 2009; Lantto and Mörkensam 2008). The Sami Parliament do have their own definitions for who is able to be a member in a sameby and vote in Sami elections, and only Sami can herd reindeer. A clear distinction between Sami and Swedish Arjeplogare can therefore be difficult, and some in Arjeplog were unsure if they could embrace certain 'Sami' traditions given their own complex ancestry.

[3] Arjeplogare is the local name for inhabitants of Arjeplog, as in English one would say 'Londoners'.

[4] I use 'participants' throughout this paper as others use 'interlocutors' or 'informants' due to my preference for acknowledging their active participation in both the gathering of and feedback to this research. They gave feedback for my arguments and were involved in the production of visual materials including the maps shown in this paper.

climate change discourses reveals tensions with the State and with the urban south. Where using the term Arjeplogare I am not referring to the whole community, but those with whom I worked closely (following Willerslev 2004) and whose views were echoed by others in the municipality.

The community has approximately 2,900 inhabitants, most of whom live in the town of Arjeplog with around 600 living out in the expanse of mountains and lakes that stretch to Norway in the west[5]. Moose hunting in autumn is a crucial part of life for the yearly supply of meat but is also a way to connect with nature and be out in the forest. Alongside jobs in the schools, clinic, and offices, many of the inhabitants work with the local car testing industry: since the 1970s, international companies have sent engineers during the winter season to test new car models on the frozen lakes of the region, creating hundreds of jobs in hotels, service, catering, and building the ice tracks. In winter, snowmobile travel is essential for navigating the icy landscape and reaching friends and the *stuga* – a cabin used for leisure, hunting, relaxation, and also accommodation during the car testing season.

[5] All images in this article were taken by the author © Flora Mary Bartlett 2020

I begin by exploring my positionality and how I learned to understand the turbulence surrounding discourses of climate change. I then explore how the local lifestyle of my research participants, their need for petrol, and their views of nature exist in tension with the discourses of climate change coming from the capital city and the politicians. I argue that the scales embedded in conversations of climate change reveal and reinforce turbulence: there is a disjuncture between the (inter)national discourses of climate change and the local scale of emplaced experience in Arjeplog, as the former focusses on a global future rather than the everyday lived reality of the Arjeplogare. Those with whom I worked thought that politicians focussed either on the global or on Sweden's place as a nation state, rather than on the individual communities within the country. I discuss how these turbulences are compounded not just by the message at the heart of climate change but also by the messenger: tensions arise as the Arjeplogare perceive these discourses as coming from naïve and out-of-touch urban 'Stockholmers', environmentalists, and politicians. Finally, I reflect upon the challenges for researchers when we ourselves face tension in and off the field concerning climate change, and the chance this presents us to look with more nuance at emplaced understandings.

Positionality and Turbulence

When planning Arjeplog as my fieldsite, I wondered if the winter car testing industry would be discussed as threatened by global warming. I was interested to know how people were thinking about a future with climate change in a town so dependent on this seasonal influx of work. An unexpected outcome of fieldwork, however, was experiencing the turbulence that conversations about climate change *created* in the field. It became clear that this was not a topic people wanted to discuss, and my own positionality became simultaneously difficult and productive.

Although the car testing companies have built up garages and workplaces in Arjeplog, one participant said this was just 'coffee money' for those huge corporations. They could pack up and move if the climate changed. And while some of the local companies that build the ice tracks are adapting to the longer autumns and unstable snowstorms, one journalist told me that people were afraid that if the ice changed, the companies would disappear. So, she warned, many would not want to face this in conversation.

Throughout my fieldwork, I realized that the reluctance to discuss climate change ran deeper than their fear surrounding the car testing industry. Local responses to my presence and questions in Arjeplog pointed to a different issue: the perceived 'outsider' meddling in Arjeplog and the suspicion that climate change was just another way for people to tell the north how to live.

During my 13 months in Arjeplog there was sometimes tension when I asked people if they were worried about climate change or if this was seen as a local threat. When I asked questions about 'environmental' matters more generally, or even used the term *miljön* (the environment) there was often a shift in the dynamic. Conversations about hunting, fishing, hiking and the specifics of everyday life were met with amused curiosity. When I asked about *miljön,* hydropower, forestry, or climate change, however, I was often met with a more guarded look. One of my participants recommended that I introduce myself as

interested in 'car testing' when I met one of her friends, instead of climate change or the environment. Once she ensured an interviewee that I was not an environmentalist motivated by a plot to bring down the timber industry.

It became clear throughout my fieldwork that people were wary of me asking these questions. I was a newcomer in Arjeplog, arriving from London with a tattoo of a leaf upon my arm and sometimes traveling to Stockholm. The words 'researching the environment' or 'researching nature' were loaded, met with eyebrows furrowed and wary with suspicion. It was a small leap from 'environment' to 'environmentalist', and some people perhaps assumed I was an activist in league with Miljöpartiet – The Green Party – sometimes seen locally as profoundly out-of-touch with the reality of rural lifestyle and the necessary dependence on *bensin* (petrol).

Hints began to creep out from these moments, strengthened by increasing mentions of Miljöpartiet. It became clear that an environmentalist discourse was linked to 'outsiders' who did not understand life in Arjeplog or the rural north. As my friend (and participant) Marianne[6] reminded me later, it is not just climate change conversations that people feel threatened by, but 'the environment' and 'environmentalism': it is a further interference of the out-of-touch south. Environmentalists and politicians were seen in Arjeplog as having a comfortable life in the city, where food was shipped in and self-sufficiency was minimal. These outsider interferences in Arjeplog were seen as threatening the way of life for the Arjeplogare and the experience of nature, and deeply linked to the historical interference in the landscape in the form of hydropower development, now marketed by the State as integral to a renewable future.

[6] Against usual convention, I have not anonymised my participants in this research. When I explained consent to each interviewee, and potential implications for non-anonymization, many including those mentioned in this paper questioned the removal of their real names from their statements. There were certain things they wanted on record, and many told me specifically when certain information was 'off the record' or should not be recorded.

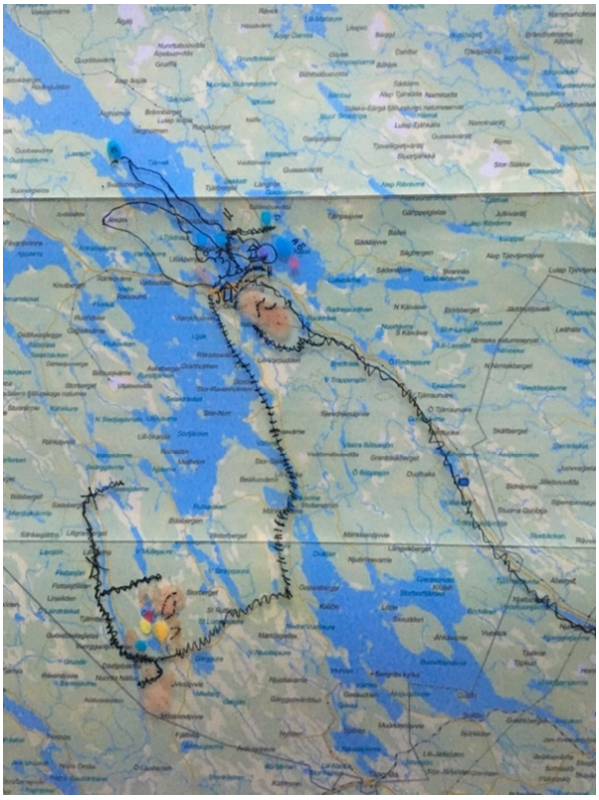
My gradual realization of these north-south, urban-rural tensions impacted the ways in which I engaged with my own environmental practice in the field and in my 'public' life online. I felt uncomfortable sharing news articles about climate change, lest locals in Arjeplog saw them and thought I had ulterior motives for asking questions about landscape and nature. In the next section I explore just how these discourses are turbulent, including the local engagement with nature and the perceived hypocrisy of politicians urging a move away from petrol.

The Need for Petrol

One afternoon during a mighty thunderstorm, Anna-Lena and I were making a map of Arjeplog together in the office of her flower shop. She sold a huge range of cut-flowers and plants, arranged side-by-side with rifles and hunting supplies – a shop locally and unofficially known as 'Guns and Roses'. I spent many days there helping with the flower deliveries and talking about her experiences of hunting and fishing, her cabin, and her commute back into town by snowmobile in the winter and by boat in the summer.
Anna-Lena sometimes teased me about my 'climate anxiety' and was much more open to discussing the subject than many other Arjeplogare.

The thunder crashed into the mountains and the rain trampled down the windowpanes, as Yrsa, the border terrier, scouted the floor for moose bones and Anna-Lena drew her familiar routes, movements, moose hunts, fishing spots, and berry picking hideaways across the plastic surface of the map. This kind of mapping is something I did with most of my participants in Arjeplog to try and make a visual exploration of their lives, movements, and engagements with landscape, inspired in part by the work of Hugh Brody (2002) and his collaborative mappings of hunting trails in British Colombia. It visualized personal histories of place, and prompted stories from, of, and with nature.

'One travels far to pick berries', Anna-Lena said, her laughter a low rumble meeting the storm outside, 'so this is how my life looks'. Her map, like those of the other Arjeplogare, showed lines looping away from home and out into the municipality. Had they marked out all their snowmobile and boat routes, one participant told me, the map would be black. Anna-Lena even chided me that the map was too small, she often drove further away for snowmobile tours or to visit friends in their *stugor*—known as 'summer cabins' in other parts of Sweden but used by the Arjeplogare all year round for hunting, fishing, and weekends away from home, even in deep winter.



When combining Anna-Lena's map with those of my other participants, in a visual attempt at Ingold's idea of 'meshwork' (2010: 9)[7], what we see is a partial sketch of travel by petrol: those most habitual routes taken for food, for well-being, and for maintaining kinship networks. People's 'being in the nature', as they described it, often required a snowmobile. While there were some who skied to their cabins, all of my participants used snowmobiles or had used them to get around outside of the town. In the winter the whine from the engines could be heard zigzagging across the terrain, louder in the northern region closer to the mountains where snowmobile 'highways' appeared etched into the surface of the frozen lakes. Smaller roads veered off in curves towards the shoreline and the smell of the motors hung in the frozen air.

[7] Ingold uses the 'meshwork' (2010) to refer to the lines of connection and relationships between things in a network, rather than focussing only on the individual components themselves. Thus, the map is a literal tracing of journeys between places, and visualises the relationship between motor, petrol and physical landscape.

Arjeplog's inhabitants rarely walk long distances in the winter, when it can be as cold as minus 40° Celsius and dark for four months. People get used to driving or taking the snowmobile. Electric engines are tested on the frozen lakes of Arjeplog as part of the winter car testing industry, and everyone knows the electric engines do not last long enough for journeys across the vast expanse of land and ice. Many locals work within the testing industry and they see how the cold affects the power.

They need petrol—the energy from ancient fossilized ecosystems (Marriott and Minio-Paluello 2012) powering the exploration of their own landscape, with global implications and connection[8]. It is a key element in how the Arjeplogare know and navigate nature, and it is therefore a crucial factor in the way discourses of climate change are received locally.

Local Care and Political Hypocrisy

For Anna-Lena, media discussions of climate change masked deep tensions of inequality between the rural north and the urban Stockholmers and politicians in terms of both petrol consumption and ways of caring for nature.

She told me that everyone recycles in Arjeplog, that they try to take care of their local nature, be clean, and not pollute or litter. Care for the environment in Arjeplog was centred around the very local relationship between the human and the non-human: recycling to keep nature clean, not spilling snowmobile oil or petrol in the lakes, and generally protecting the familiar landscape, which was a deeply important practice for everyone with whom I spoke. This was never referred to as 'environmentalism'. It was described more in terms of an obvious response to the beauty of the surroundings and a good practice of living with nature. Such care kept the forest clean for the moose hunt, too. The moose meat

[8] After I left Arjeplog I saw adverts for electric snowmobiles, and electric car charging ports were installed outside the supermarket, yet the cold temperatures were still a problem for long journeys.

was seen as coming directly from the forest – from the nature – and keeping the landscape clean was described by some in Arjeplog as maintaining this connection with the nature.

While minimizing the local impact of humanity in nature was incredibly important, many with whom I worked in Arjeplog do not see global warming as a human-caused problem. Instead it was often described as earth's natural fluctuations, operating throughout deep time, or seen as compounded by phenomena on the planetary scale such as solar winds or the gulf stream changing the average temperatures on a year-by-year basis.

Intertwined with love of nature is the need for petrol. Snowmobiles are integral to knowledge of the landscape. While the Arjeplogare commit to local nature and minimizing pollution, the politicians in Stockholm actively discuss global climate change and advise ordinary people to cut down on the use of fossil fuels. This poses a direct threat to the lifestyles of many Arjeplogare, whose very relation to nature currently depends on *bensin*.

An increased tax on petrol will have more immediate repercussions in Arjeplog than in Stockholm.

What is more, the politicians calling for change continue with air travel themselves, as Anna-Lena explained:

> How can it be that the politicians in Miljöpartiet (The Green Party) can tell us not to drive or fly, that flying is bad for the environment, but that they can fly to their meetings and their engagements because they are important? I get so angry, that they think that they can fly because they are important, but we cannot. I really don't like that those big things will make the little people have a bad conscience.

She chewed her lip and patted Yrsa on her little beige head. The politicians' engagement with the global conversation of climate change was hypocritical, as they called on citizens to cut back without doing so themselves and without considering their circumstances. This extended beyond air travel, as more of my participants mentioned similar arguments in terms of driving petrol-fuelled cars and snowmobiles.

People in the north need their petrol for navigating the landscape, so they asked, why should they stop using fossil fuels if the politicians did not?

Any increase in the cost of petrol would immediately affect people in Arjeplog. As many with whom I spoke stressed, Arjeplog has fewer than 3,000 people, and is miniscule compared to the population of Stockholm. But Stockholm is the place where decisions are made and where a big proportion of the voters live. As my participant Johan explained, all the measures would hit Arjeplog harder than the cities. For an Arjeplogare who relies on a car, boat, snowmobile, quad for hunting, and a chainsaw, petrol is crucial, and an increase in prices would affect them disproportionately.

'And for somebody who lives on Söder in Stockholm[9],' Johan said, 'it doesn't matter, they can still buy their T-centralen subway card and travel around for almost nothing. So, those measures always hit us. I mean it is 3,000 people in Arjeplog, what can we do?' He asked. 'That is what goes into the subway crowd every minute in Stockholm'.

There was a strong sense of injustice regarding the pressures placed on the community compared to the city. It seemed to Anna-Lena and Johan, and others, that Stockholmers and politicians were not expected to bear the burden of climate change, yet the Arjeplogare were. And this was made all the more ironic, for Anna-Lena, by the politicians' investments and favours for big companies. Meanwhile, the Arjeplogare are trying to get by in a tough climate while also caring for their own nature. This, she posed, was perhaps the reason why the community was not talking about climate change.

> Maybe people don't want to think about climate change here, because if we did we would have to start thinking that it is something that we are responsible for. Maybe that is too much for people to manage. We all recycle here, but what else can we do? It is too much to think about, that climate change is happening. It is *too big*. People would have to start taking responsibility. We cannot affect it. We can recycle as much as we want, but either way they sell even bigger emissions-rights to big companies. They commercialize, and then the little people have bad consciences, right? And I don't like that. You try to recycle, sort rubbish, and make small efforts.

She stared at me, eyes searching. She was angry at the capitalist system in which blame was attributed to the 'little people' while the State and big business continued to gamble with the environment.

[9] The southern island of the Stockholm archipelago, Södermalm, often used in popular culture as a hipster neighbourhood – likeable to Shoreditch or East London or Brooklyn in New York.

The argument that the cultural system itself is responsible has been the central claim of the Extinction Rebellion movement's protests throughout the world, and Latour has suggested the Anthropocene be renamed the 'capitalocene', attributing responsibility to whom it really belongs when climate change is too big for individuals to bear (2018: 7; see also Karliner 1992; Wallace-Wells 2019). For Anna-Lena, these were real life questions in response to inequality and powerlessness in the face of big business and corporate politics, as all the while politicians kept flying and expected the rural communities to change.

This raises complex questions of different scales of environmental engagement and responsibility, to which we now turn.

Scales of Responsibility

Arjeplog municipality has a permanent population of around 2,900 people, outside the car testing season, and is the most sparsely populated municipality in Sweden. The word *glesbygdskommun* means 'sparsely populated place' or dispersed settlement, and was used often in local politics to refer to the struggles faced by small disparate communities such as Arjeplog. They had their own difficulties unique to *glesbygd* and they portrayed life as sometimes tough, without the luxuries of the big cities where post was delivered to all the houses, buses were frequent, and healthcare was not something one had to fight for.

By 'little people', Anna-Lena meant those who were not politicians or in big business, but it linked also to this idea of being from 'little Arjeplog' and feeling overlooked by the State. Furthermore, for Anna-Lena and many others the question remained: Why should they feel guilty for the global climate when they are so few?

The issues of scale, guilt, and responsibility are complex. Morton argues that individuals are 'in no sense guilty' for global warming (2018: 35). One person starting one car, he states, is not causing the problem. One billion cars, however, *is* the problem. 'Guilt is scaled to individuals', he argues, 'but it is a collective problem' (Morton 2018: 57). In individualistic societies it is unsurprising that individual guilt is felt and problematized, as in Sweden, where the responsibility is often scaled to individual actions. Morton argues that instead we must view it as a bigger problem in which the species itself is responsible (see also Wallace-Wells 2019).

But viewing climate change at a collective, global scale is not without problems: Latour argues that humanity feels powerless in ecological crises as there is a 'disconnect between the range, nature and scale of the phenomena and the set of emotions, habits of thoughts, and feelings that would be necessary to handle those crises' (2011: 2). He shows how it would be difficult for any local population to embrace the idea of the 'global event' of

climate change. He argues that the question of human responsibility is raised as soon as human agency is held accountable for geological change but that it was widely recognised among anthropologists, activists, historians and philosophers that responsibility is not ascribed evenly throughout the world's population (Latour 2014).

Anna-Lena argued that smaller communities should not be held responsible while multinational corporations and politicians operate on a global scale, and it reveals a situated example of the perceived injustice in the climate change debate. How could a small rural population, as Anna-Lena asked, be held accountable for the climate crisis or feel responsible for it? Especially when they try so hard to care for their own local landscape.

Anna Tsing's exploration of 'scale' is useful to think with here, reminding us both that scales are *produced* and that the global is often falsely perceived as a single homogenous entity

in contrast with different local units (2005: 58). Scales are not separable, naturally occurring entities, but 'come into being in part through the contingent articulations into which they are pushed or stumble' (2000: 119). Tsing uses the process of 'national building' as a key element to look at how aspirations of global connection come to life in friction. She argues that we must not take dichotomies such as local and global for granted but must pay attention to how these scales are made (Tsing 2000).

In Arjeplog, global nature *is* seen as too big to be affected by humans. The focus is instead on the local, on Arjeplog and its nature and landscape. National engagement with the global conversation of climate change produces friction locally in Arjeplog as such measures are seen to sit at odds with local experience. Furthermore, the global discourse of climate change often frames (and produces) it as a single global problem.

As Descola and Palsson write, 'nature is no longer a local affair; the village green is nothing less than the entire globe' (1999: 13). Climate change as a conversation both produces this global scale in terms of the prominent global discourse and complicates these scales on the ground. Arjeplogare experience instead *their locality*, which for them is about protecting *their* local nature and feeding themselves from it sustainably. The national scale is understood in tension with the local, the State as a place apart making the rules and engaging with this global discourse. Conversations about climate change reinforce these locally experienced scales and the tensions across them: the difference between the national and local scale is widened as the Arjeplogare view national interest as out of touch with local experience of nature, in a global conversation.

It is important to note, however, that climate change as a physical phenomenon is not yet a matter of life and death for the Arjeplogare compared to many other places in the world, neither is it a threat of death to their culture as it is with the Sami reindeer herders in the same region. Environmental justice refers to the concept of unequal distribution of hardships posed by environmental degradation (see Schlosberg 2007). Reindeer *are* dying in Arjeplog, failing to access their winter food under new patterns of rain and ice that cause the lichen to mould and spoil. Sami herders are suffering financial losses, hardship, and

emotional burdens because of this, and acknowledging climate change as the cause (Furberg et al. 2011; Söderberg 2018). Outside Sweden, the countries that are at risk are those where extreme temperature increases and weather events are, in the present day, killing people (Wallace-Wells 2019).

Arjeplog occupies a complex place in discussions of environmental and climate justice. It is part of a country with historically high emissions that (by way of a high relative GDP) is now partly responsible for ameliorating the climate crisis following the climate agreements which recognize the relative responsibility of rich nations (see Posner and Weisback 2010). Furthermore, as Shrader-Frechette writes, 'since the *effects* of one's actions (e.g. burning fossil fuels and possibly causing the Greenhouse Effect) are not limited to those within one's country, the *constraints* of one's actions are not limited only to the basic rights of those in one's nation' (2002: 169, italics in original). This, too, demonstrates the collapsing of scales in climate change, as Shrader-Frechette argues that people's actions have global effects and they must be globally responsible, and that we must all take responsibility for the actions of our governments and businesses in democracy on behalf of those who suffer. Wallace-Wells argues that individual lifestyle change is not enough to alter the course of climate change and what we need is a 'complete overhaul' of industry, agriculture, infrastructure, and transportation (2019:179). For him, and for Norgaard (2011), the responsibility is therefore in voting and exercising democratic power in calling out the systems' failings. The difference, however, between Norgaard's ethnography and this one, is that her interlocutors were already talking about climate change as anthropogenic.

The connection between locally used fossil fuels and global change is not a simple fact in Arjeplog but a complicated narrative, coming from mistrusted voices and wrapped up in its own injustices of the State. Isenhour writes that 'Swedes' are an exception to Giddens' paradox, in which people only change their behaviour if they themselves feel threatened by climate change. Isenhour argues that her interlocutors in Stockholm were not feeling the effects yet were motivated to embrace the discourse of anthropogenic climate change and attempt to limit their individual footprints (Isenhour 2010, 2013). Isenhour extends this response to 'Swedes' in general, however, which is quite a large generalization. Her

research was based on a small representation of urban Swedish citizens, found through their links to environmental movements. My fieldwork has shown that – while Isenhour's conclusions are evidence of an interesting *variant* of climate change– it is certainly not a viable nationwide portrayal: those with whom I worked in Arjeplog do not feel the same responsibility as Isenhour's participants in Stockholm and are not engaging with the discourse in the same way.

Local rejections of national and international discourses of climate change in Arjeplog can be partly due to the message and the threat it carries for the community. The risks of an increase in petrol prices can be seen as part of the 'message' of the climate conversation, and likewise a reluctance to talk about a coming threat to the car testing industry. More interestingly, however, was the tension that emerged when I attempted to ask about climate change and the links to the 'typical' messengers seen to be engaging in this discourse.

Messengers and Outsider Meddling in Local Nature

To understand the scepticism of 'outsiders' and environmental meddling, we must examine the historical relations between the State and the Arjeplogare.

Throughout the twentieth century, hydro-electric dams were built throughout Sweden with many of them harnessing the power of the northern rivers (Sörlin 1988; Jakobsson 2002; Arheimer and Lindström 2014). At the time, these projects were less concerned with renewable, green, energy and more occupied with producing national power supplies in the modernization project of the State (Robin 2017). The dams create daily interferences for the Arjeplogare, with the unannounced changing of the water levels and the damage this causes to boats and access to the *stugor* (cabins). It has also irrevocably damaged local land formations and ecology in the region. Nowadays, hydropower is used by the State as a part of its role in the modern and renewable future of the nation as it aims for 100%

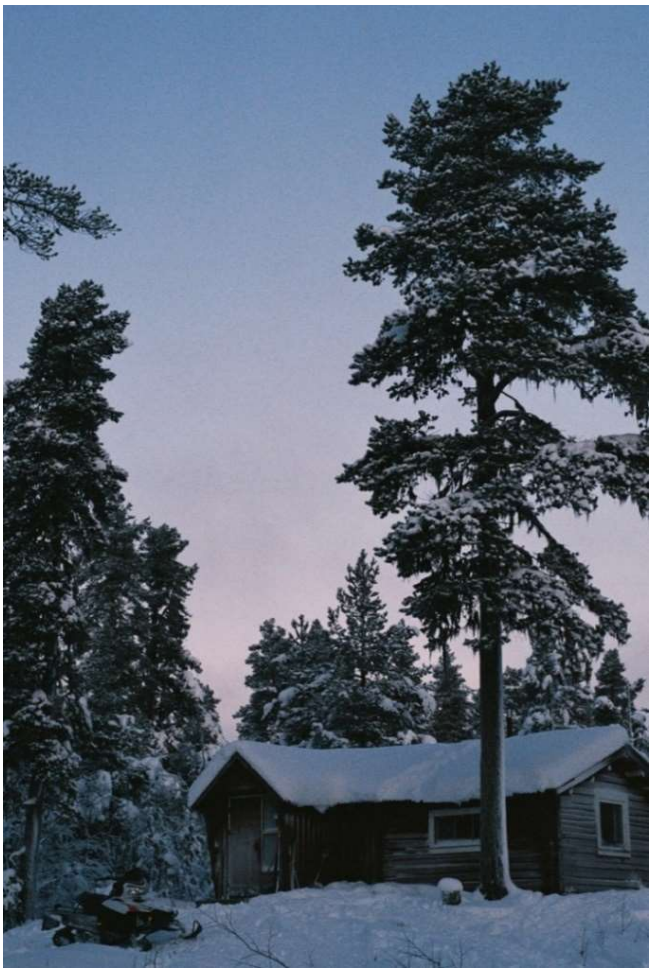
renewable energy by 2040. This, again, is an example of what Tsing describes as 'nation-building' (2005) in which the national scale engages with the global conversation of climate change, creating frictions with the local inhabitants as their lived experience of landscape is impacted.

Furthermore, current State regulations and red tape are seen as interfering with the exchange and sale of reindeer and moose meat – the two main sources of protein for the Arjeplogare who rarely buy meat that isn't either game hunted by the people themselves or reindeer herded by the Sami. To my participants, this is the best way to live off the land sustainably while maintaining the forests.

These are but two examples of a much longer history in which the north is interfered with, and treated as a goldmine and internal colony, where resources are extracted for energy, mining, forestry, and lands are taken from the Sami communities (Fur 2006; Lantto and Mörkensam 2008; Green 2009; Össbo and Lantto 2011). Calls for greener practices from these perceived 'outsider' communities were therefore met with scepticism in Arjeplog, and perceived as linked to the longer practices of extraction and pollution in the northern region of the country. Hydropower is today marketed as a key movement away from fossil fuels by the State, and renewable energy infrastructures are often constructed in the north where it is less populated and, rumour has it, further away from the politicians' own cabins in the archipelagos of the Baltic coast.

When urban populations call for environmentalism at the national scale, it is a threat to those in the north who have directly experienced the outsourcing of such infrastructures (as well as mining, forestry, and wind power). As Marianne explained, when I returned to Arjeplog to discuss my thesis, climate change was just another thread in the history of people coming to the north and deciding what was best: 'it is all kinds of voices of people who think they know better. It is those who are above us, those who want to come here and take. Everyone from outside who wants to control us… or decide over us.'

Such calls for changing lifestyles were also seen locally as coming from a southern population profoundly out-of-touch with the both the ways of the north and how to live off the land. A national call to eat less meat was often described by my participants as naïve, given the ease with which all food is shipped into Stockholm, and the subsequent risk urban populations are in if the food supplies stop. For the Arjeplogare, there is pride in self-sufficiency and getting food from nature. The message was therefore intertwined, if inseparable, with the perceived messengers of the south, the city, and the 'outside'. I often heard statements such as: 'How can people living in polluted, overpopulated cities tell *us* how to better take care of *our* nature?'



The messenger is of crucial importance in discussions of climate change discourses. As Callison argues, 'it is the way that climate change is articulated, used, circulated, and understood that creates its particular form of life and hence its meaningfulness for individuals and groups' (2014: 11), and sometimes it is the actors themselves who matter most. This was the case in Arjeplog with the message seen as coming from environmentalists, politicians and 'Miljöpartisterna'.

Miljöpartiet de gröna (MP), directly translated as 'The Environmental Party the Greens', is a political party in Sweden. It was founded in the early 1980s partly in response to the referendum on nuclear power and the failure of the existing parties to tackle

the rise in environmental and anti-nuclear sentiment (Ljunggren 2010). Support for the party is nationally relatively small compared to the larger parties.

When I sat in Johan's photography office, talking about his life as the Arjeplog photographer and his thoughts on climate change and hydropower, he discussed how he had been in a group to try and save the rivers from the disastrous effects of water regulation – the process of turning the rivers into reservoirs, changing the water level to harness it for hydroelectric power.

> It was a big organization, like any other environmental organization. And it was looked upon as if you said you were a *miljöpartist* [member of the Green Party] in Arjeplog. It is probably the worst thing you can be, because people don't believe, they don't believe in the message. Because we don't see it [climate change] here.

This was in part due to the fact that Johan and many other Arjeplogare believe climate change to be a natural phenomenon, with historic temperature fluctuations seen to be continuing today as part of a natural system and not a definite consensus among scientists. But Johan also linked this back to the injustice of the proposed measures hitting harder in Arjeplog than in Stockholm. He explained how unfair it was that city-dwellers expected the north to take responsibility. Johan thought the hatred towards MP was a little unfair, but that MP and its followers have chosen this path and it is why, he argues, the right-wing Sweden Democrats (SD) are getting votes in Arjeplog lately. SD, he said, 'offer simple solutions instead of the complex ones, saying "we're gonna fix it" instead of "oh it is very difficult, but we will do our best"'. This demonstrates the interconnectedness of the message and the messenger, and how it is not so easy to separate the two.

It also shows the importance of the environmentalist discourses in the political web of Arjeplog. Lives in the north depend on petrol. The experience of nature for food and wellbeing involves petrol in their motors. A group who appears and says '*stop*' will bring turbulence, threatening the local lifestyle while coming from somewhere geographically

and ideologically far away. McGraw gave an example of this in his book about rural American rejections of climate change, describing how his interviewee named Tanner was able to communicate climate risk to his fellow hunters. Tanner told McGraw that the hunters only trusted him because he was one of them, but an environmentalist showing up in a tie die t-shirt and Birkenstock sandals would be 'highly suspect' (McGraw 2015: 63). Environmentalists, McGraw described, were largely white, middle class, educated people of privilege who were awful at explaining the situation to regular Americans.

Distrust of the messenger, Hoffman argues, is one of four forms of distrust in the scientific evidence of climate change. The others are distrust of the process, of the message, and of the solutions (in Hodges 2019). In Arjeplog, there was little to suggest distrust in the scientific process. Certain scientific theories[10] were embraced in Arjeplog to explain how climate was always changing and weather fluctuations were nothing new. Johan explained to me how Arjeplogare did not believe in 'the message' of climate change, and he linked that both with distrust of the messenger *and* a distrust in the solutions proposed.

While the message was often simply not embraced, the messenger was embedded in pre-existing turbulence that was reinforced by these new suggested solutions to climate change. Understanding of climate change is formed based on the media as a translator (Callison 2014) and when Arjeplogare perceive the media discourse of climate change as something that is dominated by environmentalists and politicians (and even some hypocrisy), they distrust it.

The discourse of environmentalism, Milton writes, is 'the field of communication through which environmental responsibilities (those which make up the environmentalist quest for a viable future) are constituted' (1993: 9). Responsibility is woven through the very idea of environmentalist discourses. What constitutes a 'viable future', however, is an interesting question. The implication in Milton's text is a viable *global* environmental future. In

[10] See Boykoff and Boykoff (2004), Oreskes and Conway (2012) for more discussion on these particular scientific discourses, and how the presentation of them as equally legitimate as the scientific consensus of climate change has created the idea of doubt.

Arjeplog a 'viable future' is arguably one in which the community can continue living in the region with a central industry (car testing), the local environment is kept clean and free from rubbish, and the youth stay in the community and learn the 'old ways' of net fishing and hunting. A viable future seems to be one rooted in Arjeplog, not the environmental condition of the earth as a whole – which is a scale outside the realms of understanding (Latour 2011).

As Marino and Schweitzer argue, 'the global discourse on climate change is bounded and limited; with a predetermined field of knowledge, agents of knowledge, norms of discourse, and acceptable concepts and theories' (2009: 216). Science does not drop into the laps of its readers (see Latour 1993,1999; Callison 2014) - raw data does not appear unframed onto the screens of Arjeplogare. We must look specifically at the voices carrying the message of anthropogenic climate change and the role this plays in local responses.

Turbulence Off the Field: An Opportunity for Nuance

It is important to recognize our own positionality within studies of emplaced climate change discussions and environmentalist discourse. It is easy for many of us to assume that there is a global environmental 'correct' answer to the problems we face today if we have been exposed to and embedded within certain environmental movements. My aim throughout this paper, and my PhD research, has been to present a different perspective: a place-based examination of how climate change discourses are experienced in Arjeplog.

Much of the anthropological literature on climate change examines its physical effects on local communities: their specific vulnerabilities, adaptations, and resilience (Fleishman 2018). Sanders and Hall (2015) argue that this is the approach endorsed by the AAA taskforce – an American Anthropological Association committee tasked with producing a guidelines, recommendations, and research directions for 'global climate change-related issues' (see Fiske et al 2014). This has steered the discipline into a direction largely concerning the material existence of climate change. Along with physical changes,

however, the reception of climate change as a *conversation* also exists on a local scale. Climate change exists as a discourse as much as a physical event (Hulme 2009), and we as anthropologists should also be directing our attention to how this discourse is locally received (Rudiak-Gould 2011). Conversations of global warming and environmental concerns exist enmeshed with local experience of landscape, weather and tensions over natural resources. How the scientific discourse of anthropogenic climate change is received depends on local histories, relationships, and understandings of landscape.

Since returning from fieldwork, I have become more aware of the sharpened rhetoric accusing those in doubt of being 'climate deniers' (see also Callison 2014: 89) including in discussion of my research. What this fieldwork demonstrated is that scales of environmental threats depend on the specific location and population in question. If one were to discuss a president who denies climate change despite being briefed by those with experience and research in the field, who continues to publicly deny climate change because he has been directly funded by institutions that rely on its rejection, then 'climate denier' may not be so far off the mark. Directing this term towards everyday citizens, however, seems unhelpful.

Norgaard, for example, writes of a community in Norway affected by climate change yet 'living in denial' (2011) as they do not write to their politicians or stop driving cars. This, Norgaard argues, is 'climate denial' as they are not engaged in any action to stop the changes. While her ethnography is a thought-provoking and detailed examination of climate change in a place in Scandinavia, Norgaard's definition of denial is imposed by herself as a researcher onto the community.

As researchers we must be careful in the field, and aware of these connections to different ways of living with nature, turbulent environmental histories, problematic interferences from the State, and our own positions. My positionality became a complicated tool in which I myself, and the reactions to my questions, became a crucial part of my understanding of climate change conversations in Arjeplog. It sometimes felt uncomfortable, and being met with suspicion in a small community was occasionally draining during the fieldwork process.

Marino and Schweitzer warn anthropologists to take care when asking about climate change because of its single global discourse and how this might influence responses (Marino and Schweitzer 2009: 216). I argue that we need to be careful in case this discourse is itself *threatening* to our participants, and what impact this might also have on our positions in the field.

It was not just in fieldwork that I felt turbulence, but afterwards in conversations in which I was questioned about why I would give voice to those who do not believe in climate change. But I ask, why not? When it is complex, interesting, and questions the assumption that climate change is an easy problem as opposed to a 'wicked problem' with no clear set of alternative solutions, as Steve Rayner described it in the 2006 Jack Beale Memorial Lecture on Global Environment (in Fiske et al 2014). As anthropologists we are not expected to hold the same worldviews as our participants, and it is at odds with our practice to suggest we should only write about things that align with our own perspectives. Indeed, the topic of climate change seems unusual in provoking such a response asking to justify the exploration of different perspectives.

As anthropologists we are well-suited to examine other positions outside of dominant discourses, as the AAA taskforce reminds us (Fiske et al 2014; see also Antrosio and Han 2015). A number of scholars point to the unique contribution of anthropology in climate change research (Roncoli et al. 2009; Strauss 2009) and in the current climate of research, media coverage, and heightened contentiousness, it is interesting to examine rejections of climate change from emplaced, lived perspectives. Long term ethnographic fieldwork allows us to do this, and to contextualise the other social, political, and historical issues that entwine when we ask about the climate. Sometimes this also requires recognizing our years of being involved in academic institutions, in which we have been immersed in conversations of climate change as a single, morally laden fact which obscures emplaced experience or variation.

Conclusion

In this paper I have discussed how conversations of climate change reveal and reinforce turbulence across different scales in Arjeplog, and how this challenges the notion of the single global event of climate change from an anthropological perspective. It is an interesting challenge for anthropologists to look at places where climate change is a complicated question, entangled with environmental history and urban-rural divides.

While approaches that examine impacts and adaptations are incredibly important and valuable within anthropology, we can and must examine those voices which do not sing in accord with the scientific consensus if we are to gain a nuanced understanding of how climate change is experienced and rejected. Those with whom I worked in Arjeplog

experience their landscape as their own local resource, and they care deeply for it on a local scale as they depend upon it for their lifestyle. They perceive environmentalists and politicians who talk about climate change as focusing on a different scale of responsibility without considering local experience. While the message threatens their experience of landscape, through calls to abandon fossil fuels necessary to the Arjeplogares' mobility, it is also the messenger that is received with mistrust. This tension reinforces older north-south and urban-rural divisions as the Arjeplogare see climate change discourses to be a continuation of outside meddling in their local lifestyles, following a long history of Sweden using the north as a goldmine and failing to understand the reality of life in the rural north.

I have argued that this approach, focusing on an emplaced response to this global discourse, allows for a more nuanced understanding of climate change discourses as enmeshed within more complex local environmental histories and turbulence.

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About the Author

Flora Mary Bartlett is currently a PhD candidate in Visual Anthropology at Goldsmiths, University of London. Her research interests include experimental visual methods, environmental history, landscape, nature, and climate change.

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