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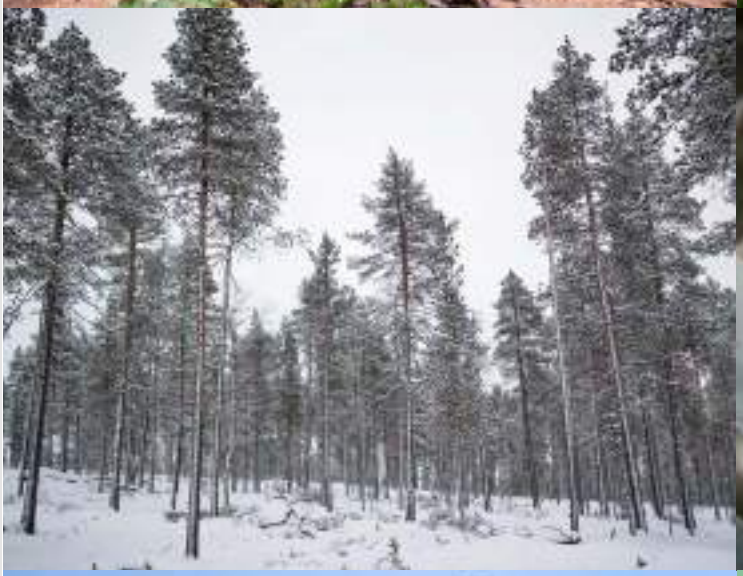
BETWEEN KNOWLEDGE AND IMPACT








FOREWORD

As we head into 2023, it's clear that every single country already feels the impact of the climate crisis. Monster storms, flash floods, extreme droughts, failed harvests, and battering heat are quickly becoming the new normal. Science told us it would happen; now that reality is here.

In the past year, we've seen how Pakistan has been ravaged by floods. How Eastern Africa suffers from unparalleled drought. How small island states in the Pacific already grapple with even more existential threats. And how this crisis happens much, much closer to home, which each season bringing new extremes to Europe as well.

We've seen all of it because journalists are bringing these stories into our homes and offices. Their reporting helps audiences find the facts, understand the magnitude of this crisis, and discover opportunities to act. It is encouraging to see how many newsrooms are slowly but steadily increasing their coverage, recognizing that climate change affects everything: politics, economy, society, finance, travel, and even sports.

Yes, climate change is quite possibly the greatest story of our lifetime. Because it is about our lives and that of our children, and the limited time that remains to save humanity's future on this planet.

But the climate crisis is not the only crisis threatening our lives. There is another, happening before our very eyes: the threatening loss of 1,000,000 species as a result of the biodiversity crisis.

The climate and biodiversity crises are two sides of the same coin. The loss of biodiversity accelerates climate change and vice versa. The good news is that the solutions reinforce each other as well. When we protect and restore wetlands, peatlands, coastal and marine ecosystems, when we develop urban green spaces and install green roofs, when we manage forests and farmland in a sustainable way, we mitigate and adapt to climate change, but we also ensure clean water, healthy soils, and space for nature to flourish.

Like climate change, the loss of biodiversity is happening seemingly unnoticed. But here as well, the science is undeniably clear: humanity is in the process of destroying the very ecosystems we depend on for air, food, and water.

And as with the climate crisis, we need you to report on this looming ecocide: share the facts, help us grasp the scale of this crisis, and inform everyone what can be done to stop it.

The window to act is closing rapidly, but we can still succeed if we act fast. Let's get to work!

Frans Timmermans,
First Vice-President of the European Commission

FOREWORD

Journalists working for public service media are among the most trusted and influential individuals of our time. And with that power, comes immense responsibility. To explain the most complex of topics to everyone. To hold power to account. To be clear about the facts. To reflect the world back to itself.

As such, when it comes to a topic as impactful as climate change, there is no doubt that our newsrooms have a duty to embrace this reality and to give the public and the powerful the tools to make informed decisions.

I don't think it is an exaggeration to say that how we cover the impact of human activity on our environment will form the basis for how history judges this generation of journalists. Political scandals will come and go, economic crises and wars may have impact for decades, but decisions made now by everyone in our society will affect our climate, and will be felt forever.

But what should we do when audiences are voting with their feet against a diet of climate catastrophe journalism? It's overwhelming, it's depressing, and there are many alternative ways to spend their time. It's time to try something different.

Almost every editor featured in this report tells us that journalism that works for their audiences focuses on solutions, not just the problems.

But how do we distinguish between genuine solutions and so-called 'greenwashing'? Factchecking is at the core of journalism, but how can journalists check the facts if they don't know them in the first place? Public service media's mandate to inform and educate may need to start in-house.

If you are a newsroom manager or have ever been in a leadership role, you will know that it is not possible to change the culture of a team, of an organization, or let alone of a country, by saying something once, or by running one investigation, one training scheme, one programme or one thread of content. If climate change journalism is to work, it will need to permeate everything we do. Like any transformation, it is not something you do once and move on, this requires a change in mindset.

There is so much to do! Thankfully, this report contains many examples of small changes and manageable initiatives which is how everyone starts. The most important thing is to start.

Yes, there is always another crisis, another breaking news story, another priority. This report does not pretend otherwise. And that's precisely why you should read it.

Climate journalism is too easy to put off—just like climate solutions. It requires leadership, determination and a strong strategy. I hope this year is the year you start, continue or develop your climate journalism. And that you make it climate journalism that works.

Liz Corbin,
Head of News and Deputy Media Director EBU

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INTRODUCTION

MAKING CLIMATE JOURNALISM WORK

The facts are indisputable: there is no other single threat as predictable and dangerous to livelihoods and life on this planet as global warming—and we are responsible. Humans have caused global warming, primarily by burning fossil fuels. And humans are called upon to reverse the trend, to prevent the atmosphere from heating up further and to adapt to its consequences. Alarmingly, modern life in its entirety is based on activities which harm the earth's climate and fragile ecosystem, be it current energy and industrial production, transport, agriculture, construction, the ways people settle, relax, and—well—show off. This means that change will be hard. Nonetheless, it is needed, and fast: the window to head off the worst climate impacts is closing quickly. If 21st century journalism is to fulfil its role and prove its relevance and legitimacy, it needs to contribute to the fight against climate change using all its skills, knowledge, competence, and influence.

This is not optional. Ethical principles require journalists to research and report the facts, to hold power to account, and to inform and educate the public. The aim is to support people in making the best possible decisions for their own and their children's lives and futures as well as for the environment and communities they live in—including the natural environment. Public service media have a specific responsibility here. They are mandated by legislation to operate in the public interest, to serve everyone, everywhere, to inform and to educate, irrespective of commercial considerations. Their mission is to reach and engage with those who do not necessarily draw on journalism when navigating their lives, be it for a lack of opportunity, access, education, or financial means. Additionally, in many media markets public service media enjoy the broadest audience reach, the highest trust figures, and are comparatively well resourced—even if it might not feel that way to many who work there and juggle tight budgets on a daily basis.

The two central questions this report addresses are: What will it take for newsrooms to motivate decisionmakers and the wider population to act while adhering to the principles of independent journalism? And: Will media be up to the task?

The pandemic has shown that audiences generally appreciate journalism's role in society. Studies documented how media brands from all over the world experienced a spike in trust during the deadliest phase of the Covid 19 threat.[1] Even young people turned to public service media when trying to find out how to behave when everyone's life was at stake. There is no doubt that journalism contributed to some extent to changes in individual behaviour and the social acceptance of restrictive policies. Now, lives are again at stake with global warming—in a scenario that is equally unpredictable in its spread and

consequences but even more complex and much slower moving. But it is safe to say that climate journalism has not exploited its full potential yet. So, the pressing question emerges: How can journalism make a difference by covering climate change?

"Just report the facts," the most likely response from many journalists, will not be ambitious enough, this much is certain. There has been plenty of climate journalism in the past three or more decades, and yet it has failed to inspire sufficient momentum. When fast political, business, and individual action is essential to initiate sweeping changes, it is not enough just to get the content right. If journalism is to have an impact, it needs to influence behaviour and inform policy. This means that newsrooms need to invest a lot more thought and energy into how issues are presented to whom, which messengers and products to employ, and which values to convey.

Apparently, many in the industry see themselves as well prepared for these tasks. Indeed, if surveys reflected reality, this report would not have been necessary. More than 60 percent of media leaders from 53 countries who were asked to do a self-assessment in December 2022 stated that their organizations were doing a good job covering climate change.[2] About half of the 275 respondents reported they had installed a climate team, and one third confirmed they had a climate strategy in place (See Figure 4, page 14). In individual conversations, however, media leaders are a lot less bullish. The Guardian is one of the few mainstream media outlets which has a high reputation for its climate coverage which has been praised by both competitors and experts in the field. But Chris Moran, its Head of Editorial Innovation, admits that he wonders "if we are just preaching to the converted." These conundrums are common when it comes to climate journalism. Many editors, even those who take the topic very seriously, struggle to identify what doing a 'a good job' on climate coverage really means. And taking a closer look, holistic climate strategies which deserve that label are rare.

Climate journalism is a tough call for many publications and broadcasters, because if not delivered well, audiences will punish news media simply by not paying attention. The complexity of the subject and its potential solutions, its depressing nature, its lack of 'newsiness'—notwithstanding some spectacular natural disasters—all these contribute to the issue constantly slipping down the news agenda when compared to seemingly fresher material which is simpler to produce and easier for audiences to digest.

It is an uncomfortable truth that the media industry trails, by a wide margin, many other sectors in developing climate strategies. While a myriad of companies has long been working on sustainability programmes, climate-friendly technologies, and investment strategies, hardly any publisher or broadcaster can boast of an integrated concept to attack the issue head on. Though the media has itself focused on 'greenwashing' controversies—where a company's announced climate action policy is said to mask some of its other less environmentally friendly activities—it is often ignoring its own failures. And while 'greenwashing' remains an important subject for investigation, it may also indicate that first steps have been taken in tackling environmental challenges by that company or sector. It is high time that media confront the fact that when it comes to the climate, other industries are far more advanced.

There are several explanations for this. Even editors who understand the threat to humanity rarely admit that they are worried about being perceived as partisan and activist when emphasizing climate coverage. This is because in many countries a small, vocal minority of climate skeptics or even deniers sets the tone and can become quite aggressive when media mention global warming in a variety of contexts. The consequence can be editorial self-censorship. International research suggests that a large share of audiences is willing to face uncomfortable truths; newsroom leaders tend to underestimate that potential and worry about noisy minorities. Furthermore, the media industry faces less pressure to act than companies which are publicly listed and operate under the scrutiny of shareholders. Many publishers are medium-sized companies; broadcasters are structured under public law. That makes them somewhat immune to investors' shifting preferences which have long 'gone green'.

In addition, the majority of newsrooms identify climate journalism as just another topic or something that belongs with the science desk. Yet the protection of our planet and our lives must be the frame through which all of journalism operates—just as it is with democracy or human rights. The climate must not only be an object to be observed and described. It must be the backdrop against which life plays out and it should subtly feed into all storytelling. Implementing this approach would necessitate a huge effort, since it requires training, expanding the scope of research, and questioning habits and routines.

Drawing on decades of newsroom experience, countless conversations for this report, and relevant literature, our findings suggest that there are several central contradictions when looking at the barriers to effective climate journalism. For one, climate is still seen as a topic addressing the future, while journalism is stuck in the now. Its focus is on the news, the day-to-day business. Audience surveys like the Digital News Report show: Too much is reported, too little is explained. Also, climate protection needs hope, while today's journalism focuses on drama, omissions, failures. There is a lot of 'fearing', 'warning', and 'threatening' in journalism. In climate protection, what truly counts is what has actually happened, while today's journalism focuses on what has been said—even though it has been demonstrated that 'he said, she said' journalism produces poor audience engagement.

Furthermore, 'journalism that works' approaches people at eye level in a language they understand, while today's journalism, particularly the self-defined 'quality' variety, often positions itself above them in a know-it-all manner. Finally, journalism that wants to be effective respects its counterparts and relies on diversity in order to address its various audiences. In contrast, much of today's journalism is still stuck in the bygone age of mass media, when one size had to fit all. The old inequalities shaping news coverage persist.

For this report, we wanted to find out more about the following: What makes climate coverage so difficult, which approaches work with audiences in practice, how can climate coverage best be managed in newsrooms, and what can other areas of journalism learn from great climate coverage. Building on more than 40 qualitative interviews and conversations with media leaders, researchers, and other experts, and drawing on the extensive literature on effective climate communication, this report paints a nuanced picture of climate coverage and climate strategies in today's newsrooms.

In Chapter One the report explains why so many newsrooms have been overwhelmingly 'climate silent' for the longest time, even though the issue of global warming has been out in the open for more than three decades. Chapter Two reports on potential pathways to change. It discusses and points towards strategies for more effective climate journalism with examples from the industry. Chapter Three gives newsrooms practical advice for building their specific climate strategies and discusses pros and cons of different steps in managing climate coverage.

To illustrate all of this, the report—as the previous four editions of the EBU News Report did—showcases case studies from media companies which have attempted to tackle the issue in innovative ways.[3] A glossary of the most important terms, a list of resources, and literature recommendations will be of practical help to those looking to read up on different subjects and have a crash course in 'What every editor needs to know about climate change' (see books, page 157, resources, page 160, glossary, page 165). The report is complemented by a series of expert Q&As which highlight different aspects of climate communications, with interviewees ranging from a UN leader to a climate comedian.

Chapter Four might be the essential one for those still in doubt. The central hypothesis of this report is that by tackling the challenge of climate journalism, newsrooms will also make crucial steps towards solving many of the general problems modern journalism faces. In other words, sustainability journalism might contribute to making media sustainable. Most importantly, it will help editors and management move their operations from gut feeling to strategic thinking.

Naturally, this report won't have all the answers to pressing questions. A lot will come down to experimenting, testing, and learning—in house, from each other, and from research which already exists. But let's be ambitious here. A global challenge needs a global effort. If journalists and the media believe in their power to influence decisionmakers and ordinary people, in their capacity to inspire action, this is the time to exert this power. This work aims to be a resource: To spark thoughts and debates, to foster an exchange of ideas, to facilitate learning, ideally to initiate collaboration. Because climate change requires that everyone acts fast. And the media will be faster when tackling this together.

One thing is abundantly clear: better climate journalism equals better journalism, and better journalism is good for the survival of the industry and for democracy. Who knows, it might even be good for the survival of humanity.

1 According to the Digital News Report, overall trust in news climbed by 6 percentage points across all markets between 2020 and 2021 to level off again in 2022. See Digital News Report 2021 and 2022, Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, University of Oxford. https://digitalnewsreport.org

2 Nic Newman (2023), "Journalism, Media, and Technology Trends and Predictions 2023", Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, University of Oxford. The study is a non-representative survey of media leaders from across the globe, in this edition based on 303 responses. All three authors of this EBU News Report are affiliated with the Reuters Institute. Lead author Nic Newman was so kind to include two questions on climate journalism in his survey.

3 See previous EBU News Reports https://www.ebu.ch/publications/strategic/loginonly/report/news-report---whats-next-public-service-journalism-in-the-age-of-distraction-opinion-and-information-abundance

1 THE CHALLENGES OF CLIMATE REPORTING

CHAPTER

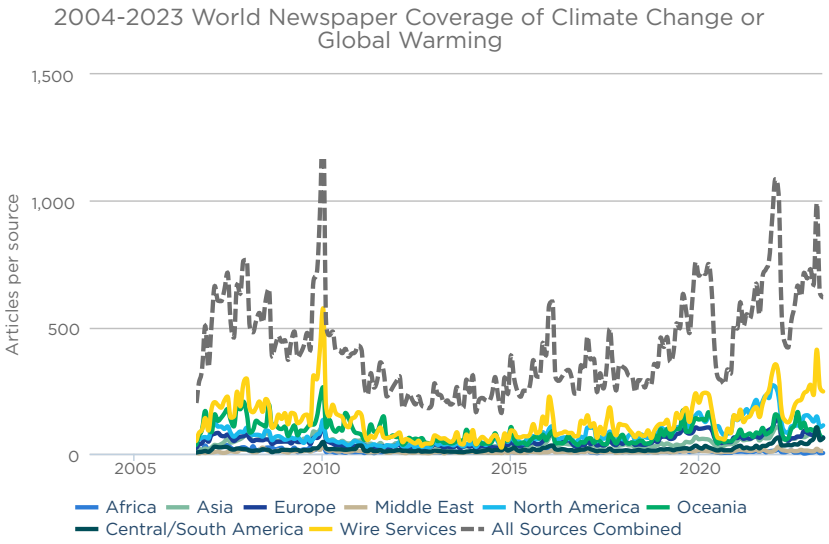
Contrary to what recent activity around the topic might suggest, reporting on climate change is not new. The issue of global warming has been public knowledge since the 1970s. Nanette Braun, Chief of Communications Campaigns at the United Nations, did a presentation on it when she was a high school student in 1978 (see Q&A with Nanette Braun, page 36). The famous Brundtland-Report 'Our Common Future' by the United Nations dates back to October 1987. [1] Many newsrooms around the world draw on the expertise of veteran reporters who have been covering the human impact on nature for decades. The environmental movements which emerged across the globe in the 1970s and 1980s left their mark, too. Nevertheless, many newsrooms remained what experts call 'climate silent'. The topic was perhaps covered in the science section, with business desks ignoring it entirely.

Recently climate coverage has advanced to new levels in newsrooms across the globe. The increasing number of weather and climate related disasters has meant people everywhere have experienced or at least witnessed the effects and rising risks of climate change. And the pandemic could be seen as a turning point: The lack of preparedness many newsrooms experienced paired with extreme weather events, the Fridays for Future movement, and a high-profile COP26 conference in Glasgow, encouraged many of them to rethink their approach to climate journalism.[2]

The Media and Climate Change Observatory at the University of Colorado has tracked media coverage of the issue in newspapers worldwide since the turn of the century, revealing a visible upward trend (see Figure 1).[3] Importantly, the range of the reporting has broadened in recent years. Maxwell Boykoff, Professor and Chair of the Department of Environmental Studies at the University of Colorado and author of the book 'Creative (Climate) Communications',[4] observed that the topic has branched out significantly beyond pure science coverage. "When tracking coverage, we settled on five themes: political, economic, scientific, ecological, meteorological, and then cultural. And it's the cultural that we see as a trend." This could be anything from reporting about climate in the context of social movements to engagement across various disciplines, for example the arts, Boykoff says. "Recently we have seen more stories on use of private jets by celebrities."

But as much as the long history of the issue should be an asset, it also constitutes one of the biggest impediments to creating structure and strategy around climate coverage. Climate change as a topic seems to be like music in a shopping mall: It's always in the background, pretty much everyone is aware of it, but you only pay attention when it is interrupted by an announcement. For newsrooms, these 'announcements' are either natural disasters, extreme weather events, or international summits such as UN climate conferences. These usually spark an all-out media effort, drawing the attention editors feel is necessary to begin the feed of explainers, special features, expert interviews, and data visualizations into the daily news diet—just to fade into the background again when other, seemingly more pressing, issues take centre stage.

FIGURE 1: WORLD NEWSPAPER COVERAGE OF CLIMATE CHANGE OR GLOBAL WARMING



Source: Media and Climate Change Observatory, University of Colorado

Sometimes, a major event may bring the climate crisis closer to home. Potentially, this can have a lasting impact on coverage strategy. Kai Gniffke, Director General of Southwest German SWR and head of Germany's largest public broadcaster ARD as of 2023, says: "For me personally, the flooding in Germany's Ahr Valley in 2021 was what you could call a watershed moment. It had been clear for a long time that climate was a big topic, that we had to do more about it. But the flooding brought home that it is not just Bangladesh any longer." For him, a podcast series or TV documentary would no longer suffice. "We need to tackle the topic differently. It will change the world, the way we work, our mobility. We need to raise the question: How does politics prioritize this? Will we manage this huge collaborative effort?"

Covering Climate Now, a non-profit organization co-founded by the Columbia Journalism Review and The Nation, has found that newsrooms all over the world want to find ways of increasing and improving their climate coverage.[5] Co-Founder Mark Hertsgaard says: "Climate is still not getting the attention it deserves, but interest is definitely growing, though I wouldn't call it linear. The mood and the conversations are different, [the topic] is on every beat. There is no doubt this will eventually be the dominant story. The question is: Will it be soon enough?"

Plenty of external factors shape the production and reception of climate journalism. They include lobbying and misinformation campaigns, the dynamics of algorithmic news distribution, the political, economic, and cultural environments as well as exposure to extreme weather events. But in this report we will mostly focus on dynamics that are inherent to the world of journalism and which block the path to action.

Wolfgang Blau, who—together with Meera Selva—founded the Oxford Climate Journalism Network at the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism in 2021, outlined the barriers to a deeper climate journalism commitment in a February 2022 lecture which gave a comprehensive assessment of the situation in most

major news organizations (see Q&A with Wolfgang Blau, page 39).[6] Blau talked about a whole set of hurdles which he grouped into three categories: operational, cultural, and ethical. However, each of these could also be used as levers of change, he says, to integrate climate coverage into every beat and every aspect of what a news organization does.

For this report we wanted to take a closer look. We asked senior media leaders about what the biggest challenges were for climate journalism to thrive in their organizations, and we sought input from academics in climate communications as to the research on audience response to climate coverage.

While plenty of factors were mentioned throughout our conversations with media leaders, three things came up disproportionally often. Editors say that the news agenda, with its constant pressures, keeps pushing climate to the background. They complain that a lack of resources prevents the kind of in-depth reporting that audiences actually consume. And they believe that the dramatic realities of relentless global warming are not only likely to drive audiences into news fatigue, but—together with the negativity surrounding the issue and the slow pace of progress—will also weary newsroom staff who are dealing with the topic daily. In the following section we discuss the most important arguments that came up in our interviews, and some that were not voiced often—but that we believe play an often-unspoken role.

Climate change tends to move slowly. The perceived lack of news value leads to competing issues being prioritized.

Most newsrooms we surveyed only started to get serious about climate coverage a few years ago, between 2018 and 2020. The pandemic and its urgency interrupted many emerging climate projects and pushed them to the fringes. Phil Chetwynd, Global News Director at the Paris-based news agency AFP, says: “Everything in the DNA of media is about what is happening now. That makes climate an extremely difficult story to tell in a way that is relevant.” Helje Solberg, News Director at Norwegian NRK explains: “Climate change is a slow-moving crisis. It can often seem distant from people’s everyday lives.” AFP and NRK belong to the few media organizations that have a strategy for climate coverage. But momentum on the topic has is constantly at risk of derailment by news events. Hans Cosson-Eide, who heads NRK’s climate desk in Oslo, adds: “During the pandemic we kept quite a few resources for climate reporting. With the war in Ukraine, it is more difficult. This is such a big news story, it is pushing climate further away. You need time to work on climate change. There is so much to understand. You need to prioritise and let people work on it for a longer term.” The war has been an overriding news topic in Europe but has been particularly salient with countries like Norway that border with Russia.

Climate specialist reporters have a tough time pushing for their topics when resources are scarce—which they tend to be. “People from the climate units keep telling us, the gatekeepers at the news desk pay lip service, but they don’t really get it,” says Mark Hertsgaard, Executive Director and Co-Founder at Covering Climate Now. “They still think it is optional. At Covering Climate Now, we try to get the media to understand: You should cover the climate emergency like the

covid emergency. The media did a good job there. They dedicated resources to pandemic coverage."

But where the pandemic presented a blueprint, the situation was somewhat different. During peak times when infection numbers were mounting, lockdowns and other restrictions caused events coverage to drop close to zero. This meant that desks like sports or culture had fresh capacity to report on the pandemic in the context of their field and beyond. Specialist coverage desks could concentrate on the pandemic, often broadening their range of expertise and developing new skills such as data analysis and visualization. However, the demands of covering the war in Ukraine and the related crises in energy supply and inflation have further stretched the capacity and expertise of news services. With these competing challenges great creativity and thoughtfulness is required to keep the climate agenda alive in an environment where news avoidance is growing.[7] While war and climate change are linked through the energy crisis and tremendous amounts of additional pollution, they compete head-to-head when it comes to newsroom capacities.

Getting attention for climate coverage internally is particularly tricky in newsrooms which are image driven. In TV news, stories with compelling footage regularly outcompete those with lots to tell but little to show. Jon Williams, until 2022 Managing Director of News and Current Affairs at Irish broadcaster RTÉ, explains: "Climate change is a long burning story. It doesn't lend itself to television. It is much better told in print and on radio." This explains why many news organizations focus on natural disasters when trying to bring the climate story home. But this shock-and-awe strategy reinforces a victimization affect: Audiences feel overwhelmed, scared, and forced into the passive role of the onlooker. They might feel that the small lifestyle changes they could make will have no impact in the fact of something so large and overwhelming.

Climate change is complex. Covering it requires plenty of investment in talent, training, and reporting time. But resources are scarce in most newsrooms.

Every reporter can cover the challenges around climate change. But not every journalist has the background to cover it correctly. And it is even more demanding to do so in a way that is attractive to audiences. The topic is prone to be part of a vicious cycle: Half-hearted, sloppy, patchy, uninspired coverage doesn't attract people. But when metrics show low audience engagement, many editors don't see the need for investment. Consequently, climate reporting gets even less attention, and talent is drawn to beats which promise more praise—and career opportunities.

Ritu Kapur, founder and CEO of the Indian news outlet The Quint, frames the problem this way: "Climate change will always disproportionately use up resources. It requires more research, time, and space. There aren't many media savvy climate experts in the country. It is difficult to travel to places badly hit by extreme weather events. And it needs geographical coverage. You have to tell the story in a way that gets people engaged. Getting people within the team interested is far away from being a challenge. The funding is a challenge."

It is predominantly the big players that can afford the necessary commitment of resources. Public service media might be comfortably funded compared to local news organizations, but for the most part cannot match what some large international brands are able to invest due to other regulatory and audience obligations. Brodie Fenlon, Editor-in-Chief of Canada's CBC admits: "I would love to have the data and visualization team The New York Times has." The industry watched in awe as the Washington Post announced in November 2022 that they would triple their climate team to more than 30 people in a newsroom-wide commitment to cover "perhaps the century's biggest story," as Editor-in-Chief Sally Buzbee wrote.[8] Nevertheless, while smaller newsrooms cannot replicate these kinds of investments, market leaders are signalling something important: This issue deserves more strategic investment.

For resource-pressed outlets where every hand has to be on deck, the need to invest time and money in training can also be a huge barrier to improvement. Vincent Giret, Director of News and Sports at Radio France, says that the absence of scientists in the newsroom was painfully felt during the pandemic, and that applies to climate coverage as well. "Journalism schools select their students from the fields of social science, law, politics, not science. That is why we are not well prepared. Today's news has so many topics with a science dimension: mobility, health, food, energy, agriculture... That is why we need to strengthen our scientific culture. It is not enough to have just a few experts to tackle these issues." (See case study on Radio France's training programme, page 128).

Freeing up funds should be easier in the public service setting compared to the general media landscape. But much of the money is frozen in traditional setups. Kai Gniffke, Director General of SWR, says: "Our structures make it really difficult. We are trying to press a new phenomenon into old structures. The business desk does business, the news desk does daily news, the science desk does science. If we want to do this right, we need new structures. In an ideal world where we had money and staff, we would build a multimedia team just for climate. We'd get the best people from the other teams, give them a budget, and let them experiment. This doesn't work in a structure which is aligned towards different broadcast formats."

One way of unlocking new resources is to pitch for external funding. Many foundations identified climate change as a worthwhile cause. For example, the European Climate Foundation funds the Oxford Climate Journalism Network.[9] In the US, National Public Radio (NPR) announced in September 2022 that its new climate desk would be funded by the Rockefeller Foundation.[10] However, the trouble with external funding is that strategies and content need to be adjusted to the funders' expectations—and their own political cultures. This is a particular challenge in the Global South. Ritu Kapur of The Quint explains: "Whenever I'm hunting for funding for our work on climate change, I find what is on offer are grants on themes with a western world orientation, very different from what is needed in India. There is, for example, significant funding to fight misinformation on climate change. But there is very little misinformation in India because we don't even have a narrative, let alone debate on climate change. We need funding for content."

Meera Selva, CEO of Internews Europe, made a similar observation. A journalist from Nigeria told her about her difficulties in conveying the oil industry's role in climate change to her editor. "She told me: My editor thinks climate change is about saving polar bears. When media organizations in the Global South think about framing certain issues, they think of the images used by NGOs that tend to be in Western Europe and North America." She says: "The appetite of funders to invest in climate change is rising, but it is less clear to them whether investing in journalism is worth it. The impact is hard to establish." Fergus Bell, founder of the British media consultancy Fathm, which works with newsrooms on climate strategies, says funding more climate journalism is not the solution: "Pumping out more content doesn't work. There is a lot of stuff out there that doesn't see the light of day. There needs to be a strategic layer applied first."

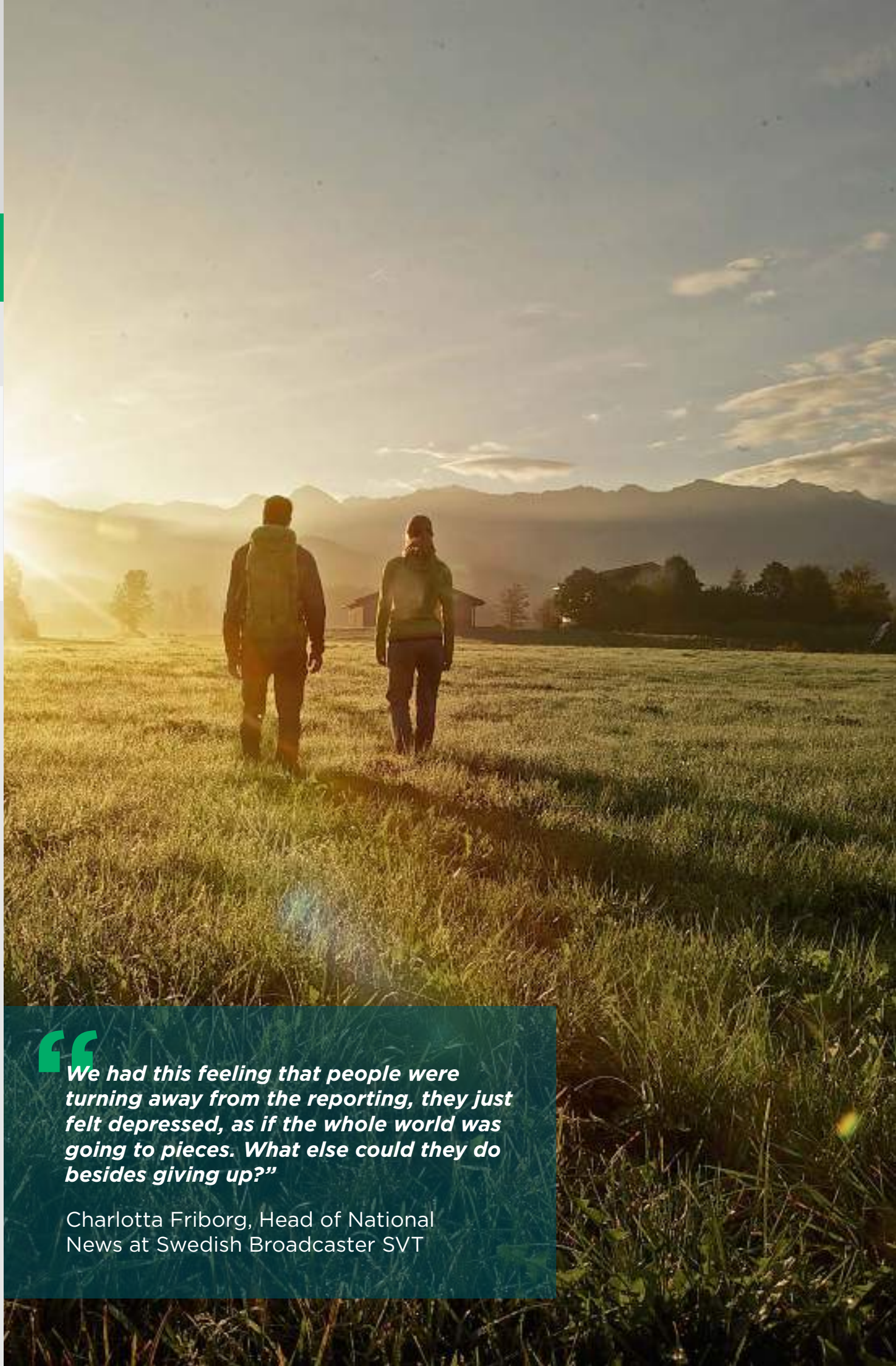
Enoch Sithole, a lecturer and doctoral candidate in climate change communications at Wits University in Johannesburg, suggests that funding schemes in public health could be a model for climate journalism funding. In African countries, there has been a tradition of foundations funding reporters to cover public health. "It works very well. If a foundation covers the salary of a reporter for 24 months, the culture will have changed, and the audience will get used to reading [these] stories," Sithole says.

The apocalyptic nature and the complexity of the climate challenge is depressing to audiences—and journalists.

Hans Cosson-Eide, who heads NRK's climate desk, puts it plainly: "It is heavy to cover climate change. Over time, you can get worn out. I wasn't prepared for that challenge." This also affects the audience—the difference being that people can simply ignore the news. Charlotta Friborg, Head of National News at Swedish Broadcaster SVT, says the negativity is the hardest aspect of climate reporting: "It is tough to cover this topic without turning people away." Manuela Kasper-Claridge, Editor-in-Chief of Germany's Deutsche Welle, which broadcasts internationally, also mentions this as her top concern: "It is too depressing. Where is the positive news? That's why we try to package things differently, emphasizing solutions no matter what the scale." (See Q&A with Manuela Kasper-Claridge, page 136).

AFP's Phil Chetwynd echoes that sentiment: "People struggle with yet another calamity. Non-stop doom and gloom is difficult. People feel helpless when they read this stuff. We need to not just talk about catastrophe but about something bigger." Ritu Kapur of The Quint is equally adamant, despite operating in a country which has already been visibly hard hit by climate change: "We must take the focus away from doom and gloom. We have to talk about solutions."

Reining in the 'doom and gloom' is also important because relentless negativity can cause people to tune out completely. "Climate change is a difficult topic to cover because the more we as humans are exposed to a given stimulus, the more we start to tune it out over time, especially when it's very negative news," explains Mary Sanford, a communication scholar who focuses on climate change at the Oxford Internet Institute. "The numbing effect of the doom and gloom stories around climate change is quite pronounced, so you have to find



We had this feeling that people were turning away from the reporting, they just felt depressed, as if the whole world was going to pieces. What else could they do besides giving up?"

Charlotta Friborg, Head of National News at Swedish Broadcaster SVT

a balance." Psychologists have established that humans have a 'finite pool of worry', an effect particularly visible when dealing with the ongoing coverage of atrocities like the wars in Syria and Ukraine, or human rights violations in Afghanistan.[11] People can only pay attention to so many issues at once—which explains the media's constant focus on breaking news.

Jon Williams, former Managing Director of News at RTÉ, sees negativity in combination with the complexity of the climate story as one of the biggest challenges for journalists: "It can feel a bit like a university lecture at times. Trying to break it down into manageable pieces that people can get their heads around is important." Friborg echoes this: "There is so much science, it gets complicated and technical. A lot of journalism is about simplifying."

For Friborg, the negativity is not only about the dramatic consequences of a changing climate but also about the nature of many of the solutions that are put forward, invoking sacrifices and guilt. "We had this feeling that people were turning away from the reporting, they just felt depressed, as if the whole world was going to pieces. What else could they do besides giving up?" she says. This happened particularly when the focus was just on what individuals could contribute. "That's why we wanted to approach it on another level. As the national newsroom, we wanted to reach out and grab the bigger picture, nationally and internationally."

Meera Selva observes a "hyperfocus on individual behaviour", which can feel exhausting to audiences and prevent citizens from pushing for policy and structural change. Often women have the onus for taking these individual actions, since in most areas of the world they are responsible for shopping, heating, and dealing with garbage: "Women have always been given microtasks to keep them away from politics. I don't want behavioural change around climate to become yet another thing to add to the workload for women in the private sphere. I want women to advocate in the public space."

Norwegian business school professor and author Per Espen Stoknes asserts that the framing of sacrifice prevalent in the Christian belief system has never been particularly successful in affecting change: "'We must sacrifice our sinful pleasures now in order to be purged for a clean and bright but very far-off future. It's the same framing that has been repeated for a thousand years or more in Christian cultures … without any noticeable improvements in behaviour. We're inoculated against messages inside that framing."[12] He also argues that fear and guilt-inducing messages and imagery tend to backfire—something that has been confirmed by various studies. According to a research article in which scientific theories of mind and brain in the context of climate coverage were reviewed, up to 98 percent of environmental news stories are negative in nature. The authors argue that this was based on the conventional wisdom among communicators that fear triggers action—but drawing on evidence, this assumption cannot be generalized.[13] Fear can also cause people to freeze in inaction or drive them into denial.

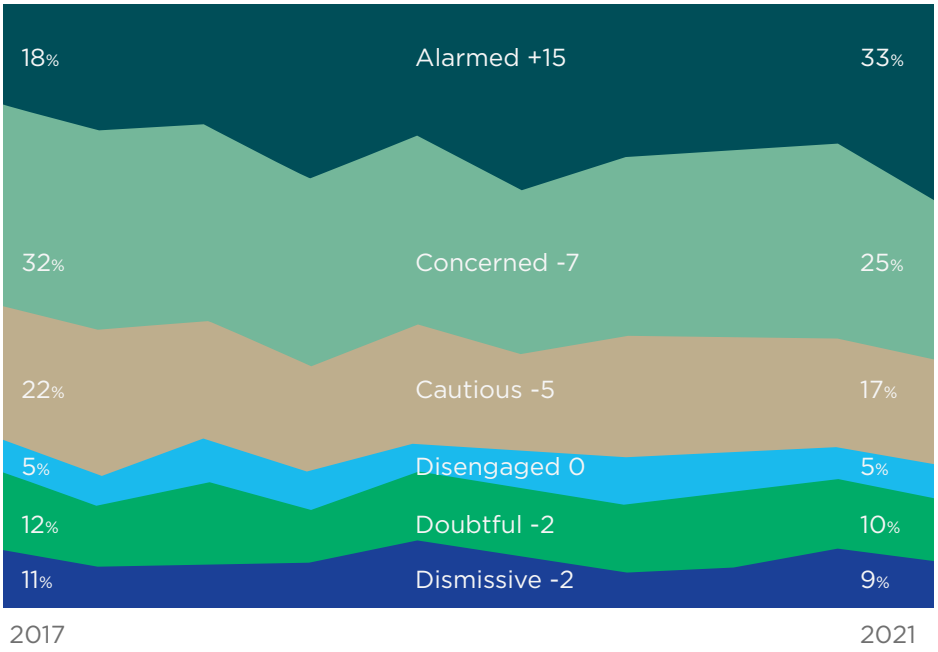
Editors don't see a business case for climate journalism, because at many outlets, audience metrics are mediocre at best.

The above-mentioned concerns are just the tip of the iceberg in terms of reasons that editors refrain from investing in climate journalism. Many might not admit that they were hesitant because they don't see a business case for expanding their coverage. But some expressed concerns about audience engagement. Kai Gniffke, Director General of German SWR, is quite frank about this: "Surveys tell us there is plenty of interest in climate, particularly with young audiences. But the number of users doesn't reflect this at the moment. Some say, why do you even bother? We have 'SWR2 Wissen', a science podcast that is one of the most successful in Germany, but when it is about climate, metrics are below average. We don't have formats yet that are really successful." Brodie Fenlon of CBC says: "We know that the audience says they are interested, that's the first thing [they say] whenever they're surveyed." But the numbers tell a different story. "They're not always actually interested."

For others who have invested heavily in climate journalism, however, audience engagement has been improving. But this reasoning sounds familiar to them, too. "I live in Delhi, the most polluted city in the world. The problem was obvious, even before these very dramatic climate change events that happened in the country. We had always reported on pollution but never connected the dots, treating it as a local phenomenon," says Ritu Kapur of The Quint. "In 2017 I first pushed for more climate journalism; we assigned a reporter. But the senior editorial team were sceptical, because there just wasn't enough readership for content on climate change." Enoch Sithole, a lecturer and Doctoral Candidate in climate change communications at Wits University in Johannesburg, observed the same kind of vicious cycle. Since the public wasn't exposed to excellent climate reporting, audience figures were scant. Sithole: "Climate change is poorly reported in South Africa. It follows conferences, events, disasters. Media coverage in general has grown to be around controversies. That is what editors think sells—it's default journalism."

Mark Hertsgaard of Covering Climate Now sees a mismatch between those who are in charge of newsrooms and what real audience needs are: "You may think that people don't want climate news. That was ten years ago; it shows your age. It's no longer true. It is especially not true for people under 35. However, the biggest problem for news media is to reach these audiences." Data collected by Yale University's Program on Climate Change Communication shows that even in a country as politically polarized as the US, people who worry about global warming are in the majority, and the group of those who are concerned grew between 2015 and 2021. More recent Yale data shows this holds particularly true for young people, even though political polarization on the issue also increased markedly in the time period.[14]

FIGURE 2: ATTITUDES TOWARDS CLIMATE CHANGE IN THE US

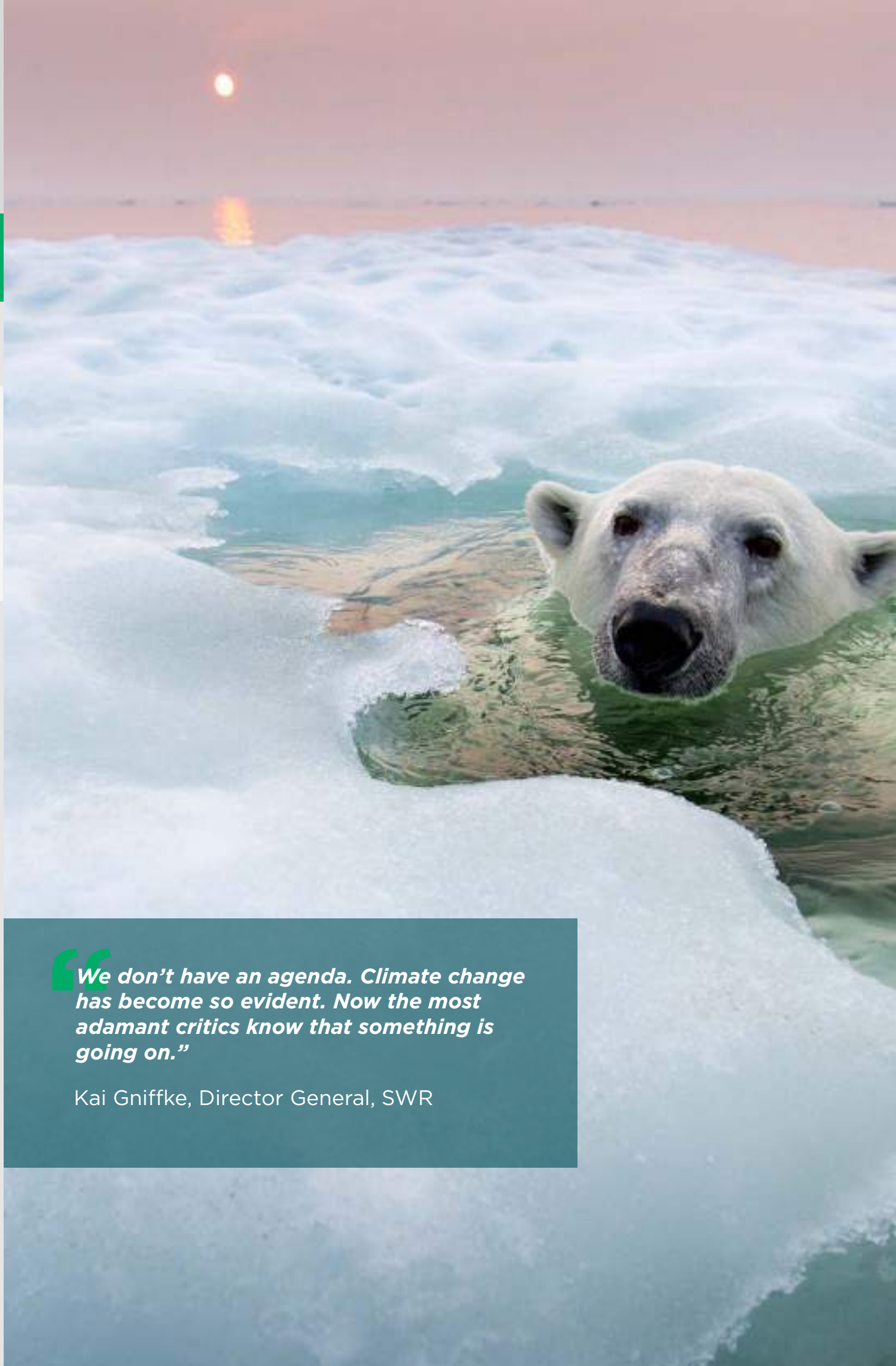


Source: Yale University (2022), Program on Climate Change Communication

International evidence shows a similar pattern. In December 2022, The Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism published a report on how people interact with climate news in eight countries.[15] The study, which was primarily based on online surveys, found that half of the respondents had engaged with climate change news or information in the preceding week, and that only a tiny proportion said they never saw any news on this topic. In most countries surveyed the majority were worried about climate change. This supports the findings of other studies which detect increasing concerns among the broad public.[16] But the Reuters Institute study also revealed that everywhere, there was "a significantly smaller share of younger people who have engaged with climate change news and information in the past week compared with older age groups." This somewhat contradicts what many of our interview partners observed or surmised. The authors of the report assumed that this finding corresponded to the fact that younger people in general consume less news than older cohorts.

According to the report, people don't avoid climate news more than other journalism content. But those who consciously avoid climate journalism do this for reasons that match publishers' concerns. Twenty-seven percent of 'avoiders' said: "I feel there is nothing really new in the news related to climate change," an equal percentage felt that "news related to climate change is untrustworthy or biased," and almost as many said climate news has "a negative effect on my mood." More than 20 percent of respondents also identified too much news coverage, and a lack of solutions about climate change (see Figure 3).

All in all, the report suggests that newsrooms shouldn't worry as much about a lack of audience interest as about how to make climate coverage interesting—which again reflects the concerns of many of our interview partners. The findings also suggest that journalists should pay attention when casting their protagonists. While scientists are trusted as sources pretty much everywhere when it comes to climate reporting, politicians are at the low end of the trust spectrum. According to the study, they are heavily associated with climate misinformation.

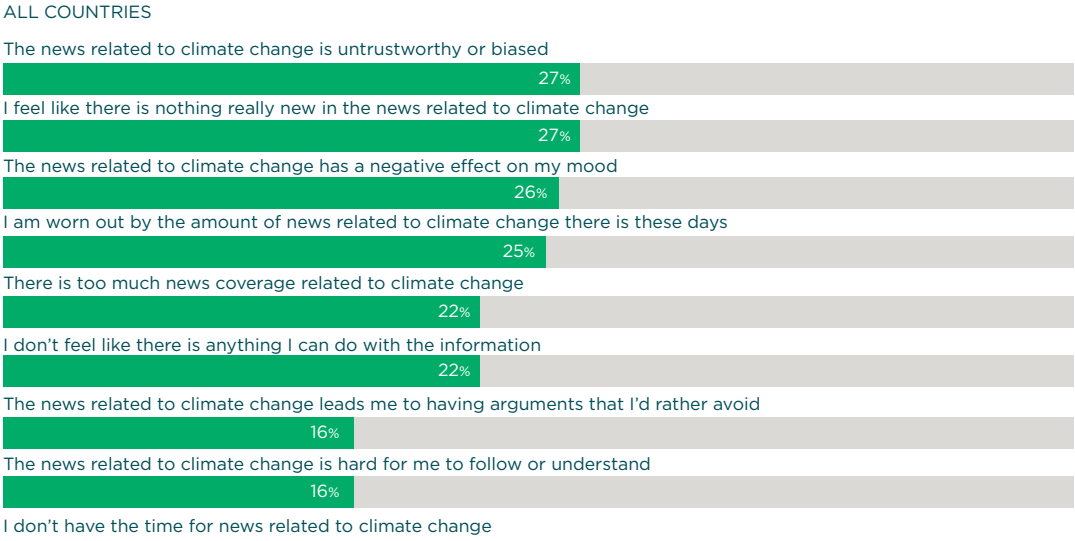


> ***"We don't have an agenda. Climate change has become so evident. Now the most adamant critics know that something is going on."***
>
> Kai Gniffke, Director General, SWR

Sometimes less than satisfactory audience figures serve as an excuse for not even trying, as do assumptions about audiences' preferences which have not even been tested. Hertsgaard of Covering Climate Now says media organizations tend to underestimate people's ability to care. "It is condescending to assume people would just care about jobs and that they are just about their own interests. People are grown-ups. Spare me blaming the public." From his point of view, the major reason for low levels of climate news consumption is simple: "If it is dull, it is not going to work."

The Guardian has been widely praised for its excellent climate coverage. CEO Anna Bateson says that the news organization has not only built large audiences around its climate reporting but that the subject is also a huge lever for eliciting donations—the news organization runs on voluntary contributions. Interestingly, according to her, many The Guardian readers argue that it is important to them that others are able to read climate content for free even if they themselves do not. Chris Moran, Head of Editorial Innovation, agrees. Engagement times on climate issues are lower than in other areas, he says. "The puzzle is how to increase engagement by people who feel overwhelmed, who are time poor."

FIGURE 3: WHY PEOPLE AVOID NEWS ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE



Source: W. Ejaz, M. Mukherjee, R. Fletcher, R. Nielsen, Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism (2022)

The issue of climate change has been politically polarized. Editors want to avoid being called out as activist or biased.

Another concern mentioned by several editors in our interviews is the underlying risk of polarization. Only a minority of audiences openly reject climate coverage, accuse public media outlets of pursuing leftist agendas, being activists, or openly supporting green parties.[17] Still, these voices can be noisy. This is particularly tough for public service media which are by their very mission committed to impartiality and a pluralism of voices. Kai Gniffke, Director General of German SWR, says this politicization doesn't influence the broadcaster's climate coverage. "That doesn't have an impact. Zero. We don't have an agenda. Climate change has become so evident. Now the most adamant critics know that something is going on." But for others—conceivably those lower down in the hierarchy who are approached directly—the protests aren't so easy to brush off.

Charlotta Friborg, Programme Director at SVT, is quite open about how the polarization of the climate issue affects reporters, if not the reporting. Particularly in the run-up to the national election in 2022, the broadcaster was faced with considerable hostility when covering the climate, she says. "We have the main audience who are, of course, concerned and feel strongly about the topic. But there is a minority, which has a really strong voice, an aggressive voice. These are people from the extreme right, who think that the climate issue is a hoax, something that the elites are trying to impose on them. They tend to contact the reporters and spread a lot of hatred in emails and social media," Friborg says. "This affects our reporters. It is a tough beat to cover." When SVT confronted this group head on with fact checking, the situation escalated. "Their reaction was really, really strong. They were so full of hate they ran a campaign against us on social media. And they reported us to all the authorities to whom you can report," Friborg recalls. SVT was officially cleared, because the reporting was correct, but an aftertaste remained.

Brodie Fenlon, Editor-in-Chief at the public Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) points out that challenges are different in every region, depending on the political environment and economic structure. In Canada, for example, it is harder to cover the issue in Alberta, an oil and gas producing province where the economy is heavily dependent on the industry. Compared to other regions of the world, Reuters Institute research shows polarization on the issue is quite pronounced in North America. "I get a lot of emails complaining about our climate coverage," Fenlon says. "We sit on the American border, and their politics is creeping into our country. The issue has been politicized by our own politicians."

To defend objectivity at all cost, some newsrooms have traditionally been hung up on what is today called 'false balance' reporting: Media organizations matched scientists talking about global warming with sceptics or climate deniers. Both were allocated about similar airtime, ignorant of overwhelming scientific evidence. In the US, Mark Hertsgaard says: "Media treated the climate story like a political story. Everyone thought we needed to cover both sides."

This has been a problem until quite recently, particularly in rather conservative settings. Max Boykoff, environmental studies professor at the University of Colorado, is outspoken about the approach journalists should take: "Media should definitely stop giving space to outlier perspectives, contrarian perspectives. Because that perpetrates a very distorted view of what's going on." Mary Sanford, a communication researcher who focuses on climate change at Oxford University, agrees, and makes the additional point that news media have to become bolder in addressing who is responsible, even if this could lead to pushback: "For example, unmasking the actions of those trying to delay climate action—and that's often parties or actors on the political right—is not a question of partiality. It's not about a political agenda, it is about facts."

Lance Bennett, one of the world's leading communication scholars, describes how the American political right politicized the issue only in the early 2000s, when it became clear that climate policies could harm certain economic interests (see Q&A with Lance Bennett, page 44). Steered by a few US spin doctors, the same talking points popped up internationally, he observed. The strategy was

to call the climate science into question, and often used political front groups and dedicated think tanks to sew climate 'doubt', including in the media.[18] The primary driver was the American oil industry. The BBC told the story about "Big Oil v the World" in a three-part film drawing on thousands of documents which were discovered in the past few years.[19] In their 2010 book 'Merchants of Doubt', American science historians Naomi Oreskes and Erik M. Conway dived into the issue of organized science denial in the US, that—given the predominance of American narratives—most likely had an international impact as well.

The narrative of lobbyists masked as think tanks seems to have changed in recent years, however. According to Nanette Braun, Chief of Communications Campaigns with the UN, outright denial has morphed into promoting climate delay. And many media outlets have become much more decisive on fighting false balance. Norwegian NRK made this part of their climate journalism strategy. Their News Director, Helje Solberg, says: "We are not obliged to give everyone equal time on air. We did that more in the past. We gave the impression that scientists were less in agreement than they actually are." Many newsrooms have since adopted the concept of 'due impartiality' as defined by the British regulator Ofcom, meaning that the extent of impartiality has to be appropriate to the subject matter.[20] In the case of climate, it needs to reflect the near 100-percent agreement of scientists that humanmade global warming is a fact.

Adrienne Russell, Co-Director of the Center for Journalism, Media and Democracy at the University of Washington, has studied false balance in the context of climate journalism. She says: "In my own research, different newsrooms have made different commitments to not quote these (science denying) sources. If it is a public official, they include their point of view. If it is not a case where people need to know, they won't include it." She found that many reporters have a hard time adhering to the traditional norm of impartiality: "Particularly when it comes to climate denial or misinformation, the idea that you have to be distanced from what you are reporting on, a lot of journalists I interviewed struggle with this. To what extent can you be distanced and still do good work? The notion of objectivity has been contested."

Some scientists, such as Waqaz Ejaz, a Postdoctoral Research Fellow with the Oxford Climate Journalism Network who has studied climate change communication for years, go even further. "There is nothing partial here any longer. There are facts and then there are consequences and that's it." In his view, the impartiality debate around climate change is often a distraction. "I don't believe that we have to be particularly impartial on this. We have to take sides here as journalists and scientists, and that's the side of the science and the science is settled. We have long passed that moment when we could impartially cover such an issue." For Ejaz and some of his colleagues, the urgency of the issue demands a more radical rethinking of journalistic norms and standards. "We only have one home and the safety of this collective asset is swiftly getting out of our hands. Human beings can't be neutral on this. We have the ability to discern what is right, and what is wrong—and we can honestly communicate to the people what has been done, what hasn't been done and what needs to be done."

Naturally, not everyone agrees with this in all aspects. Riikka Räisanen, Executive Editor of News and Current Affairs with YLE, is convinced that public service

> ***Eighty-six percent of Finns trust us. One reason is that we don't advocate for just any cause. We don't have agendas; our agenda is journalism."***
>
> Riikka Räisanen, Executive Editor of News and Current Affairs, YLE

media have a special obligation to maintain journalistic neutrality. "Young people want us to take a political role, for YLE to be a frontrunner. But we don't agree. We are journalists. Other people want us to say that this is a climate emergency, but we don't want to take this role. It is the old story: you cry wolf all the time, and when it comes, nobody believes you any longer." She points out that assuming all young audiences are in favour of climate journalism was a misperception. "There are also those who say: don't push this climate stuff in our face anymore. Eighty-six percent of Finns trust us. One reason is that we don't advocate for just any cause. We don't have agendas; our agenda is journalism."

In many media organizations, leadership hasn't embraced climate journalism as a priority. This leads to climate reporters or science desks remaining isolated.

It is rare to find newsroom leaders who openly admit they are not interested in getting serious about climate journalism. And yet, there are indications that this is the case. Finding interview partners for this report required comparatively more effort than with previous reports. While many editors and managers enjoy talking about their digital strategy, leadership, and innovation, responses were on average less enthusiastic this time around. The Oxford Climate Journalism Network's experience in recruiting members has revealed lots of demand by climate and science journalists from all over the world who are eager to network, but little interest by news leaders to become personally involved.

Fergus Bell, who consults to media companies internationally on climate journalism, shares this experience. He says: "It is very difficult to get editors to talk about it. Some senior people in news organizations are not engaged. They don't prioritize this with the time they have." He says the main reason is that the business case has not been made persuasively enough. "We heard from reporters in India who were asked to cover their own expenses when reporting on climate change, since these stories wouldn't get clicks. An editor-in-chief in an African country told us they could never run a climate story on the front page, it wouldn't be interesting enough to sell." This was unlikely to change until climate coverage could be reframed as an opportunity for growth, Bell says: "Climate journalism has only been treated as a story. No one has been given the breathing space yet: how to create new projects, how to amplify, built products and projects that work. The business side has also not been engaged."

But it is not only the senior editors or CEOs who resist change. There are blockages at middle management level as well. Jon Williams, until the summer of 2022 Managing Director of News and Current Affairs at Irish RTÉ, recalls: "TV programmers are the gatekeepers. They were resisting the most. TV organizations are very conservative. People come to work and apply a formula. Trying to break that habit is very difficult." Hans Cosson-Eide, Head of the climate desk at NRK, says, that many journalists still assume climate stories are not popular with audiences, even though the broadcaster has managed to prove this untrue. Cossen-Eide: "Those myths are harder to change than I thought. I'm still surprised that even when you have this big strategy, you often end up in discussions about 'why should we be doing this?' Resistance hasn't been strong, but more long lived than I thought."

Kirsty Styles, who looks at historical coverage in British newspapers to understand sustainability issues for her doctorate at the University of Central Lancashire, highlights a general contradiction which the media industry should at least face up to, even if it might not be able to solve it. "Like the wider economy, the media industry is focused on growth—but we can't have infinite growth on a finite planet. In media companies the need for growth is often driven by advertising—which prompts yet more consumption if you go on to buy the product on offer. Changing this might mean reconsidering your entire business model," Styles says. When advertising income is shrinking anyway, many media leaders will have difficulties embracing a strategy The Guardian announced in 2020, when editors said the paper would no longer take on ads from fossil fuel companies. Print production and logistics have their own challenges with energy and resource-intensive processes, the creation of ever more digital products might not be sustainable, either, because of their high energy demand. "High-definition standards are built into all sorts of devices, for example, which is not necessary," Styles points out. "Perhaps some may soon start to consider if there is a ceiling on the amount they are publishing every day." In these cases, the implications of a company's carbon footprint are rarely addressed.

The challenges for news organizations differ across the Global North and the Global South.

The rather blunt argument could be made that in the Global North, lifestyles were at stake, while in the Global South, lives were at stake. The reality is obviously more nuanced, but the fact remains that of the countries already hit hardest by climate change, the majority are in Africa and in Southeast Asia. Higher urgency should make it easier for media outlets to bring the issue close to home, but there are different challenges than in the North. One is the lack of reliable data. In many regions of the South, historic temperature data doesn't exist, and the same holds true for reliable and transparent data about resource depletion.

The structure of the media landscape is another issue. While in the Global South, large media is often state controlled, independent outlets tend to primarily serve urban elites. Meera Selva, CEO of Internews Europe, puts it like this: "In the Global South, digital first outlets intrinsically get it. They have a strong connection to their readers—what they lack is access to data and scientists. In the Global North there is no shortage of access to data or expertise, but reporting is focused on events like COP."

Research also shows that proximity to catastrophes doesn't always translate into action. Even when people are hit hard by natural disasters, there is no clear correlation between damage and political engagement against climate change. George Marshall examined the academic studies in detail for his book 'Don't Even Think About It: Why Our Brains Are Wired To Ignore Climate Change'.[21] "Research finds that people who survive climate disasters, like people who escape car accidents unscathed, are prone to have a false sense of their own future invulnerability," he writes. Studies from the United Kingdom and the US suggested that people who had been personally affected by natural disasters "were significantly less likely overall to ascribe it to climate change than those who were far away from the flooding." Rather than trying to get to the root cause of the calamity, victims tend to focus on rebuilding, hoping that this was

> ***Sadly, in our country climate change doesn't feature in political discourse. It doesn't play a role during election campaigns. The surround sound on climate change is missing. So, the people are left lurching from one natural disaster to another."***
>
> Ritu Kapur, CEO The Quint

a one-off rather than something that is likely to happen again tomorrow. A Filipino participant of an Oxford Climate Journalism Network course called these stories of poor people rebuilding with hope rather than understand the origins of catastrophes "resiliency porn".

Furthermore, where people lack formal education, which is more often the case in the Global South, they might observe changes in nature but cannot attribute them to a phenomenon they have not been taught about. "The farmer in the hinterland may not know the term climate change. He will know that something is seriously going wrong with patterns in nature. But he has no access to information," says Ritu Kapur from The Quint. "Many women in the countryside experience water shortages first hand and spend hours just procuring enough water to drink. And these are the people who are developing the deepest understanding of global warming. But sadly, in our country climate change doesn't feature in political discourse. It doesn't play a role during election campaigns. The surround sound on climate change is missing. So, the people are left lurching from one natural disaster to another."

Enoch Sithole, a lecturer at Wits University, echoes this sentiment. In South Africa, climate change was perceived to be a science beat, he said. The understanding in the general population was poor, because it was not taught at school. Surveys revealed that 54 percent of the population didn't know about climate change.[22] "We have eleven official languages; the term is not available in most of our indigenous languages," he says.

Interestingly, there seems to be a gender gap in engagement with climate change that varies among the Global North and South. While in the South, men and women equally care about global warming and its effects, in the North women care significantly more than men. The authors of a study in the American Political Science Review attribute this to men in developed countries having much more to lose when solutions to mitigate climate change are implemented.[23] This doesn't mean that women consume more climate journalism—at least no clear evidence on this emerged from our interviews. But this is most likely due to general news consumption patterns rather than based on the particular topic.

An ongoing debate about climate justice set the stage for much of the reporting going into COP27, the climate conference in November 2022 in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt. Those who are the least historically responsible for climate change are the first to feel its effects, and the most vulnerable—and yet a longstanding pledge by developed countries to provide $100 billion to help developing countries adapt has yet to be fulfilled. This story taps into larger debates about international justice, economics, development, and colonialism—all vivid topics that extend far beyond traditional climate stories. Nevertheless, climate justice can also be felt locally across the world, with poorer areas often more affected by natural disasters and changing weather patterns because less tends to be invested in heating, cooling, insulation, and other adaptation measures.

It is essential to understand the human psyche when crafting effective climate journalism. But newsrooms are not in the habit of learning from science.

Journalism is a craft of practitioners. For decades, reporters and editors praised themselves for their gut feeling, and a university degree wasn't a requirement for a career in journalism. That has changed, and not always for the better. Increasing academization of the craft brought more knowledge into newsrooms, but also made journalists more homogeneous; many journalists lost touch with the people they were meant to serve. Further, reporters getting better degrees didn't mean they would automatically use scientific evidence when trying to understand their audiences. In fact, the industry has its own quality standards which don't consider the potential effect of their journalism on people. For many, this is a conscious act. Many news cultures see the detachment from potential effect and therefore impact at the core of their ethics which is researching and reporting the facts. Crafting their output with a potential impact in mind to them would come close to activism, even manipulation. 'Climate journalism that works,' measured in terms of action being taken by their audiences, is not their primary goal.

The perception that reporting the facts is sufficient might be an explanation for the puzzling fact that a lot of knowledge is available on the impact of certain types of journalism but it is not being used by the practitioners. While there has been excellent literature on effective climate communications on the market for many years, newsrooms have remained largely ignorant on the matter. But the news industry cannot afford to ignore this data for much longer as value for money becomes more important while resources become scarcer and competition for attention grows. It is interesting that the 2022 Digital News Report arguably created a real stir for the first time when it highlighted the topic of news avoidance, even though it had been included in its reports since 2017. Of course, this coincided not only with the availability of granular audience metrics but also with newsroom experience around the Ukraine war when pretty much everyone except for the big international and national players noticed a severe dip in traffic.

For the challenge of climate change, it is even more important that people actually consume and engage with the content produced. Action is required to prevent further catastrophe and an informed public is vital to this end. As such, newsrooms should seek to better understand the human psyche. It will help them craft better climate journalism.

Unfortunately, the human brain is not wired to engage with issues as complex and future-oriented, with potentially high cost and low (immediate) benefit as climate change. And we often find it difficult, as the sociologist Jana Bacevic writes, "to acknowledge how our present actions are directly contributing to bringing about, or at least making more likely, certain kinds of futures—and how our actions can, and must, be changed now, today."[24] Per Espen Stoknes' book 'What We Think About When We Try Not to Think About Global Warming: Toward a New Psychology of Climate Action' contains rich advice on what doesn't work in risk communication and what to do about it, as does George Marshall's 'Don't Even Think About It'.[25]

One important disadvantage is that the human mind is poor at risk-assessment. Everyone knows that the risk of dying in a car accident is much higher than that of dying in a plane crash. Still, many people get more nervous boarding a plane than getting into their own car. This flawed perception of risk demonstrates that it is not enough to report endless facts. Statistics alone won't do—and people tend to discount future risks. This is what psychologists term 'availability bias': when people "hugely overestimate the dangers of recent events and disregard the threat posed by more distant ones that they have not experienced," Marshall writes.[26] Another challenge to overcome is the so-called 'bystander effect'. Climate change is a global crisis that needs to be battled by collective action. This requires institutional responses, since individuals are unlikely to change their behaviour if they don't experience an immediate effect. But many institutions depend on public acceptance.

For his research, Marshall met Nobel Prize-winner Daniel Kahneman, who studies human decision-making and wrote the bestselling book 'Thinking, Fast and Slow'. Kahneman's message was not very encouraging, and Marshall quoted him as saying: "I am very sorry, but I am deeply pessimistic. I really see no path to success on climate change."[27] He went on to say that people acted most reliably on threats that were concrete, immediate, and indisputable, whereas climate change was abstract, distant, invisible, and disputed. In addition, people were far more prepared to take risks on losses than on gains, especially if the losses were predicted for the future. And that was almost ten years ago. The threat of the climate crisis has moved considerably closer since.

The view of the late sociologist and public intellectual Ulrich Beck forms a counterpoint to Kahnemann's bleak assessment: "[With climate change] we will always have the problem of how to make decisions under conditions of uncertainty. I don't think this has to be a bad situation. When we think about the past, we realise that humanity has always been about uncertainty," he argued in an interview at the London School of Economics 2014, a few months before his death. "Climate change is not only a catastrophe," Beck said—it is the anticipation of catastrophe, "and it is this anticipation which forces people to take action." And action has already been taken, although perhaps not enough to avert disaster. But it's a perspective that moves us away from a purely negative outlook: The anticipation of a catastrophe can spur action and open new spaces for thinking and action which seemed previously unimaginable.[28]

Per Espen Stoknes identifies five barriers to climate action, which he—with a little tweaking—calls 'the five D's': distance, doom, dissonance, denial, and iDentity'.[29] Distance: for many people climate change still feels far away in time and place. Doom: people try to avoid topics that invoke loss, sacrifice, and cost. Dissonance: people tend to downplay dangers that threaten their preferences, behaviours, and dreams. Denial: it works as a strategy of self-defence even when we know better. And identity, because cultural identity overrides facts. Humans tend to look for validation within their peer groups and filter away information that doesn't fit their existing values. This is why 'reporting the facts' is not enough to have an impact. Evidence suggests that exposure to disinformation can erode the positive effects of science coverage when belief systems conflict.[30] However, Stoknes sets the stage for a meaningful shift in perception when he argues that

"when we become aware of how perception, risk, and framing together influence the mind, we can start crafting solutions." This is what we will attempt to do in Chapter 2.

Needless to say, there are no recipes or easy fixes. Every news organization and newsroom has to come up with their own strategies which fit their particular place in the information universe. Most likely, success will never be 100 percent. But progress towards impact is possible only by testing and learning. This means we need to start now. Waqas Ejaz and Mary Sanford put it this way: "Climate change goes across almost every aspect of life, and it doesn't wait for us to get ready. So, when the issue is that big, it deserves to be on the forefront of our thinking as citizens, academics and journalists. And if that is not happening, then that's something that we really need to talk about."

As Marshall wrote in 2014: "Climate change is very difficult but not perfectly difficult. In theory we can deal with this—it is all a matter of degree. Humans are smart, but are we smart enough? We are cooperative, but are we cooperative enough? Those people who understand and get passionate about this issue are numerous, but are they numerous enough? We have a little time, but is it enough?"[31] The depth, intensity, and pervasiveness of climate journalism will certainly have an impact on the answers to all these questions.

Q&As

Q&A

> ***"We want to hook people on hope, not on fear"***

NANETTE BRAUN

United Nations, Chief, Communications Campaigns

Nanette Braun leads communications campaigns at the United Nations. She has worked in and risen through different parts of the organization for close to 30 years. Her responsibilities encompass campaigns on a range of UN priorities, not just climate change, but she identifies this as the UN's major concern.

Within the UN framework, how important is climate change as an issue?

Climate change is the existential priority. It determines the future of humanity. It is a crisis that affects everybody, everywhere. To limit the rise in global temperature to 1.5 degrees and avoid the worst impacts of climate change we know we need to reduce carbon emissions by 50 percent by 2030 and be carbon neutral by 2050. We currently are far from achieving this and the window of opportunity is closing fast.

Is the media doing a good job covering the challenges?

The media is becoming better informed, better in unpacking the complexities. We see a lot of good climate reporting, and public understanding of climate change has grown significantly. Now, is public understanding improving due to good reporting, or is the reporting better because the public cares more? Whatever the nexus, this is a good development but there is still ample room for improvement. This is a topic not to let go of. It needs to be at the top of the journalistic agenda.

This is a positive assessment. Many media organizations are a lot more self-critical.

I'm talking about now, not about five or even more than 40 years ago when there was already opportunity to put this topic firmly on the reporting agenda. The Carter Administration, for instance, published a report in the late 70s that became sort of a bestseller in Germany. I remember that I did a presentation in high school, I must have been 14 years old. While the science was still evolving, the overall projection was already clear. We lost a lot of time. Today, there is no way to deny that climate change is happening; all countries experience the effects. Young people are justifiably very concerned. It is their future that is at serious risk. All of this has contributed to the greater public interest and this goes hand in hand with more scientific knowledge and insights.

When you look at media coverage, what is your impression about climate literacy in newsrooms?

Climate literacy has grown. But at the same time, we see a worrying amount of misinformation and disinformation. We still see climate deniers, even though the tone has shifted from overall outright denial to misleading information that is watering down the urgency of the climate crisis with the aim to delay action. Public service media has a very important mandate and responsibility in countering false information by providing a science-based, fact-checked narrative.

Public service media still seem to struggle a bit with being accused of taking sides if they are too outspoken on the issues.

Presenting different views is a principle of balanced, fair journalism. But in the case of climate change the science is clear, so it is critical that media use the authoritative information that exists as the basis for their reporting, both on the cause and effect of climate change and on the urgent need for action toward a carbon-free future. There is no longer any doubt that climate change is caused by human activity.

The negativity of it all does seem to drive audiences away. What do you recommend?

There is a lot of anxiety around climate change, and we know this can cause news avoidance. People get overwhelmed by too much negative news. This is why it is important to demonstrate that there are solutions—and they do exist: technologies are evolving fast and the transition to renewables is possible. Showcasing solutions keeps people engaged. We want to hook people on hope, not on fear. We want to provide them with the understanding that everybody can contribute. Climate change offers many entry points for reporting, beyond news and science: food production and consumption, for example, have a big impact on climate, as do travel or fashion. Climate action can be a filter through which to also look at everyday lifestyle issues.

As an international organization, do you observe regional differences in coverage?

Obviously, conversations are different in the Global North and South, particularly on how to compensate for loss and damages. The G20 countries produce 80 percent of greenhouse gas emissions that cause climate change. By contrast, the 55 countries in Africa have contributed only three to four percent of emissions but they are particularly affected. This was finally acknowledged at COP27, with a breakthrough agreement on the establishment of a fund to support developing countries cope with the effects of climate change. And then there are media organizations which are better resourced than others. With more resources comes the ability for better reporting, research and fact checking. An important step for media can be to foster collaboration, with bigger organizations supporting those outlets that are less resourced. A good example is Covering Climate Now, a media initiative that provides resources and opportunities to work together. Or take our own SDG Media Compact, a global alliance of which EBU is a member, to foster reporting around the whole sustainable development agenda.

What should media do next?

Media reporting should focus on solutions. Combatting climate change means a transformation of the way we live, and we see growing interest and demand. We see technical solutions. The price point for renewables has dropped significantly, this has been an incredible success story. There is no alternative to a just and green energy transition.

Also, media have an important role in holding decision makers accountable. Greenwashing, for instance, has become a widespread issue. It is important to follow up on promises made and see to what extent they are being kept.

With the war in Europe going on, will climate journalism be at risk?

This is the great challenge of the moment. We need to call on the media: Do not get distracted. Do not let go of this topic.

Some media outlets are very conscious of the language they choose around climate change. Do you think this is important?

I think most important is that your audience understands the issue. Avoid jargon. For instance, does everybody understand the concepts of net-zero or carbon neutral? Make sure that people who are not involved on a daily basis will get it.

What about the visual language?

Media must depict the situation as it is. Climate change is an emergency. The importance is to balance this with images that show a way forward. Again, climate anxiety and news avoidance as a potential consequence do not help. Media is only relevant when people consume it.

Q&A

> *"We are looking at the biggest reconstruction story since World War II"*

WOLFGANG BLAU

Co-Founder of Oxford Climate Journalism Network

Wolfgang Blau is an experienced international media manager. During his time as a visiting fellow at the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism in Oxford, he not only studied climate journalism, he also co-founded the Oxford Climate Journalism Network which brings together journalists from all over the world to learn about climate coverage. In October 2022 the advisory firm Brunswick appointed him as Managing Partner with responsibility for the Climate Hub.

Wolfgang, you spent two years researching how news organizations cover climate change. What struck you most?

What I found most striking was the extent of denial when you confront yourself or others with the severity of the climate crisis. In the past, I thought overcoming denial culminates in one breakthrough moment. I had a somewhat judgmental view of denial, including my own. I saw it as a weakness or something that needed to be attacked. I suspect this is the reason why so much journalism is so alarming, confrontational, and full of doom: Journalists often feel they have to hammer it home. Then I started reading up on the psychology of denial. Today, I think it would be better to look at denial with more compassion. It is an integral part of our psyche, in fact, it helps us survive. Denial has many layers and is something that can rarely ever be transformed with shock-and-awe journalism.

So, all these images of raging fires, flooding, interviews with worried scientists, they don't help?

A common assumption in journalism is that facts and figures are best suited to convey the urgency of the climate crisis. However, the recent work of neuroscientists such as Kris de Meyer at Kings College indicates that we respond more strongly to action-centric representations of the climate crisis than to abstract and issue-centric ones. We need much more and much better climate journalism. We don't achieve much by hitting people over the head with it.

What is ideal climate journalism from your experience?

A news organization's climate journalism should be as all-pervasive as the consequences of the climate crisis itself are. It should be completely normal to have a paragraph on climate impacts in, let's say, a sports story or a story about company earnings. Climate desks are important, but they carry the risk of creating a new silo in the newsroom. There is not a single area of journalism that will not be transformed either directly by climate impacts or by humanity's efforts to mitigate climate change or adapt to it. Journalism should also translate the issue of climate change into the here and now. People tend to respond to this better than to very abstract narratives. And overall, journalism about potential solutions needs more context. Currently, the goalposts are often missing. Stories about new carbon capture technologies or a new wind farm are almost pointless if they lack the context of how much capacity will be needed to keep global warming well below two degrees Celsius. Take the pandemic: Only when we had a small set of metrics did we develop a sense of whether the situation was getting worse or better. This context of the bigger picture is missing in much of climate journalism.

So, is it similar to the digital newsroom? Many newsrooms started out with a very complicated set of metrics to measure success but became aware that the best metrics are those that everyone understands.

Yes, we need simplicity. It is very difficult to find these metrics, but what we need most is proportionality: Where does this story sit in the bigger picture? How much does a supposed solution actually contribute? To summarize the to-dos: First, free climate journalism from its organizational silo and make it all-pervasive. Second, localize it and bring it into the here and now as much as possible. Third, put it into context.

Are today's newsrooms up to the challenge?

Many news organizations produce better climate journalism today than they did two years ago, but even the efforts of the best are not yet proportionate to the size of the challenge we are facing. Climate change or whatever you want to call it—the climate crisis, the climate question, the climate emergency, global warming—climate change is a systemic challenge, but most news organizations are still treating it only as a topic. You can now see news organizations that have built world-class climate desks but then let their business desk cover the fast-fashion giant Shein or the quarterly earnings report of Saudi Aramco as if there was no climate expertise in their newsroom whatsoever. This compartmentalization no longer makes sense. And this is not about injecting activism or politics into business coverage. It is much rather about better business journalism.

So, you advise against a climate desk?

It is always a good start to build a climate desk, and news organizations need climate specialists. But they are no substitute for increasing climate literacy, or

climate fluency, of all desks.

Some newsrooms have now put their best reporters on the climate beat. Canadian broadcaster CBC assigned it to a former war correspondent. Is this a trend?

I have not noticed this as a widespread phenomenon. But you are right, many editors think of climate journalism as crisis reporting. And while it is important to cover extreme weather events, they are still only the breaking news surface of something much more profound and systemic. For instance, there is the aspect of climate adaptation, of anticipating and preempting the effects of climate change that can no longer be preempted or have already happened. Just in the context of climate adaptation alone, we are looking at the biggest reconstruction story since World War II. Are our transport infrastructures and cities ready for higher temperatures or rising sea-levels? How are we transitioning the world's agriculture to crops that are more heat or drought resistant? There are so many important and interesting stories just on climate adaptation alone that you overlook as an editor when you reduce climate journalism to breaking news and crisis reporting.

Sometimes it seems regions of the 'Global South' take climate journalism more seriously, as the effects are already harshly felt in many places.

It depends. In the so-called 'Global South' it is often difficult to get reliable regional climate data. A Kenyan radio journalist told us that some of her listeners see their harvest failing and believe this must be a punishment from God. In this kind of situation, climate journalism means something very different. I have also heard about very climate-aware politicians from threatened island nations who say in private that they can't talk to journalists about how dire their situation is as that could deter investors from building the new luxury resorts that attract the tourists they need...

So where are the front-runners?

When I compare climate journalism across the globe, I see the biggest difference between the United States and the rest of the world. In the US, comparatively more journalistic energy is still spent on having to prove and defend basic climate science than in most other regions of the world. That said, some of the best climate journalism also comes from the US. Among the large news organizations, Bloomberg Green, The New York Times and the *LA Times* with their California beat stand out. And then, of course, there is a whole cosmos of brilliant newsletters and podcasts. I just wish Europe's public broadcasters would do more.

These are all heavyweights. Can you start small?

Yes. You can pick a niche and be really good at it. Exactly because climate change is a systemic challenge which affects every aspect of our societies and economies, you also have the freedom to focus on just one aspect and covering that really well, such as the climate-related activities of major football leagues.

If, however, you have the admirable ambition of France's news agency AFP or of Radio France to add the climate dimension to all of their desks, then you need to establish climate literacy across your newsroom and need a specialist team to support it, which is expensive.

Is there a particular role for public service media in climate journalism?

Public broadcasters in Europe have an unrivalled responsibility to get it right, because they are comparatively well-funded. In addition, they tend to be their country's most-trusted news organization. Especially when it comes to climate journalism, an audience's trust in a news organization is a hugely important ingredient. Sometimes I have been struck by the timidity of public service media. Yes, they are under growing political pressure in many countries. But to preemptively capitulate is not a strategy.

With the war going on now, the pandemic still in the news, newsrooms face conflicting pressures.

It seems to be a recurring theme in the history of climate journalism: There is always another crisis that seems more important. Often it doesn't even need a crisis. All it took for the last IPCC report to be washed out of the news cycle within hours was an actor misbehaving at the Oscars. It had taken seven years to produce that report. With the Russian attack on Ukraine, several participants in the Oxford Climate Journalism Network said they could no longer cover climate change but had to help out at the news desk or cover the energy crisis. This said, energy literacy is a core aspect of climate journalism, and it seems the war in Ukraine has also heightened the world's awareness for just how integral energy is to our societies and economies. A next phase in this realization may be that the much-needed shift to renewable energies will come with its own new set of geopolitical dependencies.

Which should be exciting for all those policy strategy reporters… But does everyone in the newsroom need climate literacy?

Yes, you need more general climate literacy in newsrooms, just as news organizations at some point realized that they couldn't just depend on a few digital specialists but needed to increase everyone's digital literacy in order to stay relevant as an organization.

Will knowledge be sufficient to spur action?

You can have a lot of factual knowledge but still not appreciate that the clock is ticking. The locus of the denial has shifted. It has shifted from denying climate science, and specifically that climate change since the pre-industrial age is human-made, to denying how urgent our situation is and how little time we have left to avoid a much more dramatic course of events. The willingness to embrace the time pressure we are under is part of climate literacy.

Will the pressure of younger generations help force the shift in newsrooms?

If you lead a newsroom, you generally have to work with the team you have and can't really afford to pick and choose. I also noticed over the years that colleagues in the last chapter of their careers can be the most dynamic and most supportive of organizational change. But, of course, I have never heard a young journalist say "I am somehow glad I won't live long enough to see the worst effects of climate change," while I have seen quite a few older colleagues express such sentiments. Some of them were even middle-aged, which makes me think they've never looked at an IPCC report.

Has climate coverage risen to be a C-level topic?

In newsrooms? I doubt it. It has been a somewhat confusing experience for me that in some of my other work I have met the CEOs of very large global companies who had deep knowledge of the climate crisis. I have yet to meet one chief editor with a similar degree of climate knowledge. In many large news organizations, climate literacy is still where digital literacy was in the late 1990s when chief editors delegated 'the internet' to a few experts or had just launched their first digital teams, mostly at a safe distance from their main newsroom. It is the nature of the climate crisis, though, to move faster than most of us think. I wouldn't be surprised to see a major news organization restructure itself around the climate crisis as its organizational axis soon.

Q&A

LANCE BENNETT

University of Washington

> *"We need to move from crisis coverage to solutions investigation"*

Professor Lance Bennett is among the world's leading communication scholars. As a political scientist and Senior Fellow at the Centre for Journalism, Media & Democracy at the University of Washington, he has studied the impact of communication on collective behaviour for decades. Bennett has taught at universities all over the world, and was a visiting scholar at the Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies in Potsdam. His latest book is 'Communicating the Future' (2020).

What do media consistently get wrong about climate journalism?

It depends on when you're talking about. Before the 1990s, there was a lot of confusion between the concepts of climate and weather, and a tendency to accept corporate spin. In the 1990s, the conservative right around the world began to engage with the subject because they understood that this would have serious economic consequences. So, they politicized the issue and we moved into a period of denial and deflection of the science. Until 2010 or so the mainstream media was looking for balance, so they played the political opposition game.

You are talking about 'both sides journalism', much of which still exists I'm afraid.

Probably. But balance doesn't necessarily mean you are getting it right; it means you are playing it safe. This is how a lot of misinformation was introduced into news coverage. In the past decade the framing has shifted from covering partisan conflict to anchoring more in science. That has been a huge improvement. In recent years all the catastrophes, the fires, floods, droughts have kept pushing the issue to the front pages, which is generally a good thing. But what I see now is that journalists are unable to move beyond the crisis.

Many probably feel they need to establish there is a crisis when even their editors-in-chief don't see it. What would moving beyond that entail?

There is this mind-numbing crisis-reporting. In a similar way to the reporting on hunger and famine, the climate crisis is likely producing empathy fatigue syndrome for news audiences. What is missing, and what I'd like to see journalism do more of, is find an additional anchor beyond the science. I would like to see

economics come into the story. Environmental activists have been successful in bringing the issue into the news, but they have been slow to recognize they are holding a second position in an unbalanced conversation: environment versus economics. The predominant narrative became, that protecting the environment will slow economic growth, it will cost jobs. Environmentalists have been unable to develop a compelling economic counterargument. You see this a little bit more now with the Greens being in government in Germany and their co-leader Robert Habeck as Federal Minister for Economic Affairs and Climate Action joining the issues of environment and economics effectively. But it would be nice if more journalists could see that connection and begin to introduce to readers the idea that we need a very different economic model—or several.

The debate on economic growth as the universal remedy for the problems of society and inequality has been going on for decades, but not much has happened. How could the media insert some new energy into a discussion on such a paradigm shift?

It is such an interesting and important question. It would be wonderful to see journalists asking it more often. Part of the problem is using mainstream economists as primary sources, since they tend to look backwards more than anyone else. There is a 50-to-60-year history of sustainable economics; many of its practitioners are out there but no one interviews them. Reporters finding these people would introduce interesting new models into the debate.

What kind of models do you mean?

For example, moving from global to regional economies. The US passed important legislation about it recently, aimed at getting technology companies to move chip production back home. The war in Ukraine is an excellent example of how the global food supply is so fragile. And in Europe, when major rivers dry up, how can we move goods over long distances? Or think about plastic pollution and how to fight it. Who is going to generate the ideas and the political pressure to push the change on so many fronts? There are so many super interesting questions that I don't hear journalists asking their sources.

Have you seen any compelling formats you can recommend?

I have seen very good long form journalism, including magazine pieces or book-length pieces. But most journalists in the mainstream press still focus on conventional crisis reporting. A good question is: What constitutes great climate journalism? Is it front-page journalism? Is it sending reporters out to locations where the changes can be witnessed, like rivers where warships are surfacing because of declining water levels? We need to be moving from crisis coverage to solutions investigation. This would make journalism relevant on this topic. Everyone is afraid of economic transformation because it may be disruptive. But is it more disruptive than waiting for the crisis to kill economies?

Do you think climate coverage should pay attention to language, like the way the Guardian does using expressions like 'climate emergency' or 'global heating'?

I don't think language is as important as shifting the framing of the reporting.

Shifting from crisis coverage to solution coverage, that would be huge. I think the average news consumer can handle differences in languages.

What about visuals? Some argue that the media shouldn't picture happy children playing in fountains during heatwaves.

Last summer almost every news outlet I have looked at featured the big crises: flooding, fires, nuclear plants not having enough cooling capacities, ice melting… Give the news consumer a break! Journalism can't be so depressing that people don't want to consume it. In the last two years I have put myself on a news diet for this exact reason. I restricted my intake. I have a feeling that media have to figure out what it means to be a serious news organization, because what is won if they lose their audiences?

Should journalists be careful not to come across as activists? This is a big issue particularly for public service media which are committed to impartiality.

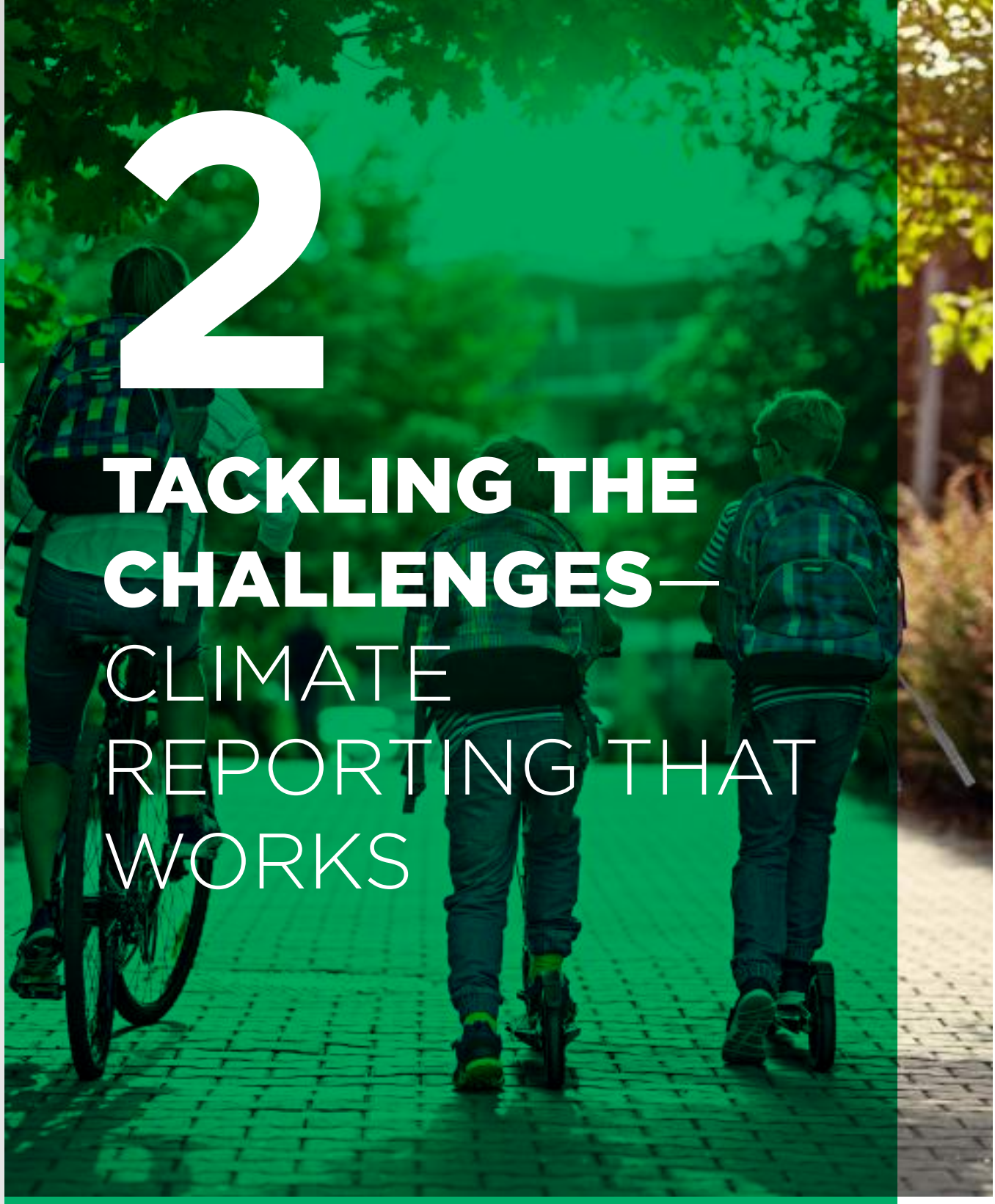
Some journalists are by their own desire an activist. That is a type of journalism, and it has an audience. For years activists felt they needed to push their issues through the mainstream press. Now they know they have their own channels. Greenpeace does their own kind of journalism, for example. They are no news organization, but some of their stuff may have been more useful in terms of holding those in power to account than the mainstream press. I think that journalists should observe their own ethical standards but not be swayed by critics and political pressures. What does activist journalism mean? When you cover too much of the climate crisis, or when you explore solutions?

So, the young generation of journalists is right when they say there is no such thing as objectivity?

The concept of objective reporting was always problematic but never more than now. Meanwhile, audiences increasingly seek information that feeds their biases. What you need to do is to create information that covers different perspectives which challenge conventional thinking. Introducing new economic models is an interesting way to challenge people. Journalism should help build bridges between the political camps. In climate journalism there are angles that attach to different ends on the political spectrum, that anchor biases in values like belonging, community, the return of a welcoming and comforting society.

Where do you see public service media's role in all of this?

I am a little bit concerned about the standing of public media. Currently it is on the run, being attacked from various sides. From my point of view public media could use its position to create public agendas, agendas of democracy. It is also clear that public broadcasting doesn't attract a young audience. And yet, what do young people care about: democracy, environment, identity, education, the future. Public broadcasters could solve a lot of their future problems by bringing in an agenda that creates a differentiator from the rest of the press by creating a large space for reporting on and talking about the big issues of our time. That would form a unique brand in any national media space. People would respect that more.



2 TACKLING THE CHALLENGES— CLIMATE REPORTING THAT WORKS

CHAPTER

Climate change has the potential to threaten the livelihoods of billions of people and—if no countermeasures are taken—the very future of humanity. 'Just reporting the facts' is no longer enough. Given the gravity of the issue, news organizations have a responsibility to ensure the effectiveness of their journalism in informing and engaging the public, perhaps even a moral obligation. For public service media this may even form part of their mandate. If facts are poorly explained or presented in an unengaging manner, newsrooms have failed to do their jobs. While it is hard, if not impossible, to tell which kinds of stories, data visualizations, images, and explanations might trigger action or at least foster comprehension, there are plenty of insights from various scientific fields that suggest what kind of journalism has the chance to be convincing and, respectively, what is more likely to bore, alienate, or aggravate consumers.

Certainly, the path from climate insight to climate action is complex. It is hard to evaluate a huge array of solutions, many of which have yet to be invented or at least made viable commercially. Further, carrying on a mainstream personal and professional life and understanding the impacts of climate change requires cognitive dissonance on so many fronts. To state it plainly: Even climate scientists fly to conferences. The move towards sustainability not only implies a deep restructuring of the economy, it impacts the heart of human behaviour, calling many of the prevailing incentive and reward structures into question. It focuses on the very definition of what a good life is. As Per Espen Stoknes writes: "Climate change isn't an individual, technical, or environmental problem. It's a cultural challenge with solutions at the organizational social level. The strategies to resolve it must therefore also be social."[1]

While the role of journalism is not primarily to engage but to inform people, it can be explicit about what the different engagement options are. 'Climate journalism that works' is journalism that shows what is at stake, who is responsible, what can be done about it, and finally, who is responsible for which type of action. If newsrooms want to deliver on this, they do not only need to work on the quality and depth or their journalism, but also on the framing of the issue, on bringing in a whole array of perspectives, on approaching different audiences in different ways, and on testing unfamiliar strategies, including gamification and possibly humour. Public service media in particular are obliged by their very mission to leave no one behind. As the British climate scientist, stand-up comedian, and author of the book 'Hot Mess', Matt Winning says: "We need to make content for people we don't make content for." (See Q&A with Matt Winning, page 92.)[2]

Framing matters: Make it about a desirable future.

Adrienne Russell of the University of Washington has studied which kinds of journalism tend to work better with different people: "Impact is tricky, but there are certain things we know. Stories are usually more effective than data. If you have these amazing data sets, you need to transform them into a narrative. The framing of stories really matters. You have to figure out what the values of the communities are and then tailor the message to these values. Generally speaking, the frame of avoiding wastefulness resonates with conservatives, health benefits resonate with a general population. Apocalyptic frames can have an alienating impact. If you present the story with no hope, people feel they can't

> ***"The worst thing is blaming individuals. This doesn't resonate with people at all. It also deflects from the fact that industries are so much more responsible for climate change."***
>
> Adrienne Russell, Professor,
> University of Washington

do anything about it." While this is widely supported by evidence, there seem to be regional variations. A study published by Nature comparing five countries revealed that when asked to support climate mitigation policies, positive frames sat much better with respondents from the US, the UK, and China, whereas negative frames worked more effectively in Germany. In India the correlation was statistically insignificant.[3]

According to Russell, blaming and shaming doesn't work: "The worst thing is blaming individuals. This doesn't resonate with people at all. It also deflects from the fact that industries are so much more responsible for climate change. It is one thing to encourage personal responsibility, but it is another to present that as a solution, telling people to go vegan, not to drive, not to fly." Stoknes echoes this: "Shaming messages backfire, positive messages reinforce positive social norms."[4]

Despite this advice, which is supported by several communication scholars, climate journalism tends to focus on alarming projections from scientists and politicians and images of catastrophic events. Sven Egenter, Executive Director of the Germany based publications Clean Energy Wire and Klimafakten.de, explains it like this: "That's usually the first reaction. When media think: 'We missed it, we need to do more', it can get quite noisy. The climate apocalypse [narrative] was a consequence of that reflex." But while fear can be a strong driver of action, it can also achieve the opposite: It can cause people to freeze, retreat, and escape into all sorts of denial. "Fear and loss don't sell," author Per Esben Stoknes says. "Uncertainty kills determination. Let's therefore try shifting towards frames that support the issue rather than backfire. (...) We can begin to talk about climate in terms of insurance, health, security, preparedness, and, most of all, opportunity."[5]

Today, journalism has the obligation to portray the world as it is—even though most of the time it doesn't. News tends to have a negative bias. Naturally, excellent reporting on resource exploitation, greenwashing, wasteful activities and behaviours is much needed and can have an impact. A recent example for compelling in-depth research is the story by Science magazine documenting that scientists employed by Exxon in the 1970 were accurate in projecting global warming, which was hidden from the public for obvious reasons.[6] But it is safe to say that there is a general shortage of journalism that opens up more perspectives on what a sustainable world could look like. Bernhard Pötter, who has covered climate issues for more than 15 years for the German newspaper TAZ and now leads the climate desk of Germany-based Table Media, says that climate journalism needs more nuance and a discussion about possible solutions: "These days it is either: 'more capitalism' or 'get rid of capitalism', but not much in between." Communications professor Lance Bennett thinks it is high time for journalists to ask more questions about progressive, robust economic models which are fit for the future (see Q&A with Lance Bennett, page 44).

According to Stoknes, people are more likely to embrace action when there is something to be gained. "People have to want to live in a climate friendly society because they see it as better, not because they get scared or instructed into it. (...) A solution works so much better when people want it, like it, love it, rather than when they implement it by duty, guilt, rule, or fear of punishment."[7] Sometimes it takes just a little tweaking. 'Enjoy your smoke-free hotel room'—as seen in a Frankfurt hotel—reads so much more welcomingly than 'smoking

prohibited'. Carys Taylor, Director of the non-profit organisation Albert which helps the film industry reduce their carbon footprint, thinks that the media industry can learn a lot from advertising when thinking about impact (see Q&A with Carys Taylor, page 140).

The multi-award-winning atmospheric scientist Katharine Hayhoe, whose 2018 Ted Talk on climate change attracted more than four million views, is convinced that framing the issue makes all the difference. As an evangelical Christian, she emphasises values like nature, family, national security, and community to speak to a conservative audience.[8] Data is important, Hayhoe argues, and on her website she assures everyone right at the top that she crunches tons of it all the time. But the most important strategy was "to start from the heart," as she suggests in the Ted Talk. George Marshall, who is also Co-Founder Climate Outreach, argues[9] along similar lines: "Rational scientific data can lose against a compelling emotional story that speaks to people's core values."

Hayhoe says that fear will not persuade anyone to embrace sustained change: "What we need to fix this thing is rational hope." At the UN findings ways of presenting a sense of hope as well as alarm is key to their communications strategy. Nanette Braun, the UN's Chief of Communication Campaigns, proclaims something similar. While UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres regularly underlines the catastrophic implications of failure, Braun, is convinced that there must be positives as well: "We want to hook people on hope, not on fear." (See Q&A with Nanette Braun, page 36). It's a view shared by Waqas Ejaz of Oxford University. "We have a lot of research that says fear framing doesn't really work. But there are some emotional responses that would work. Fostering hope is strongly associated with effective and positive communication outcomes."

A comparative study covering 40,000 respondents in 20 countries which taken together account for 72 percent of global CO2 emissions published by Harvard University in 2022 concluded that three specific concerns need to be addressed if people are to support climate action: The effectiveness of policies in reducing emissions, the distributional impact of those policies on lower-income households, and how they affect the self-interest of the respondents' households. The authors write: "We show experimentally that information specifically addressing these key concerns can substantially increase the support for climate policies in many countries. Explaining how policies work and who can benefit from them is critical to foster policy support, whereas simply informing people about the impacts of climate change is not effective."[10]

Many of our interview partners for this report emphasized that the framing of the issue requires careful thought. "There isn't one single correct frame for the whole public. You need more targeted approaches," explains the Oxford Internet Institute's Mary Sanford. Riikka Räisänen of YLE suggests: "This problem needs big solutions on a macro level. It is not a personal issue that people should feel guilty about every day." SVT's Charlotta Friborg agrees: "When it comes to solutions, big companies are ahead of politicians. This is why we are focusing a bit more on what the companies are doing. We don't want to have that apocalyptic worldview. We don't want to paint a dream picture but be optimistic while still being realistic."

Aaron Rutkoff, founding editor of Bloomberg Green, the news platform's sustainability brand, says it helps to think about climate coverage as if crafting a magazine: "No one is going to open a magazine and read depressing stories back-to-back. How can you do funny stories, stories about products you use? How can you get out of the traps of climate journalism? Becoming net zero by 2050 is the biggest business story of all time. This should be exciting!" Climate-related content that is about the future can also be about beauty that is worth preserving. NRK was very successful with a deeply researched, multi-media project on what's going on in the ocean and the risks of its destruction: 'SOS from the Ocean'. This makes sense, because many people have a special connection to water and the sea. Jon Williams, formerly of RTÉ, points out that this is what it should come down to: "Making it relatable. Making it as urgent as it is. Making it more immediate."

But a very different kind of climate journalism that could be very effective might not even mention the words 'climate change'. What are the economic models beyond the growth paradigm? What encourages people to cooperate and share responsibility for resources that are used jointly? What are the nudges that work to help people behave in a resource-conscious way? And how could the cradle-to-cradle principle and the circular economy enable joyful consumption, while not contributing to waste and global warming? Award-winning economists have worked on topics like these, the most famous one notably being Nobel-Prize-winning Elinor Ostrom who challenged the 'tragedy of the commons' theory developed by Garrett Hardin.[11] This theory, which suggests that resources are likely to get overused when many people can access them freely, is often used to justify regulation. From Herman Daly who in 1977 pioneered the idea of steady-state economics[12] to Kate Raworth's 'Doughnut Economics'[13] there is ample literature out there envisioning sustainable futures.

Many of these models have never made it into reality because prevailing structures of power, influence, and privilege prevent them from doing so. But journalists could familiarize themselves with these alternative models, so that they can at least introduce them in conversations. Holding power to account is one of the core functions of journalism. This includes challenging prevailing frames of reference and orthodoxy where there are alternative approaches that could be explored.

Audiences matter: Make it about different audiences' values and needs.

Diversity in formats is the key to successful climate communication. Max Boykoff of the University of Colorado is adamant about this: "The 20th century model of communication would be that news media need to dumb things down for the general public. But we are in the 21st century, and this model needs to change. Newsrooms need to smarten up and think carefully about their different audiences and what they need to hear." But what do they need to hear to engage? And with which characteristic or demographic should content align? Is it age groups, social background, regional attachment, politics, or values?

George Marshall writes: "Solutions are likely, as usual, to lie in the plurality of approaches with different communicators speaking in different ways to different

> ***"The urban younger person has one perspective, the rural younger person's perspective is different. A little bit more understanding of each other's perspectives would make everyone's lives easier."***
>
> Jon Williams, RT RTÉ, Managing Director, News & Current Affairs (until 2022)

audiences."[14] For Per Esben Stoknes, very often the messenger is more important than the message: "When communicating climate science, we must find more communicators whose cultural identities are consistent with those of their audience."[15] This makes it a tough call for public service media which have to serve a broad array of different audiences, from young to older to old, from left-leaning to right-leaning, from urban to rural.

Jon Williams, formerly of RTÉ, says that the urban/rural divide is a likely predictor of the kind of content that resonates with a particular audience. "Ireland will not achieve its emissions targets without reducing the size of its cattle population, the farming economy. This is because of methane. Now start telling dairy farmers they will no longer be dairy farmers! Socioeconomic background is often more important than age. The urban younger person has one perspective, the rural younger person's perspective is different. A little bit more understanding of each other's perspectives would make everyone's lives easier."

Tara Peterman, RTÉ's Executive Producer, emphasizes how important it is to address farmers: "They want to be included in the conversation. They are on the land, they are in nature, they are the right people to address. The conversation has to be inclusive." Looking at best-case examples of farmers who were trying out new things was one of the strategies they've used. The Irish broadcaster is active in developing formats that cater to different audience's needs. In 2019, when many young people engaged in climate protest action, RTÉ invited youth representatives from all over the country to come up with ideas about climate action during a two month-long programme. They even managed to convince the Chair of the House to hand over the parliamentary chamber for a youth plenary for a day. "This was the first time they let anyone other than parliamentarians use the chamber," Peterman says.

Deutsche Welle, the German broadcaster with a mission to spread independent journalism throughout the world, has been quite successful with a variety of formats reaching out to young audiences, some of them on TV, some on YouTube. 'Planet A' is a popular video series that meets a younger crowd right where they are, mixing—it seems—just the right amount of entertainment and information (see case study on 'Planet A', page 71). Insights into audience behaviour show that journalism for young people needs to be crafted for the platforms young people use—in 2023 this is overwhelmingly Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, depending somewhat on region. Furthermore, this content is less likely to hit the right tone if young people themselves are not at least involved in or preferably leading its production.

Sophia Smith Galer is a TikTok journalist for Vice Media and previously worked for the BBC. While she does not specialize in climate topics, she has created some quite successful climate related TikToks, broadening the genre in what one could call investigative TikTok journalism. "You need to own this space," she says. "Loads of journalists don't see the existential need to serve young audiences." (See Q&A with Sophia Smith Galer, page 96.) This doesn't mean, of course, that the only way to approach the young generation is with short form video. News organizations need to take into account that the needs of young people differ as well, depending on factors like socioeconomic status, political affiliation and the like. Only on first sight it might seem odd that one of the more successful news

products recently launched for young people in Germany is 'Katapult', a youth brand most popular as a print magazine that is heavy on infographics explaining and illustrating social science content.[16]

Ritu Kapur of The Quint admits that, sometimes, it is anywhere from hard to impossible to figure out what sits well with a particular audience. "We developed a climate change dictionary. It was very cool, very young, breaking down complicated things. Internally we were loving how it was turning out. But it just didn't find the audience. I have no explanation for this." She describes the struggle to figure out the needs of their main audience, a predominantly young and urban crowd. A big research project on sinking islands causing migration solicited positive comments—but not much engagement. The same happened with a project on sex-trafficking, covering young girls who were lured away to big cities, because the fishing grounds in their home villages had been depleted. It was beautifully done, says Kapur, but reactions were scant. "That's when we said: let's attack the big cities, not the severely hit parts of the country." A story on Mumbai did the trick. The story was an immersive multi-media piece reflected through the eyes of the city's inhabitants, showing how the financial capital and heart of Bollywood was sinking. It became a big success.

Other formats that gained traction at The Quint were an interactive piece on how pollution affected different parts of the body and a calculation of the carbon footprint of a wedding. The lesson: "The kind of content that will win awards is not the kind of content that engages people," Kapur says. "But our intention is to start a debate, not to win awards." The lesson: people enjoy content they can use or identify with. In short, they like to read about themselves.

Further, people have different preferences. While some like to read, others prefer watching or listening, others again enjoy data visualizations or gaming. This is why it is essential to test a variety of formats on different audiences. The Financial Times chose to take an educational approach when a data team developed the Climate Game, an interactive game where everyone can test their knowledge of decarbonization (see case study on the FT's Climate Game, page 74). France Télévisions and German WDR started NOWU, a brand targeting young people (see case study on NOWU, page 78). And others are best reached by comedy. Matt Winning isn't the only comedian experimenting with climate change. Maxwell Boykoff, his colleague Beth Osnes at the University of Colorado's theatre department, and others have used theatre and comedy in their project 'Inside the Greenhouse', bringing the topic closer to environmental studies students by making it less depressing.[17]

Brodie Fenlon of Canadian CBC says: "The best stories are around how they affect people in their own lives, their pocketbooks. That is not really surprising." While "there isn't that much interest in the big stuff, politics," as Fenlon puts it, journalists should not neglect or give up on political coverage of climate change. They could however put more effort into mapping out the potential consequences of various political decisions instead of resorting to the 'he said, she said' coverage of big events that will most likely be ignored by much of the audience. Detailed and specialist knowledge might be better packaged in a newsletter with a targeted audience of policy wonks or sustainability experts, whose number is likely to grow substantially in the near future as the job market in these areas expands.

Bloomberg's daily 'Bloomberg Green' newsletter on the challenges of climate change is an example of a product targeted at an audience that is interested in the details of climate change, in particular in strategies to fight it. Launched in 2020, it has turned out to be one of the top five subscribed Bloomberg newsletters, Rutkoff says. "One of our strategies is to build audiences beyond our classic business audience, to bring in new audiences. We get more of our [Green] readership from social media traffic than with other products." According to Rutkoff, most readers are interested in energy coverage, stories about renewable energies, but the "classic side of journalism"—wildfires, disasters, blackouts—also drives plenty of audience attention.

Bloomberg expanded its coverage of greener living, too. The green consumer economy, learning about sustainable homes, e-vehicles, the emissions of different types of food are subjects that all draw interest. Engagement becomes difficult when the stories get complicated, though: "Some stories are important but difficult to get audiences on. Carbon offsets coverage is extremely important. I think we have done it very well, but it is a difficult subject to engage readers," Rutkoff says.

In the future it might not even be necessary to increase newsroom staff when trying to address different audiences in an adequate look, feel, and voice. Rapid advances in Artificial Intelligence (AI) open a broad array of opportunities to produce the same message in different formats. Experiments where software comes up with avatars which are likely to resonate with, for example, particular age groups and which can adjust visuals and language accordingly are quite fascinating. This, of course, sparks an ethical debate around transparency and the role editors need to adopt when dealing with AI. It will be explored extensively in the worlds of journalism and communication science, given the rapid advances with the launch of Open AI's Chat GPT. In any case, this doesn't absolve newsrooms from listening closely to their audiences rather than leaving this to robots—particularly on a local level. Any AI can only be as good as the prompts and data with which it has been fed.

Place and time matter: Make it local and immediate.

While products like Bloomberg Green seem to work well for an international, well-educated audience, bringing climate change home to local contexts is vitally important to addressing root the issue 'in the here and now', as Maxwell Boykoff says. This works best when the effects of climate change can be seen next door. One of CBC's most successful climate formats was an interactive story on heat islands in Canadian cities in the summer of 2022. People were able to learn about the climatic situation in their neighbourhoods by typing in their postal codes. This way the story brought in the topic of environmental justice: The wealthier people are, the more likely they are to live in cooler neighbourhoods, because streets tend to be lined with trees. Ritu Kapur of The Quint says: "People only worry about climate change when it is happening to them. The task is to find out: How does it connect to them directly?"

One tactic is timing. Audiences tend to be more attentive when events like COP dominate the evening news, or when natural disasters highlight the need for action. AFP's Phil Chetwynd recommends tying stories to news events, even

It has to humanize, localize, and solutionize. We need journalism which reaches people. You reach people when you are writing about human beings."

Mark Hertsgaard,
Co-Founder Covering Climate Now

when they are timeless: “We are trying to keep the story news driven. When we have great content, we piggyback it on events. Evergreen content doesn’t work so well.” This strategy only has limited potential, though, since people’s attention tends to wane even with the gravest threats, as witnessed with coverage of the pandemic and even the war in Ukraine. Connecting the climate issue to people’s immediate surroundings seems to be a much more effective strategy, and this implies particular potential for local and regional news outlets.

“People like local stories, they like human stories,” Tara Peterman, Executive Producer of RTÉ focusing on climate coverage explained in outlining their approach. RTÉ developed the ‘climate heroes’ series of short video clips, highlighting people who made a difference, which combined local journalism with personalised solutions journalism. The series draws “above-average engagement” of young viewers, RTÉ reported in a December 2022 statement for the Joint Committee on Environment and Climate Action.[18] Another model example for RTÉ’s attempts to link climate change to the local context is its climate dashboard, where at any time, citizens can see how much of Irish energy is produced from renewables and how this measures up to the 2023 target (see case study on RTÉ’s climate dashboard, page 81).

Local contexts often shape how climate change is perceived. Jon Williams, formerly of RTÉ, explains that in Ireland, environmental awareness was comparatively high due to the 1957 fire at the nuclear plant in British Windscale. This was one of the worst nuclear accidents ever with fallout reaching Ireland. In 1986, many people signed up to host children from Chernobyl in the aftermath of the catastrophe in Ukraine. The bonds have been sustained ever since. “Many families know someone from there,” Williams explains.

Kirsty Styles, who researches the environmental sustainability of news for her PhD at the University of Central Lancashire, says that a revival of local journalism is key to an awareness of climate impact. “Journalism in recent years has been massively driven by scale and reach. Our local media has been destroyed. But one of the answers to the environmental challenge is in local journalism, embedding a sense of place and purpose. We have to understand the global but be able to act locally.”

Mark Hertsgaard of Covering Climate Now explains what effective climate journalism involves: “It has to humanize, localize, and solutionize. We need journalism which reaches people. You reach people when you are writing about human beings. You have to connect the dots between the hurricane and the climate science and then to the human suffering. The way you reach audiences [so] that they don’t turn off is to localize, write about where they are, the place they can relate to.”

Communicating the fact that there is now a broader consensus on the issue, especially a scientific consensus, could also have a positive impact in reaching and persuading people, as some recent research has indicated.[19] Per Esben Stoknes explains that watching neighbours, friends, and likeminded fellow citizens is one of the key drivers of change: “Peer behaviour is one of the strongest predictors of green behaviours and attitudes,” he writes. Experiments have shown that it is far more effective than the expectation of cost-savings.[20]

This is also Maxwell Boykoff's advice, Professor and Chair at the Department of Environmental Studies at the University of Colorado in Boulder.

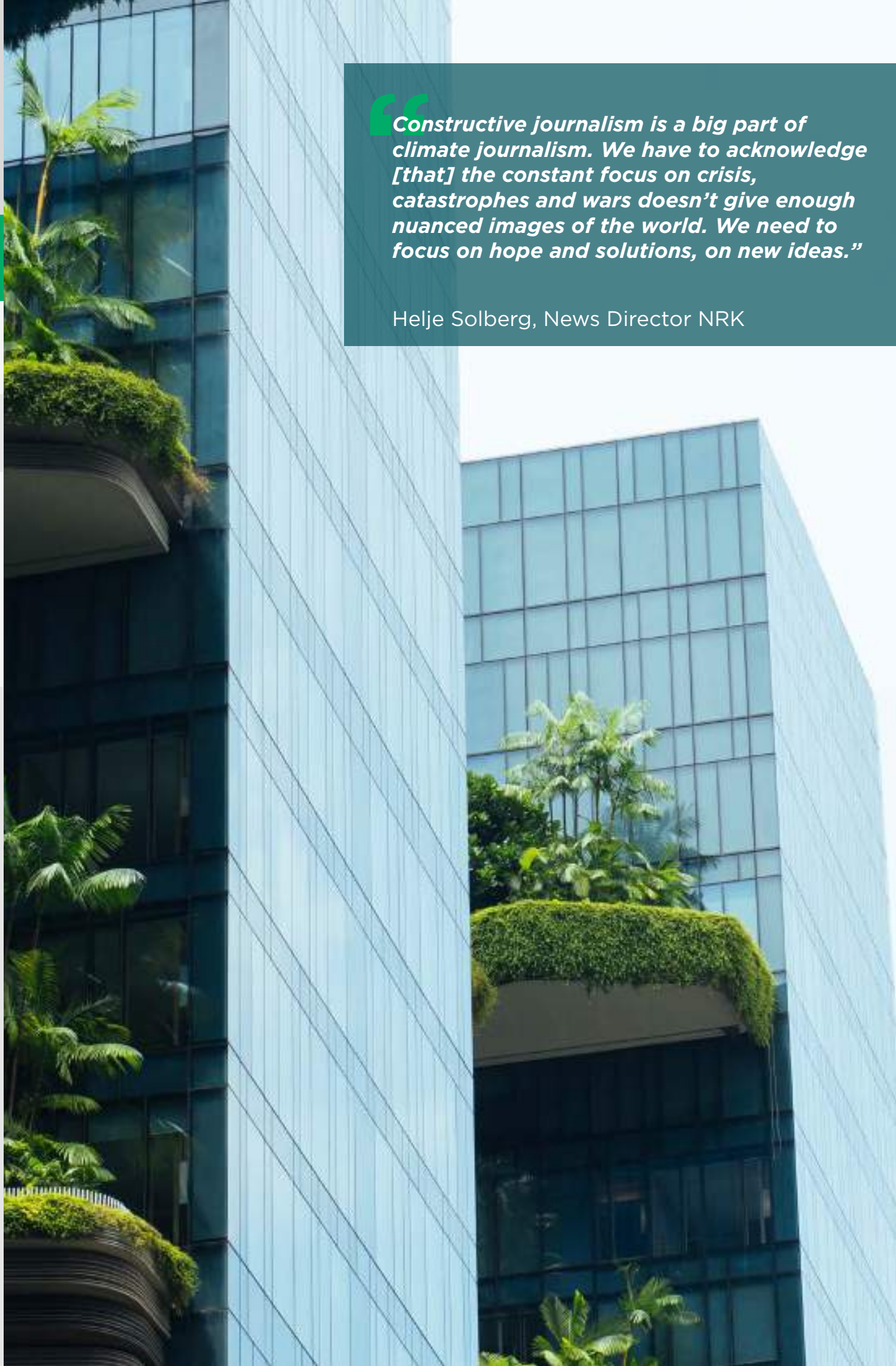
MAXWELL BOYKOFF'S FIVE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CLIMATE JOURNALISM THAT WORKS:

1. News media articles that seek to find common ground through human stories can be very effective in communicating about climate change.
2. News media stories that focus on the here and now rather than distant futures often resonate with audiences. Also, when they talk about the context within which people live in their local communities.
3. News media articles that don't always focus on the doom and gloom but also talk about the benefits of engagement and change can be very helpful.
4. News media articles that provide spaces where people can creatively find empowerment, agency, self-determination, can be also very effective, in contrast to stories that make people feel paralyzed and helpless.
5. To be effective, newsrooms need to smarten up and think carefully about how to address different audiences.

Solutions matter: Make it about what works.

An increasing number of journalists understand that people are much more likely to take action when they are given at least some hope and agency. The Solutions Journalism Network in the US and the Constructive Institute in Aarhus, Denmark have done a lot to challenge the belief of traditional journalists that holding power to account is all that it takes to affect change.[21] Jay Rosen, journalism professor at New York University, said in a June 2022 interview: "With climate change the first step that is required is learning, you need background knowledge, without this the news about climate change doesn't make any sense. (...) If our newsrooms cannot learn how to become more helpful in problem-solving, they won't survive as influential. (...) For us journalists our job used to be to uncover problems, to put a spotlight on them, and it was governments' job to solve them. This is no longer appropriate."[22]

Mark Hertsgaard supports this view: "Solutionize is where the next stage of journalism is going. People kind of get how bad the problem is. People are scared. We have to help them understand what we do about it. When you talk about that, there is a lot of suspicion among older journalists: 'Oh, you are an activist now, a cheerleader.' What we say then is: tell the whole story. Don't just say what's wrong. Say: here is what we can do." Solutions should not just be understood as technical, social, or behavioural solutions though. Often solutions are political: "Encouraging people to vote certain people out of office is also a solution," Hertsgaard says. This could be misunderstood as a call to activism, but quite a few of our interview partners emphasized the need for systemic change rather than solely advocating for technical or behavioural solutions. One aim of reporting has always been to lay the groundwork for voting decisions.



> ***"Constructive journalism is a big part of climate journalism. We have to acknowledge [that] the constant focus on crisis, catastrophes and wars doesn't give enough nuanced images of the world. We need to focus on hope and solutions, on new ideas."***
>
> Helje Solberg, News Director NRK

Adrian Monck, former journalism professor and now managing director with the World Economic Forum (WEF), says in his experience many editors are not interested in a model of journalism "that gives people a little bit of warmth and encouragement." He says: "As a young journalist I wanted to embarrass and shame people. We think that shame changes things but look at public health messaging around obesity. Shaming obese people is cruel and often achieves quite the contrary to what's intended. We need a few more notes on our stringed instrument." WEF focuses its efforts on pointing towards solutions from all over the world that champion sustainable lifestyles. (See case study on WEF's constructive journalism on social media, page 84). Indeed, zooming in on solutions might also help to broaden people's understanding on progress, since some forward-looking strategies can be found in regions of the world where people of the West don't necessarily expect them. SVT, for example, sends its climate correspondent around the world to discover "where others do a better job than Sweden does," says Friborg, the broadcaster's Head of Programming. Sometimes, developing countries are good in creating solutions, just because they have to—and because they are not held back by carbon-dependent power structures and lifestyles.

Alison Broddle, senior director of the current affairs and investigative units of the CBC says: "We had great successes with explainers. They are constructive because they help people to understand what it takes to help them thrive in their world." Editors generally seem to be coming to the same conclusion and experimenting with different approaches. According to the 2023 Reuters Institute Trends Report, many of them plan to invest in explanatory journalism, formats that answer questions and provide solutions, and constructive journalism to battle news avoidance.[23]

NRK's Helje Solberg is convinced that journalism has to move beyond news, particularly with a slow-moving subject like climate journalism: "Constructive journalism is a big part of climate journalism. We have to acknowledge [that] the constant focus on crisis, catastrophes and wars doesn't give enough nuanced images of the world. We need to focus on hope and solutions, on new ideas." Hans Cossen-Eide, head of NRK's Oslo climate desk, endorses constructive journalism as well—but expresses a caveat: "As a news organization we are moving forward to being constructive. We want to contribute to this shift towards news that doesn't scare people away from reading our news. But always bringing in the solution can lead you into a balance problem as well. We are so behind in reaching those climate goals." Pretending a solution was near, or that a climate goal is closer than it actually was, will not actually solve the problem. "If we enable people to take part in debates around climate solutions, that is also being constructive."

Olle Zachrison, Head of Digital News Strategy and Deputy Commissioner at Swedish Radio SR says, that sometimes a bit of darkness seems to appeal to people, even when pushing for solutions: "One finding for us is: publishers should not be afraid to go dark and dystopic in this area as an alternative to the constructive. We have a long running podcast success called Dystopia which starts every episode with a really dark image of a future scenario and then actually ends up talking about solutions. Our experience is that it's easier to attract digital audiences with that angle than trying to sell them something that feels cheerful in a strained way. Many episodes deal with the climate crisis."[24]

Corinne Podger is an Australia-based independent consultant who has delivered climate journalism training all over the world. She observes: "A flurry of interest from outlets and donors has led to a deluge of climate change journalism. This raises the risk of climate change journalism fatigue. Solutions journalism is one way to battle it. But editors need to understand what solutions journalism is. It is not public relations or some sort of lightweight coverage but deep, rigorous journalism." Solutions journalism builds trust and is therefore good for business, too, Podger says.

Highlighting people's agency, making them feel they can actually do something is the recommendation from communication experts. Margo Smit, Ombudsperson for the Dutch public service broadcasting system, says that it is key how citizens are portrayed in the news. "Are they always shown as people to whom something happens, or are they shown as doing something?" she asks. Smit points out that in children's programmes kids are often cast in active roles, testing things, experimenting, giving the impression they can do something. "In the evening news it is different. It is always about people being affected by something and government has to act."

Trust matters—use your influencers

When climate scientist Katharine Hayhoe, who makes a point of addressing fellow evangelical Christians, speaks about the preservation of nature in front of her congregation, she could safely be called an influencer in her community. The title of her latest book is 'Saving Us: A Climate Scientist's Case for Hope and Healing in a Divided World', invoking a deeply Christian narrative. The British journalist Sophia Smith Galer of Vice Media is extraordinarily popular with young audiences beyond the UK. She has evolved into what might be termed a journalist-influencer, particularly with her work on reproductive health as well as other issues which resonate with young people. In June 2020 the Swedish news organization Dagens Nyheter invited climate activist Greta Thunberg to be editor-in-chief for one day and broke records for new subscriptions that day. Ritu Kapur describes how The Quint had a Bollywood star who happens to be a UN representative on climate change do a video on plastic pollution at a religious event: "That video has been a runaway hit."

Reaching out to influencers is a viable opportunity for media organizations that want to spread certain messages—and it can be a successful business strategy as well. What makes influencers so successful is that they have the trust of their communities and audiences. Research has shown that when audiences have to vote on how convincing certain speakers are on climate change, delivery tended to be more important than facts. "Social trust is determined by confidence and is conveyed by body language, eye contact, and a clear and unfaltering delivery," George Marshall writes in 'Don't Even Think About It'. But those who think that all it takes to achieve more rapport and credibility with audiences is to send scientists off to media training is mistaken. In fact, the contrary could be true. "What climate change really needs are the voices of ordinary people who might not be fluent speakers or skilled orators but can bring an authenticity and genuine sense of common ownership to the issue," Marshall writes. "The answer to partisan deadlock and public disinterest starts, I am convinced, with finding new messengers rather than finding new messages, and then creating the means for them to be heard."[25]

Consequently, an 'If she says it, it must be true' approach can work as a powerful shortcut into people's minds. Gautier Curtil, who has developed and led France Télévisions' youth brand NOWU, a cooperation with German WDR, says: "I do believe in the influencer leverage strategy. Sometimes it can help if you have a young woman with 5 million followers on her account if they have the right tone, the right content. I have no problems working with them as long as we control the message." But leaning too much on influencers bears some risk as well. If the influencer turns out not to be as trustworthy as assumed, audiences can be out the door fast. This happened with German influencer Fynn Kliemann, who used to be a prominent figure on ARD and ZDF's Funk digital brand. His image of championing sustainability collapsed when ZDF researchers found out he had falsified that the Covid face coverings his company sold were made in Europe, when they were in fact imported from Bangladesh. Another tricky issue is that many influencers contribute to blurring the lines between facts and opinion, a dealbreaker for most public service media. Newsrooms need to carefully analyze whether taking this risk is worth the expected gains.

Before investing in expensive talent brands, media can reflect on which influencers they might already have on board. Trusted presenters or other journalists with high audience credibility could be encouraged to develop climate-related content for social platforms to build on that connection. In public service and private television, meteorologists often rank among the most trusted people on-air—even when their forecasts don't always turn out to be accurate. With their reliable, matter-of-fact appearances on screen explaining something of vital importance to audiences and their climate knowhow, they have everything going for them when it comes to effective climate communications.

This is why the Norwegian Meteorological Institute trained TV meteorologists in a two-year project to become better climate communicators. It was quite a success. 82 percent of people surveyed said they had a high degree of trust in TV weather forecasters as climate educators, a corresponding evaluation conluded. "TV meteorologists can play a key role in climate education and strengthening climate literacy," the authors wrote.[26]

Some media are well aware of these assets. At The Weather Group, the Atlanta, Georgia based national group of weather channels, producers found out quickly that audiences "don't want to hear from politicians who aren't scientists," says Nora Zimmett, president of news and original series at Weather Group. The group's audience is politically diverse, Zimmett says, so trust and sidestepping polarization was crucial to make coverage effective. Because the Group's staff is overwhelmingly made up of meteorologists—in other words, scientists—the solution was to "double down on our own people." People trust their weather presenters—and everyone cares about the weather (see case study on The Weather Group, page 87).

The downside is that when climate as an issue became politically polarized, meteorologists were drawn into a political debate many of them wished they could have avoided. During the 2021 federal election campaign, German tabloid Bild accused ZDF's weather presenter Özden Terli of campaigning for the Greens because he was explaining climate change in his forecasts.[27] In the UK, weather forecasters experienced "unprecedented trolling" when linking the 2022 summer

heatwave to climate change with the BBC teams alone receiving hundreds of abusive emails and tweets.[28]

Language matters—but communicating matters more.

In October 2019, The Guardian issued a substantial climate pledge that has been updated every year since then.[29] As one very visible element it included six changes in language that journalists from now on had to observe.[30] They were asked to use 'climate emergency' or 'climate crisis' instead of 'climate change'. 'Climate science denier' or 'climate denier' were to be used instead of 'climate sceptic'. 'Global heating' was mandated instead of 'global warming'; 'greenhouse gas emissions' was preferred to 'carbon emissions'; 'wildlife' was deemed better than 'biodiversity', and 'fish populations' better than 'fish stocks'. Adrienne Russell of the University of Washington applauds this: "Language is really important. More and more news outlets are being more and more precise about it. The Guardian was the first. My preferred term is crisis—that seems to convey the urgency of it. But climate change is also fine in some contexts. It is not that one term is better than the other, but it is about being deliberate about language use. Journalists are language people after all."

George Marshall devotes quite a bit of thought to language in his book. There is too much jargon in climate change reporting, he finds, too much use of 'environmental language', emphasizing the need to stop or ban things, which tends to work poorly outside the environmental constituency. Climate change communicators should try to avoid creating an 'us versus them' dynamic, he writes, dividing people into those who care and those who do not.[31] Extensive use of the word 'we' can be a slippery slope in this context. "It sounds inclusive and assertive when read in a transcript, but it is actually ambiguous and often meaningless," Marshall writes, because it could also mean 'us versus them'.

In some organizations, including at The Weather Group, that includes being careful about when presenters use climate change terminology at all—despite extensive climate coverage across all the group's channels. When the Group was shifting its coverage towards covering climate more intensively about five years ago, this was a concern that came up, Zimmett says: "We were very sensitive to the fact that 'climate change' was a phrase that invoked a tonne of political intensity in our country in a way that it doesn't in most countries," she said. Speaking about 'clean air, clean water', tended to sidestep this polarization. "That is not controversial," she added.

Journalists at the News Agency AFP have detailed material to hand about which terms to use in which contexts, leaning heavily on the usage of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. They are for example advised to always include a time reference point when writing about temperature increases and to embed climate change deniers' quotes in the scientific evidence. While AFP reporters have guidance on when it is acceptable to use 'climate crisis' rather than 'climate change' (in cases of climate impacts), they are told to avoid using the phrase 'climate emergency' due to its political connotations. Climate literacy is a feature, too. Every reporter is expected to know that "the three pillars of climate action are reducing greenhouse gas emissions (mitigation), adapting to

the impacts (adaptation) and helping the victims of climate disasters (loss and damage)".[32]

Journalists at Germany-based Deutsche Welle (DW) can draw on concise advice when writing about the climate. DW's guidelines, for example, recommend using 'greenhouse gas emissions' unless reporters are specifically referring to 'carbon gas emissions', since carbon dioxide is not the only greenhouse gas. They also suggest talking about the present, because, "Our reporting should make clear that the problem is already here. Even when we talk about scientists modelling the future, which might be decades away, we should also talk about change that has already happened." Scientific findings should be directly attributed to the source, not to a more general 'scientists say'. This is also to be avoided even when the science is undisputed, because otherwise it might sound like an opinion, rather than a fact. DW also tells their journalists to avoid apocalyptic language: "We should not suggest that we are doomed and that nothing can be done," DW's guidelines read. "A certain amount of warming has happened, the action we take now will determine the severity of future warming."[33]

But many other newsrooms—the majority in our sample of interviews—have been reluctant to provide their staff with yet another set of rules. Helje Solberg, News Director at Norwegian NRK, admits that attempts to work on language had faltered in their newsroom: "We discussed: should we have a 'green book'? We would have liked to have something like a dictionary. But we found it difficult to create something that was useful." Jon Williams, formerly RTÉ, felt formalizing strict language guidelines would set a trap to fall into, since critics could use it against the broadcaster: "There was a reluctance to put anything down in writing. It is far better to have conversations with people."

Meera Selva, CEO of Internews Europe, is sceptical, too: "I don't think one language works globally anyway. If you insist on using language some people just stop caring." It's a sentiment shared by Mark Hertsgaard of Covering Climate Now: "Stylebooks have their place, but I think in general you need to follow the science." Riikka Räisänen of Finnish broadcaster YLE says there are plenty of language rules already: "We have quite good national journalistic guidelines that everyone respects. We don't write special guidelines for special journalism."

Style guides or otherwise, language around climate change is very much alive anyway, as the Oxford English Dictionary, The Guardian introduced its new language guidance in 2019, it apparently influenced others, too. 'Climate crisis' and 'climate emergency' popped up more frequently.[34] And other terms have also been suggested: Per Espen Stoknes talks about 'climate disruption'.

That language matters is indisputable. Claire Dembry writes in a blog "to 'World of better learning" by Cambridge University Press: "Evidence from health communications research gives clear examples of how emotive and powerful language choices can be. You can experience this for yourself by comparing, for example, how you might feel being told you had a 50% chance of *survival* vs a 50% chance of *death*—how different might your lifestyle decisions be based on this?" In this advice that is primarily targeted at teachers, she suggests discussing different terms and what they might suggest to learners. She writes: "By reframing the conversation around climate issues to give a sense of seriousness,

immediacy and also of personal action and responsibility, the hope is that it will encourage people to do what they can to contribute to improving the situation."[35]

Whether newsrooms have style guides or not, it is important that journalists have a clear understanding of what the key terms of climate related language mean and use them consciously in the correct context. When in doubt, they should consult material listed on our resources pages (page 160) or our glossary (page 165) that highlights key terms.

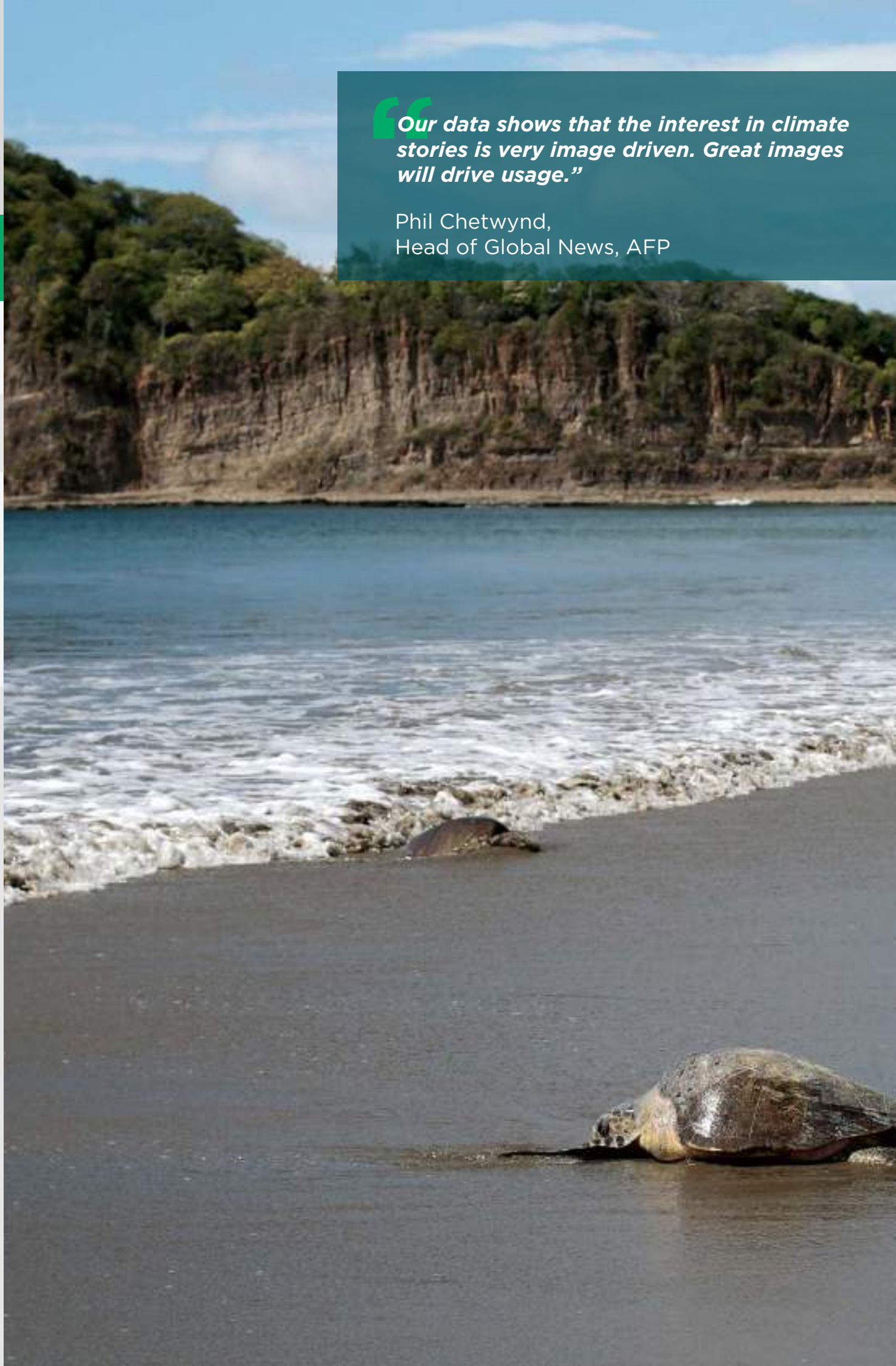
Images matter: Make it fascinating, make it about solutions, make it subtle.

Newsrooms can make plenty of mistakes with their visuals around climate change—as they do in other contexts. One reason is that images often come as an afterthought, particularly in a text-driven environment. This is where the inevitable polar bear comes in, often as a desperate editor's reactive choice when looking for a last-minute illustration as an explainer. Hardly anything could remove the issue further from people's day-to-day experiences, though. George Marshall quotes Judith Williamson, a pioneer at studying non-linguistic signs, with her observation that showing polar bears invokes a frame of loss. "She argues that this focus on what is vanishing means that we are perpetually looking backward rather than forward, gazing at what might be gone rather than at what might come into being. It is a visual iconography that speaks of loss, and is tinged with melancholy."[36]

Zimmett of The Weather Group adds that, for many audiences, the polar bear has simply become a distancing cliché: "Sadly, the image of the iconic starving polar bear did not do a lot to advance climate change in our country. In fact, I think I will go so far as to say it really hurt the perception of climate change, because it laid the foundation that climate change is something happening to someone else somewhere else in a foreign land, and mainly to animals—and it's not going to be my problem."

Saffron O'Neill, an associate professor at the University of Exeter and an expert in the visual language of climate change, concurs with this argument that polar bear images can backfire badly: "When you use polar bears, they're generally used as a stand in for a whole bunch of arguments about climate change," she says. A study O'Neill published in 2022 "clearly shows that in recent times, polar bears are used as an icon of satire and of cliché to cast doubt [on climate change], just as much as anything else." (see Q&A with Saffron O'Neill, page 98.)

Another problem is that photography tends to be reactive. It is better suited to document abrupt changes, preferably drama, rather than chronicling gradual developments or even mapping out the future. Additionally, photographers are drawn to spectacular events: floods, fires, landslides, and earthquakes provide plenty of material. This is not necessarily because of personal preferences; many photographers cherish opportunities to delve into subtlety and beauty. But most of them work freelance and have a clear and realistic idea of what sells and what photo agencies are looking for. However, shocking or disturbing images can undermine efforts for a more constructive approach to climate coverage. Mary Sanford, of Oxford University, says: "The way media cover climate change related



> ***"Our data shows that the interest in climate stories is very image driven. Great images will drive usage."***
>
> Phil Chetwynd,
> Head of Global News, AFP

events such as wildfires simply with visuals of things that burn to the ground might do justice to what is happening. But what is this actually achieving except for making people more scared? How is that ever going to make people think, OK, I am scared but what do I now do about this? What is there to be done?"

These are the constraints in which climate coverage has to operate. But there are opportunities as well. Highlighting the beauty of nature and the need for its preservation has been a recipe to engage people emotionally since the 1970s. TV documentaries have done plenty to document issues like the melting of glaciers, deforestation, and the retreat of wildlife. Images of plastic islands in clear blue oceans and garbage accumulating at formerly pristine beaches have brought the issue of plastic pollution home, sparking some political action.

Phil Chetwynd, AFP's Head of Global News, says that a visual strategy is at the core of the agency's climate coverage (see case study on AFP's 'Future of the Planet' hub, page 131). Often AFP invests in collecting visual material first, and text follows. Chetwynd: "Our data shows that the interest in climate stories is very image driven. Great images will drive usage."

But can images be counterproductive, too? There was much discussion during the 2022 heatwaves on whether it was appropriate to picture happy children playing at fountains, while elsewhere fires were raging, and droughts were threatening harvests way into the future. Saffron O'Neill argues that imagery that shows 'fun in the sun' underplays the danger of extreme heat, especially to vulnerable people, and that images should be consistent with content for people to get the message. Others are not so sure, since doom scrolling has proven to drive people away rather than engaging them with the issue. Jon Williams has a more pragmatic view: "It is entirely legitimate to show happy people at the beach, but it is important to show the flipside, too."

Carys Taylor, Director of Albert, talks about film when reflecting on the effect of visuals (see Q&A with Carys Taylor, page 140). Albert is a non-profit organization which helps film production reduce their carbon footprint. Taylor says that climate-related storytelling in movies should come more naturally. Instead of hammering it home with another apocalyptic scenario or hero-type climate-warrior, messaging around climate change should be incorporated into regular storytelling, like protagonists driving electric cars, travelling by train instead of flying, weatherproofing their houses. "It doesn't have to be a David Attenborough film to have an impact," she says. Developing a solutions-oriented visual strategy seems to be one of the larger challenges the industry has to face up to.

When preparing for the next COPs, newsrooms would be well advised to remind themselves of the experiences of Norwegian NRK. When asked what doesn't work in climate journalism, NRK's News Director Helje Solberg was quick to answer: "What has not worked at all are stories with men in suits. It never works in any story. You need real people."

Research backs this up, says O'Neill: A study found that images of politicians, in particular, "make people feel that climate change isn't important, and they can't do anything about it,"—the worst possible outcome. The challenge is to find images that both convey the importance of climate change, and a sense of agency. This requires a degree of deliberate thoughtfulness that can get lost

in the high turnover of a busy newsroom. Finding creative solutions for telling political stories about potentially pathbreaking events like UN summits is one of the key tasks facing visual journalism.

Hans Cossen-Eide, head of NRK's climate desk in Oslo, points out that successful climate journalism is not only about what one does and shows, but also what one doesn't do: "The biggest shift is because we are producing less, but [more] thorough journalism instead. We carefully consider: Should we go and meet someone, should we do a traditional news story or a video format? We are not mass-producing news stories that repeat the same message any longer."

Politics and platforms matter—and that's for institutions to fix.

While there should be no excuse for media organizations that are not doing their homework to the extent they can, it would be wrong for newsrooms to shoulder all responsibility for the reach and impact of their journalism. The opportunities and limits for journalism in climate coverage are tightly woven into the political debates (or its absence), the general level of education, the culture, and the state of the natural environment. Also, journalism doesn't operate in a vacuum. It is tied into the global communication system that is dominated by third-party platforms which have profoundly shaped how people consume and interact with news.

This is why Adrienne Russell of the University of Washington believes it is important to look at forces beyond the media's control. "Journalists have done a really good job at adjusting their practices, but I don't really think that journalism can fix this without looking at the larger information environment." Industry and their lobbies spend billions of dollars to state their case; misinformation is a huge a problem. Russell: "We cannot clean up the natural environment without cleaning up the information environment." She is hinting at the power of platforms, their business models and underlying algorithms that push certain content up and rank down other content down. "Our public conversation is taking place on those platforms, and they don't serve us very well," Russell says.

This is not the place for an elaborate discussion of the power of platforms in the modern world of communications.[37] Suffice it to say that waiting for platform regulation is not a good strategy. Media organizations that want their content to be widely spread, seen, and shared, have to understand these algorithms and potentially game them, as Kiyo Dörrer of Deutsche Welle explains in the 'Planet A' case. In the end, battling climate change is a collaborative task to be pursued by all societal, economic, and political actors. The media has a huge part in activating this potential.

CASES

CASE

‘PLANET A’: DEUTSCHE WELLE AIMS AT YOUNGER AUDIENCES ON YOUTUBE AND TIKTOK

GLOBAL REACH WITHOUT ‘BEING PREACHY’

The name says it all: we only have ‘Planet A’, there is no Planet B, so we need to treat it with care. And this is exactly the message Deutsche Welle wants to spread across the globe. ‘Planet A’ is one of the broadcaster’s most successful formats, attracting droves of young people on all continents to better understand climate change and possible solutions. Its look and feel is more like meeting your friends and trying things out rather than receiving a lecture. This has been key from the beginning. “The goal was to have a format that is not intimidating, not super meta,” says Kiyo Dörrer, the Channel Lead who has been developing it with her team from well before its launch in September 2020. “We wanted to be close to the viewer because with climate change it is easy to scare people away.”

Deutsche Welle (DW), financed by German taxpayers as a world news service, is on a mission to provide access to independent journalism all over the world. In this case the intention was to develop something with a low threshold for users with respect to both content and format. “We wanted to reach people who tend to avoid the topic, who are not super interested in sustainability,” Dörrer explains. “I always tell our team: Make people who don’t care yet care.” Another goal was to make it attractive to people in the Global South. “A lot of climate coverage is very Eurocentric, shaped by journalists in the Global North, even though it has been affecting people in many parts of Asia or Africa much more harshly,” she says. This is also why casting matters. An important goal was to include reporters from these regions and to feature a high proportion of female interviewees, reflecting the importance of climate issues for women.

DW launched ‘Planet A’ on YouTube as a ‘digital first’ product. Many of the climate offerings particularly on YouTube were very consumer-oriented, very ‘micro’, Dörrer says. When she and three DW reporters started working on the concept, they very much wanted to take a broader perspective. The channel description reads: “We look at the big and the small: What we can do and how the system needs to change.” They were more interested in systemic change rather than individual action. It took them less than half a year to prepare. Their first video was ‘The real reason cities are sinking’, followed by ‘Why everybody loves their SUV so much’. Dörrer herself had a hit with an experiment she conducted herself: for one week she lived on nothing but food waste. In other posts, ‘Planet A’ attempted to debunk the myth that Germany was ‘super green’ or showed that Bangladesh did much better than Europe in fighting floods. Now the channel is even popular with the science community. Her team considered it a big win was when an engineer from NASA commented on a post.

"Talking about climate change doesn't have to be super negative," Dörrer says. "We are trying to offer solutions, show how we can move forward." This reflects DW's strategy under the leadership of Editor-in-Chief Manuela Kasper-Claridge. She is deeply invested in the importance of constructive and solutions journalism (see Q&A with Manuela Kasper-Claridge, page 136). She and her team know that this is essential for anyone aiming at a younger audience. The tone of voice matters a lot. "Not being preachy is really important," Dörrer says. "We are trying to take people along for the ride, making it fun – which is not always easy with climate change."

The project faced some challenges at the outset, particularly within the organization. As with many other public broadcasters, a big chunk of resources at DW was still in linear TV, and the development of 'Planet A' cost real money. "Shifting resources without hurting people was difficult." Convincing people that online brands were at least as important as TV formats required energy. "Once we got going and people realized that this was a way to do storytelling, they were really happy about it." Today, her team consists of four editors and about 14 contributing reporters, they produce one video per week and have started doing TikToks. Dörrer is happy that other desks have begun to collaborate. For example, the data team contributed information on greenwashing, and the investigative team did research on a little-known type of pollution called bilge dumping, which occurs when cargo vessels illegally dump oily waters into the ocean.

The process has required a lot of patience. "It took us a while to get traction," Dörrer recalls. "Not having enough views is depressing. The algorithm keeps changing, and you don't know why." The team used Google trends when trying to identify potential topics and invested quite some time in search engine optimization. "If a topic doesn't have enough search traffic, then most of the time we won't do it." Exceptions are possible, to spark conversations, for example. 'Planet A' hit 100,000 subscribers within the first year, but most of the growth occurred after a long stretch of slow, rather linear development. "All of a sudden we got a lot of views; obviously we were pushed by the algorithms." Her team are not always clear on why that happens at a seeming random moment. Quality control was important, too. The team learned that having a critical mass of videos was decisive for the progress, "and we needed to make sure that every video was good." In January 2023, almost 400,000 people had subscribed to the format.

Today, about one quarter of the audience is from the United States, another quarter from South East Asia and South Asia, the rest mainly watch 'Planet A' in Europe. Most of the viewers are men, which is typical for YouTube which skews more male than female. Part of their strategy is to carefully craft formats and content to the region and audience they are targeting. For example, they make sure not to be Eurocentric when including cultural references or giving historical examples. "If you produce for everybody, you don't produce for anybody," Dörrer says.

In the autumn of 2022, Dörrer's team launched a TikTok channel, aware of the complexities that need to be understood for output to succeed on this platform. "With TikTok we are trying to use humour, and we include our own experiences. You need to be more authentic, more approachable. You need to condense content to 35 seconds. Every sentence has to be right, and you have to be entertaining. The finger is always close to swiping away." As with any new format, understanding the platform is key: "You need to play the platform without becoming a slave to the platform."

Problems to solve

- Younger audiences want solutions, they want to be met at eye level, they want to be entertained.

What was done

- DW launched a video format 'Planet A' on YouTube (September 2020) and TikTok (October 2022), featuring topics around climate change with a constructive, low-barrier approach.

Success story

- As at January 2023 'Planet A' had 395,000 subscribers, 50 million channel views on YouTube, and 31,000 subscribers and 8.4 million views on TikTok.

Lessons

- It takes patience to understand the algorithms and adjust the format accordingly.

- Tone of voice, quality, and market fit are key.

CASE

‘THE CLIMATE GAME’, HOW THE *FINANCIAL TIMES* GAMIFIED CLIMATE COVERAGE

ENTICING AUDIENCES WITH A SCIENCE-PROOF REAL-WORLD CHALLENGE

Imagine the fate of the planet was in your hands and you had the sole power—and responsibility—to do something about it. Would your decisions prevent the worst from coming to pass? Or would you sit back and and gleefully watch while the world burns? Enter the Financial Times (FT) with the Climate Game,[1] where this hypothetical scenario comes to life, giving audiences a playful opportunity to learn about what is at stake and what needs to happen to save the planet.

Such games are by no means new. In recent years, an increasing number of news outlets have turned to so-called ‘newsgames’ in an effort to find novel ways of engaging and keeping their audiences—and to create journalism that has an impact.[2] These approaches combine the core elements of journalism—rigorous reporting, truthfulness, and credibility—with imagination, persuasive power, and the mechanics of games.[3] But the Climate Game is the first such newsgame solely dedicated to the topic of climate change.

“The idea,” says Emiliya Mychasuk, the FT’s climate editor and responsible for launching the game, “was to come up with a format that would provide an education around climate change issues and help people relate to what can often be a complex and kind of woolly subject that can feel intangible.” At the same time, it would give the Financial Times team an “ambitious project to work on” which would allow them to combine reporting, data modelling, visualization, and interactive elements and bring together talent from across the organization.

The game itself starts simple enough: “After another wave of extreme weather, world leaders want to get serious about climate change. They appoint you the global minister for future generations to make the decisions squabbling nations have dodged for decades.” A somewhat unlikely proposition, perhaps, but it’s a game after all and some sacrifices must be made for the sake of playability. Your task as the player? “You need to keep global warming to 1.5 degrees by cutting energy-related carbon dioxide emissions to net zero by

1 https://ig.ft.com/climate-game/

2 Arafat, R. K. (2020). Rethinking framing and news values in gamified journalistic contexts: A comparative case study of Al Jazeera’s interactive games. Convergence, 26(3), 550–571. https://doi.org/10.1177/1354856520918085

3 García-Avilés, J.A., Ferrer-Conill, R., García-Ortega, A. (2022). Gamification and Newsgames as Narrative Innovations in Journalism. In: Vázquez-Herrero, J., Silva-Rodríguez, A., Negreira-Rey, MC., Toural-Bran, C., López-García, X. (eds) Total Journalism. Studies in Big Data, vol 97. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-88028-6_5

2050. In 2021, they reached a record 36 billion tonnes a year. You must also deal with other greenhouse gases, and protect people and nature, for the planet to remain habitable."

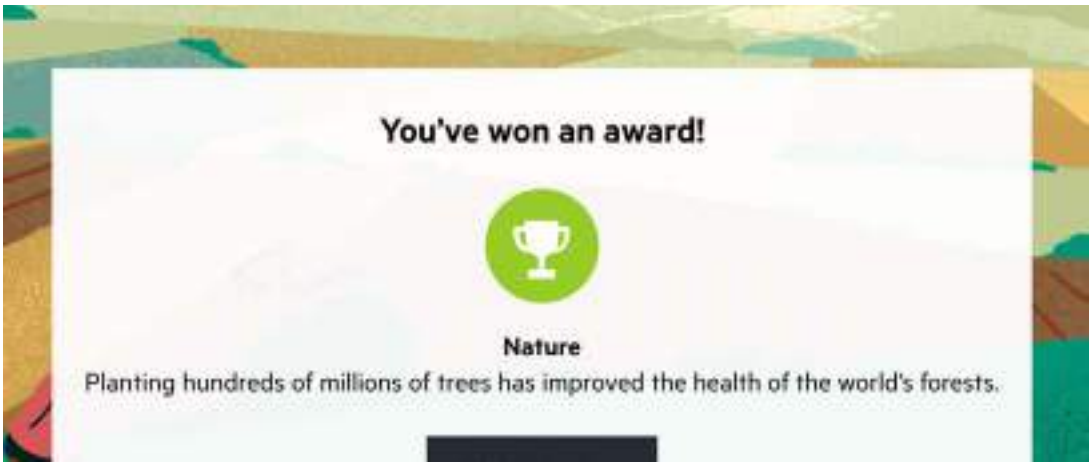
What sounds simple enough quickly becomes complicated. Players are faced with difficult trade-offs and tough choices. Based on real-world scenarios, there are critical tipping points which lead to irreversible plantetary changes—and make the player's life a lot more difficult, as they must deal with the fallout. At the end of the game, players see how close they got to reaching net zero and what damage they have wrought. In the game, it is extremely difficult to not drive the planet to the edge. You have to go hard and early to win, something which has taken many who tried it by surprise—including the FT's own board members who got a sneak-preview of the game before it launched.

The Climate Game was created by a team composed of Emiliya Mychasuk and her colleagues and launched shortly after the COP26 Climate Change Conference in Glasgow in November 2021. The newsgame challenges all those who might claim, "if only I were in charge of things, we'd long have solved climate change" with a simple proposition: "Go on then, give it a try!"

Getting the game off the ground, however, was not easy. The FT's ambitions were high. "We were trying to model the steps in a real and as accurate way as possible," Mychasuk says. At the same time, the newspaper was keen to build a "piece of evergreen content that would stand the test of time." To achieve this, she and her colleagues Leslie Hook, the FT's Natural Resources Editor, and Sam Joiner, Visual Data Editor, brought their respective teams together. Hook had previously worked on the FT's Uber Game which was trying in a similar fashion

to surface the complexity around a topic—in this case the gig economy—in an easily-digestible way by putting people in the role of an Uber driver.[4]

In a first step, they turned to various experts to make sure that the game was informed by the latest scientific evidence. "It was a months-long effort to gather as much information as possible," explains the climate editor. "We talked to leading scientists such as Tim Lenton and we also involved people from the International Energy Agency, whose modelling on how to shift to a clean energy system is among the most sophisticated." The FT also collaborated with IT company Infosys which donated coding and development time to the project. Once the game had been built, the team followed up with lots of testing among the FT's journalists as well as the experts they had consulted "to get it functioning and looking as good and realistic as possible."



Luckily for the FT, it was worth the effort. The game won two awards in 2022 and was showcased at the UN's COP27 climate summit in Egypt in November of the same year. Audiences loved it, too. According to Mychasuk, almost a million people have accessed the game so far—not least thanks to the FT making it available for free—and the feedback has overwhelmingly been positive: "We got a lot of quite granular feedback and positive comments. A nice surprise was also that all the experts that we talked to were really engaged, too." Intentionally built to have a long shelf-life, the climate game now forms one of the crown jewels in the FT's wider climate coverage which has been turbocharged and streamlined under the newspaper's Editor-in-Chief, Roula Khalaf.

4 https://ig.ft.com/uber-game/

Of course, a format such as the climate game is not the end game. Instead, it must be embedded in a broader strategy that takes climate change seriously as a topic of lasting importance. However, games such as this can play an important role in helping people understand what is at stake—and what needs to be done. "Climate change is a very complex topic without obvious and ready-made solutions," Mychasuk says. "Making it relatable and understandable and cutting through that complexity in a way that people can come to grips with it is still the biggest challenge. Hopefully, our game has made a small contribution to this."

Problems to solve

- Coming up with an innovative format that educates readers about the challenges of achieving net zero without turning them off and leveraging diverse in-house talent to create a piece of evergreen content.

What was done

- The newspaper brought together various teams, consulted and collaborated extensively with various experts, and submitted the format to rigorous testing.

Success story

- Overwhelmingly positive audience, industry, and expert feedback. Creation of a piece of stand-out content which promotes the issue and the newspaper.

Lessons

- Climate change content has a high potential to be evergreen content for a news organization. Intentionally designing it as such from the start can help it to stand out amid ever-changing news cycles.

- Tone of voice, quality, and market fit are key.

CASE

REACHING YOUNG AUDIENCES WITH CLIMATE CONTENT: NOWU (FRANCE TELEVISION & WDR)

'WHEN YOU WANT TO BUILD A MEDIA BRAND FOR YOUNG PEOPLE, IT HAS TO BE DONE BY YOUNG PEOPLE'

It's a short, fast-paced clip. Stock footage of people opening presents, smoking chimneys, memes, and snippets from movies including 'Home Alone' are overlayed with simple, flashy captions. The overall message: '*Pensez au reconditionné pour vos cadeaux de noël* 🎁 or 'Think reconditioned for your Christmas gift'—because it's fun, good for the planet, and good for your purse.[1] This little video, not even a minute long, has more than 473,000 views on TikTok and is a prime example of a new approach to climate coverage aimed at younger generations tested by the French-German joint-venture NOWU. Judging by the number of views and the comments it has garnered, it seems to have struck a nerve.

Reaching young audiences can be a challenging task for newsrooms, especially in the digital age where they have an overwhelming amount of information at their fingertips. However, it is crucial that younger audiences connect with the news when it comes to issues surrounding climate change. Not only are young people disproportionately impacted by the consequences of climate change, they also have the potential to be powerful agents of change in the fight against it.

That, in a nutshell, is the philosophy and aim of NOWU,[2] an interactive digital offering launched in collaboration between France Télévisions and German public broadcaster WDR. Targeting young Europeans, NOWU hopes to engage them with relevant and solution-oriented news and content about climate change while keeping its own carbon footprint as small as possible.

"The main objective of the project is to help the young generation to be part of the action," says Gautier Curtil, Director of NOWU on the French side. "I believe in solutions journalism and young people want to see and learn about concrete solutions. Our editorial line is to deal with ecology and the environment in a positive way, providing content that informs, inspires, and shows how to act against climate change." NOWU launched on social first in July 2021 with its own Instagram accounts, later joined by accounts on other social media and its own website. These days, at least in France, the format is most successful on TikTok where it has over 51,000 followers.

1 https://www.tiktok.com/@nowu_fr/video/7178556140320558341

2 https://www.nowuproject.eu/

One of NOWU's aims is to reduce its own carbon footprint as much as possible while it tries to help others do the same. "Our journalists do not travel by air. When they covered the COP26 in Glasgow, they went by train. And they didn't attend COP27 in Egypt as we couldn't send them there in a climate-friendly way," says Curtil. But NOWU's efforts to be climate-friendly go beyond production, with an additional focus on 'Green IT', as Curtil terms it. "When we launched the website, we decided we would use technical and functional approaches to minimise carbon emissions. We do not have a video player or a subscription newsletter feature. And images are as much as possible in low definition."

Perhaps more important, however, is NOWU's realization that reaching young people is easier when they themselves are engaged to produce content. "When you want to build a media brand for young people, it has to be done by young people," says Curtil. Many in his French team are under 30 which makes him one of the oldest. "To be honest, sometimes I do not immediately get where they want to go. But I really have confidence in their judgment. They know things about younger generations and pop culture that elude me." France Télévisions seems to have realized this, too, and NOWU's journalists are in increasingly high demand across the broadcaster.

NOWU's work is shared on social media and their website although Curtil admits that straddling the divide is not easy. "People who come to our website are not looking for the same kind of content that they are looking for on Instagram or TikTok. On social media, they are looking for lighter, more fun content." Consequently, NOWU's team makes sure to target each channel with tailormade content. "We produce specific content just for social media. Our main priority is to get our message across and to reach people where they are."

As NOWU tries not to rely on invasive web-tracking and audience analytics, soliciting feedback from users is crucial. It's also part of their ethos. "If you want to reach younger generations, you cannot expect that they will lap everything up. It's about co-creation and learning from them." Therefore, among other things, the NOWU teams asks people each week on social media what they'd like to see covered and how.

The team gets more in-depth feedback from a select audience who gets sneak-previews of material. They also work extensively with influencers on various platforms. “I have no problem working with them as long as we control the message,” explains Curtil, who sees them as part of a new way of doing outreach and marketing—something that he thinks is crucial. “You cannot launch a brand without having a digital marketing strategy. Even with great content, without the right marketing you will fail.”

Of course, launching a new brand is not without challenges. The competition is stiff. Especially in Germany, NOWU has had a harder time and has, so far, not really exploded—perhaps also explained by the fact that various German news outlets (including public broadcasters) are already providing similar content for young users. “Interests and budgets are often misaligned. Having a common European strategy is really, really hard as each market is different.” And yet, Curtil and his team see potential in their idea and hope to expand and collaborate with other media across the continent: “The vision is to be a European brand.”

Finally, what does Curtil have to say to those who accuse NOWU and similar offerings of being too activist? He smiles in response. “We do not want to be an activist brand. But we do want to be a brand that engages people who want to make a difference. These two things are not the same.”

Problems to solve

- Reaching young audiences with positive and solution-oriented content around climate change.

What was done

- France Télévisions and WDR launched an interactive digital service aimed at a younger audience that seeks to be climate-friendly itself.

Success story

- NOWU’s French offshoot is highly successful on social media, especially TikTok. The team’s young journalists are frequently invited as commentators on other shows.

Lessons

- Climate journalism for young people works better if it is produced by young people.

CASE

GIVING AUDIENCES A SENSE OF HOPE AND AGENCY: RTÉ'S CLIMATE DASHBOARD

MONITORING PROGRESS ON CLIMATE METRICS IN REAL TIME

One of the challenges of climate change coverage is giving audiences a sense of hope and agency. It often seems no progress is being made and all hope is lost. The opposite is true, but it remains difficult for news organizations to convincingly demonstrate this to audiences—and to let them see exactly how well we are doing as societies in tackling the transition to a climate-friendly future.

This is why Raidió Teilifís Éireann (RTÉ), the national public broadcaster of Ireland, has come up with a climate dashboard. Taking a lesson from the live coronavirus data visualizations that proved successful with audiences during the COVID-19 pandemic,[1] RTÉ has built a web tool which allows readers to check live how Ireland was powered over the last 24 hours as well as in recent years. In addition, audiences can also see how the country is faring with respect to its renewable energy target for 2030.

"We asked ourselves: How do you cover a permanent crisis? How do you give people agency? How do we help people understand what the important drivers and levers in the conversation around climate change and the transformation of energy are?" says Tara Peterman, RTÉ's Executive Producer in News and Current Affairs with a focus on climate change coverage across RTÉ News and Current Affairs. The aim was to give people an idea of where the country was going, which targets had been set and if progress has been made towards these—information that, as Peterman argues, people both need and deserve given that they are being asked to make significant changes to their lives. "I think the metrics around this are important to have, whether it's energy, or whether it's where we are with emissions. It helps us understand how as society we are meeting or not meeting our targets, and where the problem areas are."

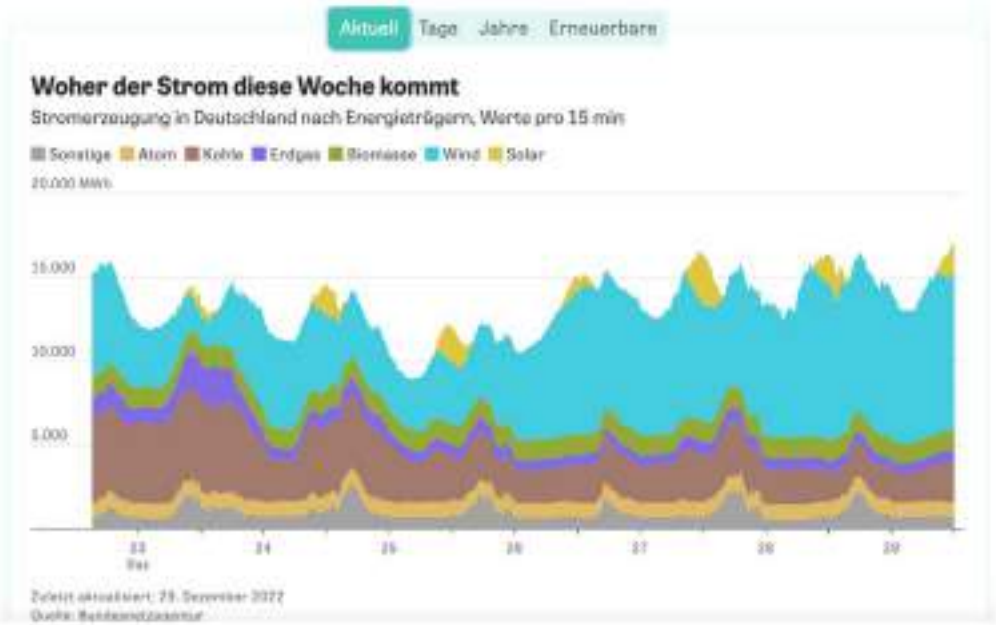
Surveys show that the Irish have a lot of trust in science and experts. While climate scepticism exists it is not very pronounced.[2] This is a fertile ground for a format that provides people with raw data without any reporting or narration. Experiences from the pandemic delivered further arguments for the climate dashboard. "We knew from COVID that our audience was able to really get to grips with the numbers," Peterman says.

1 Christian Pentzold, Denise J. Fechner & Conrad Zuber (2021) "Flatten the Curve": Data-Driven Projections and the Journalistic Brokering of Knowledge during the COVID-19 Crisis, Digital Journalism, 9:9, 1367-1390, DOI: 10.1080/21670811.2021.1950018

2 https://www.epa.ie/publications/monitoring--assessment/climate-change/climate-change-in-the-irish-mind.php

The climate dashboard is now in place as part of RTÉ's Climate pages—built in collaboration with the MaREI Institute at University College Cork and EirGrid which provides the data—and anchors the surrounding content, primarily stories and features, with the basic data of the moment and the trends for the future. Still, Peterman thinks there is room for improvement. "We could use it more and use it better," she admits, pointing to a desire for more real-time data and an expansion to other relevant metrics. Nevertheless, she is convinced that the climate dashboard is a good starting point.

One possible inspiration for direction of the project is the 'Energy Monitor' created by German weekly newspaper Die Zeit which was launched during the cost-of-living crisis and aggregates information on the country's energy consumption and transition.[3] Building on the newspaper's successful Coronavirus dashboards, which were among the most detailed in the country, the Energy Monitor uses a wealth of public and private data to show how much energy Germans are consuming, as well as from which sources and at what cost. The data journalists also use the monitor to track how the expansion of wind and solar power in Germany is progressing in comparison to the requirements of the country's Renewable Energy Sources Act—giving readers a clear sense of whether progress is being made and if the government is adhering to the law. Maintained by a team of 10 data journalists, the Energy Monitor is frequently referred to in other stories on climate change (and other issues) and used by their journalists on social media.



3 https://www.zeit.de/wirtschaft/energiemonitor-deutschland-gaspreis-spritpreis-energieversorgung

Another example of the skilful use of data analytics and visualization is the Climate Action Tracker (CAT) which tracks countries' efforts to limit global warming to 1.5°C, compares it to their climate targets and displays the result as a thermometer (while also providing more sophisticated analysis). Underpinned by rigorous climate modelling and research, the CAT gives readers a quick insight into the current situation on climate action.[4] No matter their individual differences, the idea behind these trackers is always the same: Use data, modelling, and easy-to-grasp visualization to make complex matters digestible. A picture (or a good graph) is worth a thousand words.

For her part, Peterman, is determined to push the climate dashboard and similar efforts forward at RTÉ. "I think we can't stop. We're doing some really good work, and I know we're doing different work. People here in Ireland have a good handle on what's going on around climate change and they're open to it. So we can't drop the ball."

4 https://climateactiontracker.org/

Problems to solve

- Showing and tracking progress on tackling climate change and the shift to renewable energy.

What was done

- RTÉ built and integrated a climate dashboard on its website which provides up-to-date and historic data on the country's energy use.

Success story

- The dashboard is not only used as a stand-alone feature on the website but also acts as a useful point of reference for RTÉ's reporters when covering climate change more broadly.

Lessons

- Collaboration is key, particularly in getting access to relevant data.
- Having data science experts that can access, wrangle, and visualize complex data from different data sources are vital.

CASE

THE WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM'S SHORT-FORM CONSTRUCTIVE JOURNALISM

EFFECTIVENESS INSTEAD OF AWARD POTENTIAL: WEF TARGETS THE EDUCATED AROUND THE GLOBE

It might be surprising to see an organization like the World Economic Forum (WEF) featuring in a journalism report. But the WEF's social media output—focused on the theme of improving the planet—is worth examining as an example of a successful, reasonably low cost, high impact means of spreading a solutions-oriented news format globally. Examples from Instagram include mini-explainers like: 'Are these the world's ten greenest cities?', 'How Fiji is moving villages to save them from rising sea-levels', 'This car park in Sydney doubles as 'microgreens' farm'—content that globally-minded teenagers find exciting and adults, too.

The approach was developed by Adrian Monck, a journalist and former journalism professor at London City University, who grasped the opportunities of digital platforms early on. "I realized that you could become a media organization with very little," he says. He made it his challenge at the WEF "to tell important stories about the world in a way that didn't make people feel miserable—quite a contrast to what I did in my time as a journalist," he adds. His team started with the tag line 'stories of positive change', which could be anything about things, practices, companies, or governments everywhere.

Key ingredients were the use of visuals, brevity, and continuity. "I'm not a big believer in campaign-run media. When you are talking about global issues, it is more effective to have a permanent on-switch, 365 days a year, 24 hours a day," Monck says. In 2011 his team of about twelve based around the world started a factory-like production process. "We can produce very effectively. We have people all over the world, it is the ideal work from home process." Everyone on Monck's team has a journalism background. They meet daily, share raw material, and then decide what works best on which platform. "This is more cost-effective than developing a content strategy for each platform." The platform also determines which topics get uploaded. "If Instagram is more interested in climate change, then the corresponding videos are rotated more there."

Having started with text and images, video became a feature about six years ago. Monck said they had an early adopter advantage. "We were keeping track with the bandwidth development. We were at the right place in the right time, we hit those platforms in the key moments of their growth, because we joined early enough." These days the WEF is delivering up to six or seven social videos every day on platforms including Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and TikTok.

In doing so the WEF has generated millions of followers across social media. By the end of 2022 their Facebook channel was followed by around 9 million people, Instagram drew 4.4 million, and LinkedIn 4.2 million followers. The world's most populous countries also loom large in the geographic distribution: India, Indonesia, Brazil, and the US are at the top, there was quite some growth in the Spanish language market where the team discovered a niche to fill as most international news brands rely on the reach of English language material. Some stories are translated into Chinese for the social network Weibo which is comparable to to Twitter and Instagram.

The WEF's target audience is people with English as a first or second language. "Especially aspirational people, those who cannot afford a subscription to the FT, for example business school students in Indonesia, India, Nigeria," Monck says. The majority is younger than 35, slightly more male than female, reflecting global social media audiences. Monck says he is relieved that the WEF is a non-profit organization. To please advertisers, he would need a lot more granular user data. "But we are not producing these stories to get people to buy things, we just want to get them interested in big stories, global issues, to give them some hope."

There is a downside to efficiency: it tends to lack glamour. "Sometimes it is frustrating that we have never produced anything 'Snowfall-esque', something really beautiful", Monck admits, referring to the multimedia project 'Snowfall', which the New York Times published in 2012 to international acclaim.[1] This is a disadvantage in the battle for creative talent, but focus is important. "We cannot afford to do the award-winning Faberge-egg kind of journalism." The WEF even declined to experiment with Snapchat because it would have needed too much customization—too expensive. The same goes for data journalism. "You have to pick your wins."

What surprises Monck to this day is that many news organizations haven't seen the opportunities in social media. "For a long time, I have thought that someone with more brains and money would come around and beat us at our own game. But that doesn't happen."

1 https://www.nytimes.com/projects/2012/snow-fall/index.html#/?part=tunnel-creek

Problems to solve

- People want hope and solutions, people enjoy brevity, the young, educated class with a global outlook is looking for low-cost encouragement and guidance.

What was done

- Launch of WEF constructive journalism social media channels on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, TikTok, starting in 2011. Headline: “How to make the world a better place.”

Success story

- Channels with up to ten million followers on all major social media platforms with a spread across the world, reaching from Brazil to Indonesia.

Lessons

- Streamline production processes to make it low cost, post-production curation works best.

- Make it hopeful in tone; do global research.

- Build momentum in tune with the platforms you are using.

CASE

THE WEATHER GROUP SETS OUT TO SIDESTEP POLARIZATION

CUT OUT THE POLITICIANS AND CHOOSE WORDS WISELY

When The Weather Group, the American parent company of The Weather Channel, first began restructuring its coverage of climate change about five years ago, senior management learned a hard lesson about what doesn't work: Politicians.

"It was rejected by our audience," says Nora Zimmett, president of news and original series. "We heard loud and clear: this is not the way to educate me or gain my attention."

It wasn't that the audience across the Group's brands, which also include the Weather Channel en Español, Pattrn, and the streaming, localised weather and news service Local Now, were opposed to hearing about the changing climate, or that they were opposed to hearing from experts, Zimmett says. But unless the politician onscreen was also a scientist, they were prepared to turn the channel.

Luckily, The Weather Group is a broadcaster overwhelmingly made up of scientists, in particular, meteorologists. The answer was fairly simple. Cut out the politicians, 'double down' on using the experts they already had on staff, and be wary of terms that tended to immediately divide the group's politically diverse audience: Terms like, yes, climate change.

"We were very sensitive to the fact that climate change was a phrase that invoked a ton of political intensity in our country, in a way that it doesn't in most countries," she adds.

Reuters Institute research released in December 2022 shows that, when it comes to concern about climate change, the US has a particularly large political divide: 93% of respondents who identify as on the left said they were worried about climate change, compared to 61% of those on the right[1].

That said, when it comes to sources, the trend is clear. In the US, scientists have the highest rates of trust on climate change: 68% of people surveyed said they trust scientists—far above the rate of trust for the general news media, at 43%. Politicians, meanwhile, were down at the bottom of the list, with only 23% of respondents saying they're trusted on climate change. (This general trend was repeated across all the countries surveyed.)

1 How We Follow Climate Change: Climate News Use and Attitudes in Eight Countries; (2022) Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism.

The Atlanta, Georgia based broadcaster also has an unusually mixed audience, from political views to gender and racial background. Covering climate, given the station was focused on weather, was increasingly non-negotiable. Finding a way to engage their viewers without turning them off was non-negotiable, too.

That hadn't always been the case. Both Zimmett and her colleague Angie Massie, a senior vice president at The Weather Channel, are veterans of US news broadcasters. Both said they had experiences being told that climate stories don't 'rate'. When she arrived at the Weather Group, on the other hand, Zimmett said the story was unavoidable—it was no longer possible to talk about the weather and avoid climate change entirely.

But while there was acceptance that the climate was shifting, five years ago, not all the staff accepted that human activity was indeed the cause. A major turning point came with 2017's Hurricane Harvey, says Massie, which overwhelmed areas of the Gulf Coast, including in and around Houston.

"People seeking an explanation for that kind of extreme weather event lent itself to more mainstream climate discussion in our newsroom," says Massie. "It's one of those things that's hard to ignore." In the newsroom, the meteorologists were finding 'new colours' to put on their rainfall maps.

Since then, there's been a more general shift in demand for climate news in the US, she says.

"If you can teach people how to keep their family safe, or to save money, you're going to strike at the heart of what the American audience cares about," she points out. "We just have to find our way with climate."

The Group's approach, aside from sidelining the politicians—political discussions are "not our lane", Zimmett says firmly—was to weave climate through its daily coverage and longer reporting. Massie says that both herself and Zimmett were firmly opposed to a 'climate minute' that pigeonholed what a climate story looked like—and made that coverage easier to avoid.

It's an approach Massie calls the 'climate vegetables' approach.

"You know how you have to hide the vegetables on the plate for your kids when you're introducing something new? We kind of did that . . . by starting to weave in historical data, temperature charts, air quality index information, rainfall amounts that we had never seen before."

"We didn't have to use the words 'climate change' to tell the climate story," says Massie. Instead, the idea was to let it "permeate the coverage." The phrase they focused on instead was 'clean air, clean water'—an approach both say it's hard to argue with regardless of your political leanings.

That coverage included encouraging reporting on climate justice: stories about how climate change is disproportionately affecting Black communities in America, or hurting Native Americans. Many of the stories and new storytelling styles are trialed on Pattern, the Group's digital only channel targeting a younger, more international—and in theory, more climate concerned—audience. Coverage included wall-to-wall reporting of the COP27 climate conference in Sharm El Sheikh this past November.

It's an approach that both say has been successful in seamlessly integrating climate coverage in a way that doesn't divide its audience, or its employees, into right or left—and, by making it an inextricable component of daily coverage, they have sidestepped some of the ratings fears. But regardless, Zimmett says she doesn't see covering climate change as optional.

"For those newsrooms that are afraid to cover climate change because they're worried it won't 'rate'," she' says, "I strongly urge them to remember what journalism is for. It's the responsibility of people like us to educate our fellow citizens on what dangers lay ahead, and what we can do about it."

Problems to solve

- Audiences perceive climate coverage as a political issue.
- Fear by management that climate stories "don't rate".

What was done

- No politicians on air.
- 'Climate Vegetables' approach: include climate information in shows without mentioning climate change.
- New formats are tried out on digital channel first which has younger audiences.

Success story

- Good ratings for climate content.
- Audiences and employees accept climate coverage.

Lessons

- Be conscious about words and framing
- Don’t let rating or other fears distract from journalism’s responsibility

Q&As

Q&A

> ***We need to make content for people we don't make content for"'***

MATT WINNING

Comedian and Environmental Economist

Matt Winning is a stand-up comedian and an environmental economist with a PhD. in climate change policy. He appears regularly on BBC Radio 4 where he hosts the show 'Net Zero: A Very British Problem' and the podcast 'Operation Earth'. His latest book is 'Hot Mess—What on Earth can we do about Climate Change' (2022).

Can you tell us a climate change joke?

If we don't reduce our emissions fast, then the future will be like the film Waterworld. Terrible.

Some might not remember: That's a dystopian movie starring and co-produced by Kevin Costner in 1995, the year of the first UN Climate Conference. You started a bit later. What came first: Your passion for comedy or your research on climate change?

I have been working in the field of climate change since 2008. I fell into it by chance. I worked at an investment bank at that time and I was bored. That's when I was offered a PhD. None of my family are academics, but the topic interested me. I have been a researcher at University College London for ten years now with a focus on climate mitigation. But I have a very odd other career that commenced at almost the same time. 13 years ago, I started doing comedy. First as a hobby, then a paid hobby, then a better paid hobby, in tandem with my other career. Then it all changed again in 2017 I started doing comedy on climate change. Back then it was an incredibly niche area.

Was there a particular moment when you decided to do this?

I stumbled into it. I had seen people doing science comedy back then, but I always shied away from it, because it was done so badly. I didn't want to be that sort of comedian. I tried to do it subtly, weaving it into the show. This was when I got some really bad reviews. People said it was non-committal. So, I decided to do the opposite. I wanted to do comedy that doesn't shy away from the difficulties. Within a year I had developed a full hour-long show.

How long did this take you?

It was a big risk and took me about half a year trying and failing to get enough jokes and a lot of people not laughing at me. Then it fell into place. I felt I had something. Then I took that first show to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. It went surprisingly well.

Could you share with us a little bit how you work on this? Do you write at your desk? Do you test your jokes on friends?

I do a little bit of everything. I sit at a café and try to write jokes. Then I book slots on small stages and go there with half-tried jokes, ideas. I talk to friends. It is the most iterative process possible. I try two or three, then cut that down to the funniest stuff. With climate, it is almost like writing a lecture, then I reverse-engineer jokes into it, try to improve the punchline. Some subjects are too tricky though.

Which ones would be too tricky?

I did one or two jokes about carbon taxes, but it is very difficult to talk about financial instruments as it's too remote from people's day-to-day experience. I prefer topics that people can relate to, doing something on sea-levels rising, for example, or transport. Everybody has to drive. Often you want to talk about more complicated topics, about things that are a bit more systemic. But you need to spend more time explaining them. One option is doing them later in the show, once you've drawn people in at the start. When you have your audience's trust, you can talk about more complicated topics. The more time you have, the more people are willing to sit through more complicated stuff.

This sounds like real life. Have you experienced anything on stage that has particularly impressed you?

There are moments when you are on to something very exciting. One of the slides I show on stage is on the main climate impact assessments. I show six planets and two different worlds, explaining scenarios. In one scenario the world is going red. This is a moment when I can be very silly about it, playing with people's perceptions while flipping between being a normal person and being an academic who knows all the stuff. What always works well is talking about flying. Some people are afraid of flying. So, I say: We should make more people afraid of flying. We should put glass floors on planes, show movies of plane crashes on board. Jumping logic is fun.

Is anything off limits? Talking about plane crashes might not be funny for everyone.

One rule is: You have to be punching up. A joke needs to punch people who have status above everyone in the room. I'm trying to never make fun of people who are impacted by climate change. That is not my intention. People understand that I am doing this as a job as well. I am not coming at it from a point where I am undermining the seriousness of it. I talk about the impacts of heatwaves, for example. How bad it is, but also silly, unexpected consequences such as how

French fries have been smaller because of droughts, that I don't want my children to live in a world with small French fries, stuff like that. I also have the occasional rude joke about climate change: "You don't believe how many Brits are flying somewhere else just to have sex with another Brit. Why not stay at home?"

What do you think about climate journalism?

Often the details are great, but the headlines are atrocious. Something like: 'We have twelve years to save the world'. I know this is not the case, so I don't read it. Complex content doesn't fit well on a T-shirt. However, I do use good climate journalism to inform my comedy. Those journalists have already done what I have to do: distilling something into what people can digest. The difference is just that I do it with jokes involved. I have a lot of respect for climate journalism. Having said that, generally it's not done well. The main problem I see is a lack of complex thinking across topics, saying something like "this policy will also affect the climate." A lot of journalism has to be pigeonholed. What I'd like to see more of is more critical thinking on the systemic nature of climate change. It is not happening just to some people in some countries but to all people of all countries.

Is academia doing a good job communicating climate change?

Quite the opposite. There is all this work being done, and then there is little work being done on the communication of that work. It's often just an afterthought. Academia is generating knowledge for the public good, the same as journalism. The difference is: Journalism focuses entirely on communication but has little time for research. Academia is the mirror image: there is so much time for research but none for communication. Journalists need to work more closely with academics. Or academics need to be trained more to do communication better. Climate change is being hampered by the incentive structures of journalism and academia.

Media organizations battle with news avoidance. What do you think makes people decide to join you for an evening of bad news?

It is hard to get people in the door sometimes. But once people come, they are pleasantly surprised. My goal is broadening the conversation. I get people from different walks of life coming to the show. The worst are those who work for environmental charities; they just look at the graphs and don't listen to the jokes. If you have very strong opinions on climate change, my comedy is not for you. This is about communicating to the vast amount of people in the middle, to get them engaged. My book, for example, could be a present for your brother who would be interested in the topic but would never read a serious book on climate change. We need to make content for people we don't make content for.

How do you approach this?

People don't like being talked down to. There is some peer pressure in the room, people don't want to be the only ones not laughing. They think: "If I don't pay attention, I'll be the odd one out." Some people have contacted me after shows. They've told me that their family doesn't fly any longer, or that they sold their car.

A couple said they changed their electricity provider after they had seen my show. There is an impact. I'm not saying I will singlehandedly save the planet. People are adults, all I can do is inform them well and let them make their own decisions.

Have you done anything that didn't work?

I once played around with carbon offsets. I asked: Can I offset having a baby? A stupid idea, but that's how people often think. I took it to the extreme and counted how many dogs a year I had to murder to account for a baby. People were quite shocked by me miming murdering fictitious dogs. People usually wait for me after the show to chat or share questions. At this particular show, the last person in the queue asked me, "How many dogs can I own if I don't have children?" The offsetting idea really is bad, clearly.

Q&A

> *"Learn from content creators how they create engaging content"*

SOPHIA SMITH GALER

TikTok journalist and reporter with Vice World News

Sophia Smith-Galer is a senior news reporter, book author, and TikTok creator working for Vice World News. With her reporting, much of it on issues around social justice, reproductive health, and environmental damage, she has attracted more than 450,000 followers on social media. Her videos have been watched more than 130 million times.

You are a news reporter using TikTok and Instagram as your major platforms. How important are posts around climate change for you?

I am a general news reporter, but climate justice and climate action are very important topics for younger audiences. I did TikToks at COP26 in Glasgow, showing interesting protests, for example. I used the opportunity to highlight the record of COP26 sponsors, these were almost exclusively companies with poor climate records. The climate stories I have done since then were mostly about wrongdoing. I recorded when local or national authorities were not doing what they should be doing. The online space around the climate crisis is very active and vital.

For your climate journalism TikToks you went to a polluted beach in Italy and a site in the UK where trees had died that were planted as part of a compensation scheme. Would you call this investigative reporting?

The kind of journalism I do emphasizes wrongdoing, holding power to account. This is different to previous roles I held. In my personal TikToks I tend to focus on solutions journalism.

For those who are not familiar with the platform, could you describe a little bit what kind of journalism works best on TikTok and how, if so, it sets itself apart from activism?

There isn't one kind of journalism that does better on there than the other—but you'd expect it to be delivered in a journalistic manner with rigorous research and the principles of journalism ethics rather than a lobbying one or directing users to do something, which is what you tend to see more with activism videos.

You used to work for the BBC. Do you have advice for established organizations?

I helped to pioneer this kind of TikTok journalism in the UK. Getting eyeballs on climate coverage is a pertinent struggle. With videos the pressure is to find something good. But there is material out there. Sewage in rivers works well, for example. And then there is the technical thing: If a newsroom wants any of their coverage to be watched, they have to pivot to vertical video. The whole internet is turning to vertical video. And they should also add text, because then a lot more people engage with it.

What do traditional media get wrong?

I am on Insta and TikTok because audience needs are there. It is one thing just being there and another being native and organic on there. You need to own this space. I have learned what I learned from having a personal account. What works well is when journalists are creating communities around their reporting, around their beats. Everything cross-pollinates. But for traditional media, it will only work if other things get deprioritized which is still TV in most broadcasters. TV and radio always get priority to digital.

Is this why you left the BBC?

Vice is an online newsroom, that makes it easier. All in all, I have more than 450,000 followers on different channels. They all met me for different reasons. I have been building trust with them on my personal following because I have been holding power to account. You need an appetite to do that. Loads of journalists don't see the existential need to serve young audiences.

How do you screen new platforms to decide whether this could work?

Definitely early adoption. Do it as soon as possible, learn how to do this. Don't follow other journalists on these platforms, follow content creators and see how they create engaging content for their audiences. People don't come to Insta to follow journalists, for example.

You are tackling a broad array of topics. Is it more important to master a platform than to specialize in a particular beat to attract a large following?

No. It is just the way I like to do my work.

What about the climate issue: How does it fare in terms of likes and engagement compared to the other areas and topics you are covering?

I think it does roughly the same as my general content.

Are you personally invested in the climate issue?

I am massively invested in climate as a consumer. I don't drive and I hope to spend my life not driving. I try to be a pescatarian at home. I fly a lot and I feel very guilty about it. But I have to do it to bear witness.

Q&A

> *"Images of politicians make people feel that climate change isn't important"*

SAFFRON O'NEILL

Geographer and Associate Professor at Exeter University

Dr. Saffron O'Neill is a human geographer and associate professor at Exeter University. Her research career has been devoted to understanding images of climate change, and the way audiences—particularly news audiences—interpret climate visuals, from polar bears to smokestacks to incongruous scenes of 'fun in the sun' scenes during dangerous heat waves. Her Twitter feed about research into images which showed extreme heat in the UK in 2022 has been widely circulated among European newsrooms. Her paper was published in the Geographical Journal in October 2022.

Why is it important to think from the audience's perspective when considering which images are being paired with climate coverage?

We know that images have effects on audiences. They affect how we think and feel, including our voting intentions. Work by Anthony Leiserowitz in the US: if I say to you, "what are the first three images that come to mind when you think about climate change?" They're correlated with how you might vote on climate change. What images you see, for example, on the TV news or attached to a newspaper story, feeds into the visual discourse in your head about what climate change 'looks like', what it means for you.

But yet, nobody's really looking very much at what those climate pictures are in the media. The problem that I found back in 2010, when I did this study looking at climate images in UK, US and Australian newspapers, It's mostly images of people—those people are mostly politicians—some images of climate impacts, and there's very few images of climate solutions.

In a follow up study, talking to people in all three of those countries, we found that the images of politicians make people feel that climate change isn't important, and they can't do anything about it. So that's not great. Most of the climate imagery out there makes people feel both that they don't think climate change is important, and that they can't do anything about it. The pictures of climate impacts, which is the next most common type, make people feel it's important, but makes them feel quite disempowered—they don't feel they can do anything about it. And lastly, images of solutions makes people feel that they can do something about it, but not that it's particularly important—but then we're hardly getting any of those images anyway. not that it's particularly important—but then we're hardly getting any of those images anyway.

There's a bit of a mismatch, if we're thinking, 'how do we encourage people to think about what climate change means in their everyday life? How can they take action?' The images that we're currently getting aren't matching up to the challenge.

It seems like none of these images are a total fix.

There's no silver bullet, right? So everybody always says, 'so what image should I use?' And I'm like, sorry, to be awkward—but there's no simple story. There are some general guidelines though. A great guide I'd recommend as a starting point, which brings together the growing social science knowledge about climate imagery and how we engage with them, is Climate Outreach's 7 Core Principles for Climate Change Communication

But some of those guidelines have changed since the guide was first published. One of [the guidelines] says: be careful with protest imagery. But work by Sylvia Hayes, my PhD student looking at the rise of Fridays For Future and Greta [Thunberg], really shows the changing visual discourse around climate protest. Rather than wide streetscapes, a lack of visible faces or even police violence—[media images are] now focused on close ups, mainly of women and girls. Even when you exclude Greta from those images, the point still stands. Researchers need to follow up on how people engage with these different kinds of climate protest images, but we think that these changing protest images could be really compelling, especially for younger audiences and women. I led a workshop with Climate Outreach to update their guide and in particular their updated 'Key Insights' page.

Have you seen any changes in how the heatwave and drought this past summer in Europe were covered visually, compared to previous years?

I've seen people saying on Twitter, "Oh, I'm really pleased that heatwave images have changed' [to reflect how dangerous extreme heat is]. And as a social scientist, I would say, "well, I'll do an analysis on that and see actually if it has." Because my suspicion is: no, not really. There have always been examples where we think, "Oh, this is great. This is a really good example of compelling heat wave imagery—that image that tells a story about vulnerability, or how we might live differently and adapt to climate change." But they're still in the minority. What I would say is that we definitely seem to see different types of heatwave visuals in different places around the world—that is interesting, and an opportunity for places to learn from each other. So, the 2022 Indian subcontinent heatwave saw very different types of heatwave visuals, which really did portray the risk of heat extremes—in a way that news coverage of the summer 2022 European and North American coverage generally didn't.

Polar bears are one of the most common visuals associated with climate change. Where do you stand?

Polar bears are this icon of the climate debate in certain places. It's something to do with Coca Cola, for sure—[those] adverts in the early 80s, with polar bears sipping Cokes in the Arctic, having a fun time; and how these 'cuddly and cute' but endangered bears were picked up on by climate activists.

But be careful with polar bears. When you use polar bears, they're generally used as a stand in for a whole bunch of arguments about climate change. In my paper that was published just this year, it clearly shows that in recent times, polar bears are used as an icon of satire and of cliché to cast doubt [on climate change], just as much as anything else.

Are there any other kinds of symbols we should watch for?

Smokestacks are another one that are used a lot, and that can signal different types of engagement on climate change, from scepticism to extreme distaste for any kind of fossil fuels.

Wind turbines are another visual that seemed to have become more polarized over time. This polarization is particularly evident in the UK, by the way. I think that's an important thing to recognize. That these visuals are culturally constructed, and there are certain kinds of narratives in countries that make some visuals become more or less popular, or mean different sorts of things. So you have to know what the visual cultural context is within a country.

Having said that, our work does tend to suggest that there is a kind of global visual discourse, at least in the Global North, about climate images. Mostly emphasizing politicians, impacts, very few solutions. That kind of runs across all the countries we've looked at so far. We're now expanding this to look at climate visuals around the world.

Have you been involved in creating a visual style guide for newsrooms?

We've never done that, but I'm hoping that we will be doing that. There's a few different domains that we're interested in exploring in terms of climate visuals, where we know that there's either very problematic visuals currently, or visuals are really lacking.

Saffron, do you have one or two quick examples?

I know from talking to image editors and other journalists that they really struggle to know what images to put with these stories.

Do you have any advice for leaders in organizations for developing their visual climate strategies?

Some kind of official style guidelines or protocol would be really valuable. There could also be ones around specific types of stories. We know, every summer, we're going to get heat waves, for example. Maybe the same thing around major political summits, how might you diversify the kinds of visuals that you're getting out of political summits?

Then there's thinking upstream of the newsroom itself. What sorts of images come through via photojournalists and image agencies? Are there opportunities to change the sorts of images which are tagged as 'climate' images to make them more diverse, and more representative? There are real opportunities here to broaden climate imagery at this point, and to support editors and others when it comes to making image choices in the hectic newsroom environment.

3 MANAGING CLIMATE COVERAGE – WHAT NEWS ORGANIZATIONS CAN DO

CHAPTER

As discussed in the previous chapter, effective climate journalism is a matter of news strategy. It involves targeting specific audiences, making it local, emphasizing solutions, and being conscious about framing. But its success depends on embedding this kind of journalism effectively into the organization and its culture. This tends to be the harder part. This chapter will highlight good practice from newsrooms in different parts of the world, as well as general experiences of driving change in organizations. The 2021 EBU News Report 'What's Next? Public Service Journalism in the Age of Distraction, Opinion, and Information Abundance' provides more detailed guidance for those who would like to read up on techniques to foster innovation.[1]

It is well known that buy-in from top leadership is one determining factor of success in fostering change. Throughout our interviews it became obvious that personal commitment to and interest in environmental issues seems to matter considerably when it comes to developing climate strategies and pressuring for implementation. NRK's Head of News Helje Solberg talked about her first experiences when covering pollution as an intern at a local newspaper. Manuela Kasper-Claridge of Deutsche Welle mentions her economics background and her experience in merging and running the business, science, and environment department which—she suspects—played a role in her being promoted to Editor-in-Chief. Brodie Fenlon of CBC spoke about being the father of two teenagers who bring the topic home.

At broadcaster RAI, Marinella Soldi came from the private sector where sustainability strategies are much more commonplace than in the media industry. In France, Jean-Marc Jancovici, a well-known engineer, government consultant, and founder of the think tank The Shift Project seems to have played an important role in convincing the media elite to act.[2] And for AFP's Phil Chetwynd, climate change fighting strategies are pretty much daily news: "My wife is an expert in environmental investing. The topic has been close on my radar for a decade."

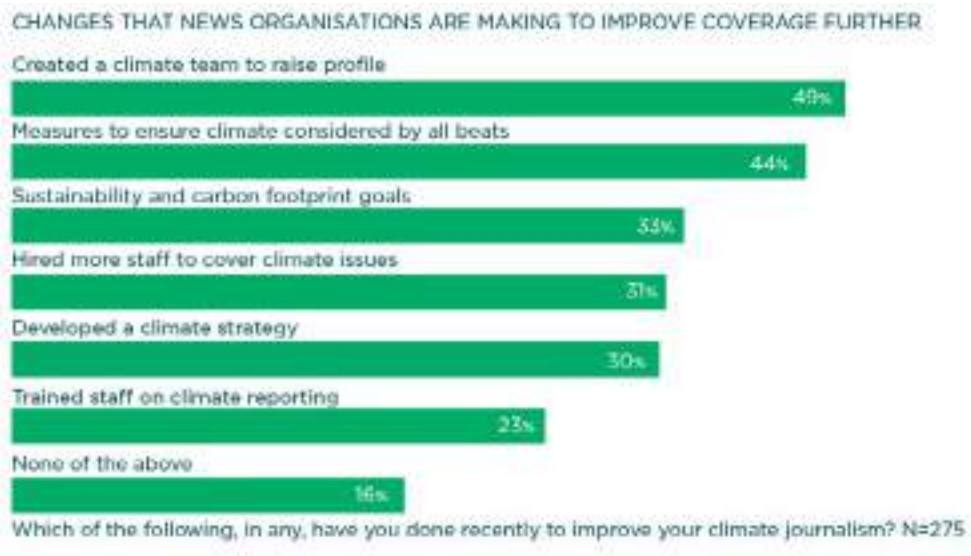
Aaron Rutkoff, Executive Editor of Bloomberg Green, explains that Bloomberg News' Editor-in-Chief John Micklethwait had ambitious plans for the organization when taking on his role in 2015. "Coming from The Economist, he had this interesting hypothesis," Rutkoff said. "He said that looking at 75 years of history, every era had a publication that expressed a historical moment. Time Magazine stood for the post war era, Rolling Stone for the 1970s, Wired for the early dot.com years. Now it was the climate era. So, what would it be like if Bloomberg became that particular publication?" he recalls. "He wanted me to be disruptive." Bloomberg Green was the strategic answer.

At the London-based Financial Times, leadership change made a difference as well. When Roula Khalaf took over as Editor-in-Chief in January 2020, she decided to pull all climate-related content together under one header on the homepage so readers could find it easily. She appointed a climate editor and encouraged innovation in climate coverage, including the development of the popular Climate Game (see case study on the FT's Climate Game, page 74).

Developing a climate strategy is essential for a comprehensive and sustained effort.

Personal commitment from top leaders in the organization is not enough of itself, although it is a good starting point. To build effective climate journalism so it survives changes in personnel and the centrifugal powers of the news cycle, having a specific and agreed climate strategy is an important asset. However, news organizations which have taken that step seem to be few and far between. Fergus Bell who consults with news organizations on climate strategy says: "You can go to any organization and say: show me your reader revenue strategy or your engagement strategy. But no one has a climate strategy." There are exceptions, of course. And the self-assessment of media leaders suggests a different picture: As mentioned in the introduction, one out of three respondents in the 2023 'Journalism, Media, and Technology Trends and Predictions' report said they had a climate strategy (see Figure 4).[3] But while we might be overlooking some significant examples, our research revealed just a handful of organizations presenting convincing strategies.

FIGURE 4: SELF-ASSESSMENT OF MEDIA LEADERS ABOUT THEIR ORGANISATION'S CLIMATE COVERAGE



Source: N. Newman, 'Journalism, Media, and Technology Trends and Predictions 2023', Reuters Institute

French news organizations seem to be particularly advanced on strategy development when it comes to climate journalism. So, it is no coincidence that we feature three case studies from France: Radio France with its particular focus on newsroom training (see case study on Radio France's training scheme, page 128), France Télévisions with its news brand targeting young audiences (see case study on NOWU, page 78), and AFP with its 'Future of the Planet' hub (see case on page 131). Norwegian NRK has followed a climate strategy for a couple of years, and Italy's RAI is in the process of setting up a comprehensive sustainability strategy for the whole organization, not just the journalism stream (see case study on RAI's sustainability strategy, page 118).

What exactly causes publishers and broadcasters to go strategic on climate isn't entirely clear. Consecutive heatwaves and fires might have contributed to the French standing out, but this delivers only half an explanation. German media, for example, didn't drum up the same kind of activities, even though

they operate in a country that has a decades-old environmental movement with early participation of a Green Party in government. Germany also suffers from increasingly frequent snow shortages in national skiing areas, and experienced devastating floods in the Ahr Valley. Spain is another example where climate related weather events failed to spark a climate journalism engagement on a similar scale to that in France.

One reason for only moderate action with tendency towards a 'business as usual' approach might be a general lack of strategic thinking particularly on the editorial side, which can also be felt in digital transformation. While Scandinavian publishers, for example, have been at the forefront of driving digital change by bravely embracing user data and using it to deriving strategy, news organizations in many other countries have been much shyer when confronting the harsh realities of modern publishing. One hypothesis is that an abundance of environmental coverage could create the illusion that the news organization has been on top of climate coverage; in these cases the need to tackle the problem strategically is not perceived. Meera Selva, CEO of Internews Europe, shares as a general observation that the presence of seasoned environmental or climate correspondents might deter organizations from acting in a more holistic way. The stronger the silos, the harder it seems to introduce fresh thinking and concepts.

But what does a climate strategy (and any strategy) entail? Figure 5 provides useful questions for leaders to check on their strategic preparedness and advancement. At the outset, it is important to define goals. Everyone in the organization needs to know where the newsroom and/or the company are headed, and this needs to be communicated in clear and convincing language. To elevate this from a state of fuzzy 'mission statement' speak, clear metrics need to be set to define how to measure the success of the strategy. "What gets counted counts" as the feminist and professor of global studies, Joni Seager, once quipped.[4] Organizations can do this by developing expected engagement or subscription metrics for climate content, climate-related products or activities.

Projecting impact is far more difficult, though. Newsrooms could, for example, aim at climate coverage that inspires one or two major policy changes. Or they could survey or track users who report changes in lifestyle choices to the news organization. As Carys Taylor of Albert suggests in a Q&A in this report, the media industry could learn a lot from advertising when measuring impact (see Q&A with Carys Taylor, page 140).

Developing strategy also means pinning down the various steps that are expected to lead to the proposed result. With climate journalism, these most certainly feature aspects of content, products, and language—more investigative projects, newsletters, podcasts, for example—organizational restructuring, newsroom training, talent decisions, as well as an investment and funding strategy. Importantly, news outlets need to get their heads around how to structure climate coverage internally: Should there be a climate desk or—for small organizations—a dedicated climate editor? Would it be helpful to appoint a person who networks among all desks to push climate coverage, or to initiate regular update meetings for everyone working on climate, across different beats? Lastly, it is essential to look into possible partners for cooperation. This could be in terms of data exchange, content and knowledge sharing, project development or marketing.

Figure 5: Seven questions to check your climate strategy

1. Have you defined the role of your organization in the climate change challenge?

2. Have you defined what success should look like and how you measure it?

3. Have you aligned your internal structures and your talent with your goals?

4. Have you defined your audiences, and the do's and don'ts of your climate journalism?

5. Have you defined a training concept for your newsroom and leadership?

6. Have you thought about potential partners, including a funding strategy?

7. Have you mapped out stakeholder support and identified potential roadblocks?

Experience shows that starting small and fast can help considerably to drive change in organizations. Experimenting with easy-to-launch products like a climate newsletter can provide a testing ground to learn about potential audiences and their expectations. For larger organizations, a start-up approach like France Télévisions' youth brand NOWU can deliver valuable lessons. The theory of disruption suggests that in hierarchical incumbent organizations, founding small, independent, agile units on the side is the best way to test and promote innovation. One of the industry's highly lauded and successful grassroots endeavours for change has been the BBC's 50:50 project which has aimed at increasing the share of female voices in content. It is very likely that this kind of challenge-based approach could also work in promoting 'green' content or sustainability projects across organizations.

Norwegian NRK can serve as an example of a newsroom which approached climate as a strategic topic when it became clear that regular sporadic coverage wouldn't fulfil audiences' needs and expectations (see case study on NRK's climate strategy, page 121). Canadian CBC has carefully thought about embedding the topic in the organization (see case study on CBC's climate coverage coordination, page 124). Very few news organizations have developed a sustainability strategy in parallel to a climate journalism strategy. Italian RAI serves as an example for an ambitious sustainability effort that is still in the making. For others, for example Austrian's ORF, sustainability programmes seem to be moving faster than the journalism strategy, as conversations with several ORF staff suggest. And again, The Guardian was mentioned by many of our interviewees as a role model for both climate coverage strategy and credibility, particularly since the publisher opted out of fossil fuel advertising.

As with every strategy, there is no 'one size fits all' solution. Some organizations have had a strong record of science coverage and already have a large audience interested in and engaging with it. Others have a focus on business coverage, so it wouldn't make any sense to run climate as a separate beat. Other newsrooms again are too small for specialists, so someone has to take the lead to educate generalists.

To make the strategy fit the purpose, organizations have to look at their (potential) audiences, their competition, their resources, the political, economic, educational, and natural environment, and, importantly, their publication's culture and mission. For public service media, the mandate is to reach everyone, from young to old, from rural to urban, and to go heavy on facts and fact-checking. Commercial publishers might thrive on opinion and controversy, and they will most likely run the kind of journalism that draws subscriptions, for example large-scale investigative projects. Getting started on a climate strategy by looking at all these distinctive elements will be valuable in any case, because it will reveal new insights into the organization and its special place in the media environment.

The hybrid climate desk wins over the 'just another desk' approach.

One of the crucial questions newsrooms have to address is whether or not to establish a climate desk. The upside is that such a desk can serve as a knowledge hub for the rest of the organization and could serve as a magnet for talent. Highly qualified journalists are most likely drawn to places where senior leadership clearly commits to climate coverage, where they can bounce ideas, exchange knowledge with likeminded peers and can overcome the more depressing parts of the task as a team. Peer support is important, since mental health issues seem to be of increasing significance when staff is obligated to constantly deal with alarming scenarios and, at the same time, hate mails and trolling as a result of highlighting them.[5]

Additionally, it is much easier to apply for external funding when proposing a climate desk, a dedicated climate team, or—the smallest solution—a dedicated climate correspondent.

One downside is that such a desk is expensive, a luxury many organizations cannot afford. But more importantly, there is the risk of creating a silo for a topic that is easier to accelerate when covered across all beats and embraced by the whole organization. Meera Selva, CEO of Internews Europe, has strong opinions on this point: "It shouldn't be siloed in an organization. If you let someone own a topic, then others cannot do anything about it." At times, editors who were doing good work on climate journalism resisted attempts to open the topic to others, she says. When asked why they were doing this, some said they were afraid their colleagues could fall victim to greenwashing, Selva says, reflecting on her time as Co-Founder of the Oxford Climate Journalism Network. But it is also likely that dynamics of power and influence in the newsroom are at play when opting for a strong climate team: Once structures have been established, experts don't want to let go of their status and privileges, be it resources or external validation as go-to people when it comes to an increasingly attractive topic.

For some, there is also an element of frustration. Many veteran climate journalists have spent decades fighting for the topic to get traction in their newsroom, often with little success. They may (rightfully) fear being side-lined as the topic gains prominence and others can advance their careers through it. This means, the veteran environmental correspondent can be an asset as much as they can be a roadblock to change if they are not properly integrated in a new, more encompassing effort.

> ***"It was important not to pigeonhole the topic into a specific segment or piece (...) I have a phrase for it that I jokingly use with our show producers: it's the 'climate vegetables'. You know, how you have to hide the vegetables on the plate for your kids, when you're introducing something new."***
>
> Angie Massie, Senior Vice President, The Weather Group

Silos can also contribute to news avoidance, a topic that is increasingly discussed in the media industry and feared by editors.[6] Although research from the Reuters Institute suggests that audiences don't avoid climate news more than they avoid other types of coverage, the perception that audiences find climate news particularly hard to stomach still presents a challenge. In theory, tagging or segmenting climate news into one product, landing page, or dedicated program, potentially makes news about climate easier to sidestep. This approach also increases the likelihood of a self-fulfilling prophecy: If a broadcaster tries one climate newsletter, and audience uptake is low, editors may conclude that demand for climate news of all kinds is low. As we've seen, many editors already hold this view—and siloing can simply reinforce perceptions, rather than encouraging investment and experimentation.

At The Weather Group in the U.S., the topic of silos has been actively resisted, says Angie Massie, Senior Vice President. "I think Nora [Zimmett, President of News and Original Series] and I were both quite adamant that we not have the 'climate minute' in our broadcasts. It was important not to pigeonhole the topic into a specific segment or piece— that it really needed to permeate all that we do," she said. This also helps with acceptance from the audience, Massie pointed out. "I have a phrase for it that I jokingly use with our show producers: it's the 'climate vegetables'. You know, how you have to hide the vegetables on the plate for your kids, when you're introducing something new."

In contrast to establishing a climate team, some of the more advanced players in our interview sample therefore decided for a rather hybrid approach to covering climate. Riikka Räisanen of YLE says: "We don't have a special climate team, we wanted it to be broad. Our climate coverage is led by the science team. We have so many topics that would deserve a team of their own. We think it is more powerful when we have a few specialists who lead and then make it a broad topic." From her point of view, climate change is very much a business topic. "It is visible in all our business reporting. Many companies are doing much more to fight climate change than politicians."

SVT follows a similar approach. Their seasoned climate correspondent Erika Bjerström leads on the topic; there are just a handful of additional dedicated reporters who focus exclusively on climate change but work with other reporters if needed. SVT's Charlotta Friborg says: "We want this to be a topic for everyone in the newsroom. We got criticism that we don't have one special show on climate, but we do a lot of climate reporting. A while ago we started a weekly newsletter in which we put together all the things we have done. Criticism has subsided since." Digital publishing makes it easier indeed to be specialist and general at the same time by developing content across programming or sections and then aggregating the best pieces for those who prefer to have it all in one place.

Ireland's RTÉ is another example of a fluid approach. Executive Producer Tara Peterman coordinates a loose group of those in the organization who are deeply committed to the issue. "Climate goes across so many different areas: finance, business, agriculture, lifestyle. It is about driving conversations internally. The thinking starts to get embedded that there is a climate angle on every story. You have to think laterally; climate doesn't work like news." This view is shared by Canada's CBC. Alison Broddle, Head of the Current Affairs and Investigative

Teams, helped bring together a group of roughly 60 journalists from across the country—some dedicated climate reporters, but many more local journalists who found that covering climate was now part of their daily work. "We learned from Covid," she says. When the pandemic hit, cooperation was needed, and fast. Now colleagues from all over the country meet regularly to discuss climate coverage, "even if we don't have anything special to talk about."

Change management theory proposes starting change processes with those who are willing. If possible, critics are best ignored. This is exactly what RTÉ's Tara Peterman is doing. "I don't think anyone is sceptical, but there are competing interests, there is competition about resources. Some people in the organization are really focused on the climate issue. So, we formed a collective. We try to retweet others' work. We also work across the different platforms." The informal team of about ten participants includes people from TV, podcasting, social video, and a radio presenter. Some of them had never met before, Peterman says. "It is informal, but it is supportive. We are looking to make more out of the material of what people have done."

The UK's Financial Times also decided against building a new silo. Climate Editor Emiliya Mychasuk has taken on the role of facilitating the issue across different desks. She started doing this in early 2020 when Roula Khalaf took over as Editor-in-Chief and made climate one of her priorities. Having learned from other rather siloed desks, the FT chose a 'floating desk structure' to cover climate change, Mychasuk says. "It has been a strategic effort to identify who were the reporters closest to climate," she says. Important allies included colleagues from the energy team covering oil and mining, the head of natural resources coverage, and the industry team's journalists covering airlines, shipping, manufacturing, and the steel industry. And it was imperative to follow the money, of course. It has most certainly helped that Mychasuk is a Financial Times veteran: "I have been with the FT a very long time. I can walk up to anybody and ask them something."

Exhaustive communication is part of the deal, particularly in hybrid structures where the message has to cut through business as usual on a daily basis. And of course, the messenger matters. CBC's Brodie Fenlon: "It helps for the message to come from the top that [this] matters. And then it has to be repeated over and over. It takes five to ten times until the message lands." Many leaders underestimate the significance and potential of this kind of repetition because they wrongly assume that communication is about transporting facts alone. But it has another equally important function: To convey credibility and trust. Do they really mean it, or is this just box-ticking because other priorities prevail?[7]

AFP's Phil Chetwynd emphasizes that communication is not only about frequency but importantly about the how. When the 'Future of the Planet' hub was developed, it was not universally praised. "Some colleagues asked: Are we becoming The Guardian now?" he recalls. "But I was very clear on this from the beginning: This is a top world news story we are not covering appropriately. We are doing this based truly on news value. We are a news agency; we are not activists. Inevitably climate change is politicized. You have to be extremely rigorous." And then, after they said it again and again, there might be this moment when leaders suddenly feel they have done a decent job after all. Jon Williams, formerly of RTÉ, says: "You know your work is done when people are doing things you are in awe of, that you had no part in actually commissioning."

Learning is the new knowing—and leaders should lead the effort.

If leaders choose to implement climate reporting across existing desks, one precondition is a solid knowledge base across the newsroom—including its leadership. In the autumn of 2022, Radio France published one of the most ambitious training plans in the industry as part of the organization's climate strategy. It was advertised as "the biggest education plan of our history for journalists, producers, production teams, and news anchors on climate and science topics."[8] This was a change in philosophy: "Environment and Science won't be subjects for experts any longer but an indispensable basis of all newsroom teams." The pandemic had revealed that many journalists—typically educated in the humanities and arts—lacked a science background, Radio France's Vincent Giret says.

It is unfortunate indeed that many journalists are excellent storytellers but reluctant to immerse themselves in data and numbers. This is an issue even in business journalism and was a significant issue during the pandemic. Consequently, there is a challenge in providing the complete context or explanation of an issue as often the real story is hidden in the numbers, not the quotes or soundbites. To develop these skills and expertise, Canada's CBC is preparing a special training module for its news staff. Alison Broddle: "We are putting together a course called 'Climate Reporting With Confidence'. We did something similar a couple of years back on health reporting. It will include things like how to read a study, how to make sure it is peer reviewed. Here's how to read a chart. Here's what to look out for in terms of who might be behind the specific study or release of information."

While some of these skills come in handy for any kind of reporting, a minimum understanding of climate basics should be a requirement for everyone in a news organization, from commissioning editor to anchor. Bernhard Pötter, Head of the Climate Product of Germany's Table Media, sees a huge need for this. "I don't know what's being taught at universities or journalism schools, but sometimes I am surprised about the low level of understanding. What talk show guests can get away with saying without being challenged. ARD has an expert on royals, but not on climate in the Berlin media bubble."

To help newsrooms navigate the complexity of climate change, we put together a few resources for this report: a list of sources to draw on (see page 160), a glossary of terms: 'What every editor needs to know about climate change' (see page 165), and a list of book recommendations with a focus on climate communication, (see page 157) in case editors or reporters want to do a deep dive.

There are quite a few organizations that help newsrooms with climate literacy—even though proficiency in the English language is still a requirement for the international ones. Specific international training programmes have specialized in climate journalism. One is the six-month training programme of the Oxford Climate Journalism Network.[9] This free programme through the Reuters Institute accepts 200 journalists per year from around the world, on all beats, and offers online lectures with experts and scientists covering not just the basics of climate science, but how climate change intersects with politics, health, justice, finance,

and other topics. There are also plenty of books and resources on effective climate communication (see book recommendations, page 157). And there are other institutions that can help. Training courses, seminars and fellowships to build up climate literacy, many of them free of charge, have also expanded rapidly through other organizations including the Earth Journalism Network, Climate Tracker, CLEW, and Covering Climate Now.

Covering Climate Now's Mark Hertsgaard explains: "We have press briefings, brown bag lunches, classes, presentations on the climate story of today. Participants usually know how to produce good journalism. They just need to know how to produce good climate journalism." But workshops provide more than facts, he says. They serve as a connecting hub. "The most valuable thing is that we provide a sense of community. We have given people the feeling that they were not crazy, that there were other journalists working on this. One person said in a meeting: 'I have been arguing in our newsroom for ten years, and I lost, and lost and lost, and now there is Covering Climate Now. It validates it. And now I am starting to win these arguments.'"

Attendees of the Oxford Climate Journalism Network also say that they have been able to influence the approach to climate coverage when returning back to their home newsrooms. This impact has included shifts in editorial policy on the coverage of extreme weather events, improvements in the use of language and visuals, and the development of climate strategies and climate training programmes within their newsrooms. That comes from not just knowledge, but the credibility that such training programs lend to journalists who are attempting to get senior management onboard with shifts in coverage.

Corinne Podger, an Australia-based journalism trainer who has taught climate change reporting since 2013, has observed that strong growth in donor-funded climate change journalism, particularly in the lead-up to COP26 in Glasgow, has led to a greater volume of climate change coverage in recent years. She says most of the requests she receives for training do not originate directly from traditional news media. "The major interest is driven by donors and implementing agencies, who ask for capacity strengthening in climate journalism, biodiversity, the emergence of just transitions." Often the starting point was a donor funded collaboration. Podger: "My sense is that most news outlets don't have a climate beat."

Podger has trained reporters from dozens of countries to cover climate change, and says she observes that most journalists have basic knowledge, but lack a deep understanding of the drivers of climate change, and have a very limited grasp of how international climate negotiations work. "I think most human beings know the phrase climate change. They have a good understanding of climate change originating from fossil fuel burning, but I don't think there is a strong understanding on the contributions of land use," she says. Podger typically introduces trainees to relevant UN documents to increase their comprehension of expert-speak. "I want to make them feel empowered to cover that story, to get to sources that are clear and accessible." She also suggests potential interview partners. "What is missing from the training space is training for policy makers and journalists to communicate better with each other," she says. "Journalists cannot change things, but policy makers can."

> ***It has been a somewhat confusing experience for me that in some of my other work I have met the CEOs of very large global companies who had deep knowledge of the climate crisis, while I have yet to meet just one chief editor with a similar degree of climate knowledge."***
>
> Wolfgang Blau, Co-Founder of Oxford Climate Journalism Network

Importantly, it is not sufficient that only the reporters get it. Newsroom leaders need to be on the front foot on climate literacy so that they are role models for staff. However, there seems to be a reluctance to engage. The Oxford Climate Journalism Network's Co-Founder Wolfgang Blau has observed when researching the subject: "It has been a somewhat confusing experience for me that in some of my other work I have met the CEOs of very large global companies who had deep knowledge of the climate crisis, while I have yet to meet just one chief editor with a similar degree of climate knowledge," he says (see Q&A with Wolfgang Blau, page 39).

Changing newsroom culture is key—with a focus on talent, diversity, and collaboration.

There are a few trends in journalism that could benefit climate reporting in the near future. One is demographics. Refocusing journalism on climate change could get easier with generations entering newsrooms who learned about the issue at school and who—because of their lifespan—will naturally be more affected by climate change than older reporters. Brodie Fenlon of CBC says: "There is a generational change happening with journalism. There is a group retiring out… there is a younger group taking over leadership in news organizations," he says. But just because rates of concern about climate change are higher among younger audiences, as Reuters Institute research has shown, those younger audiences—and journalists—are not necessarily more climate literate.

Editors have observed that sometimes, there are challenges with younger staff, particularly if they have been engaged in protest movements. Phil Chetwynd of AFP: "A young reporter might be extremely motivated, but everything needs to be balanced. When you have extreme weather, for example, you need to be clear on saying, not everything is climate change. They are a very different generation, there is a need to constantly remind them of who we are."

Then again, climate can also be a draw for young talent. It was good for younger staff to see that a traditional media organization was taking these issues on, Chetwynd says. Deutsche Welle's Manuela Kasper-Claridge had the same experience. Some young journalists and other staff have applied to Deutsche Welle specifically because they saw the broadcaster reporting on and developing formats around climate change. Digging deeper into the topic could be a draw for talent which is increasingly hard to attract in an industry that battles with diminishing resources and trust issues (see Q&A with Manuela Kasper-Claridge, page 136).

Additionally, there is the struggle for more diversity and inclusion. Increasing the variety of social and ethnic backgrounds in the newsroom will bring in different perspectives on the climate issue, and thus a much-needed reality check. Strategies to fight the burning of fossil fuels will be felt differently across different groups in society. Exposing vulnerabilities and gaps should be easier with a diversity of voices contributing to the debate. And colleagues of different ethnic backgrounds, as well as immigrants, will potentially be more aware of the global interconnections of climate stories. Additionally, hiring people specifically with science, mathematical or environmental qualifications will increase comprehension and exposure to good or best practice. Journalism and the media can learn a lot from what has been state of the art in many other industries.

Transcending the bubble will help paint a more nuanced picture of the battle against exponential warming.

As a third lever for cultural change, resource-pressed newsrooms will inevitably resort to cooperation when trying to improve their climate coverage—something that is actively encouraged by some communication researchers such as Oxford University's Waqas Ejaz and Mary Sanford. "Many of us are wondering: Why isn't there more cooperation? Why isn't there more synergy? This is an issue that really calls for this," says Sanford. These could be collaborations or partnerships with universities or national electricity providers for data gathering, or connections with external knowledge hubs like Covering Climate Now or the Earth Journalism Network. The development of content sharing platforms could help to capture the uniquely global aspects of the challenge.

One example is the EBU's collaborative platform 'A European Perspective'. Since July 2021 EBU members have been sharing stories online to deliver multilingual news content through an audience-facing recommendation box which includes a specific section on climate coverage.[10] The goal is to provide citizens with improved access to a trusted public sphere. An example for cooperation by a small organization is the media network Hostwriter's collaborative 'Sinking Cities Project', which explored how rising sea levels would impact cities in both the Global South and the Global North.[11]

Given that climate change does not respect national boundaries, transnational projects—for example, among news organizations in Alpine countries or those with Arctic regions—could also improve access to resources, knowledge, and, consequently, reporting. Ejaz stresses the need for more cross-border journalism, too. "I think that this would really improve the overall quality of public service media's journalism in terms of climate change communication."

Credibility matters: Getting serious on climate change means building sustainable news organizations.

Excellent climate journalism is one thing. But to be credible to the outside world, it needs to be matched with an effort to embed it in a sustainability strategy for the entire organization. Nanette Braun, Chief of Communication Campaigns at the UN says: "Media are also organizations and companies. They should go into this: Is your organization climate friendly? What about your energy consumption and sources of energy, your carbon footprint? How transparent are you? Non-state actors have a very important role to play. How do you conduct your business? This is a question of credibility and commitment." (See Q&A with Nanette Braun, page 36).

It has been not much more than a convenient excuse for many a news organization to argue that the editorial and business sides operate independently from each other. Following this reasoning, the editorial side has no influence on the organization's strategy and vice versa. However, the public is less likely to differentiate between the responsibilities of the newsroom and the business and administrative sides. Undue influence on editorial decisions needs to be prevented, of course, but the perception of the organization as a whole matters, too. The news department is not immune from public scrutiny when it comes

to its own practices. In an age of increased transparency, audiences will sooner or later find out if news outlets as organizations live up to the standards they hold others accountable for in editorials. If they criticize a car manufacturer or retail company for greenwashing, they'd better be prepared to provide full transparency in their own activities.

Since this report focuses on journalism, it will not deal in any detail with the subject of media organizations' sustainability strategies except to note their relevance for reputation and best practice. But while it is not directly connected to journalism, it is vital for public service media in particular as a matter of trust and credibility. For example, it is part of the EBU's strategic goals for 2023. In this work the effort of Italy's RAI will serve as an example of what a holistic approach can entail.

In general, it is a good idea for news organizations to have at least an idea about their own carbon footprint. As mentioned before, what doesn't get measured, doesn't get done. For those who need assistance there are organizations there to help. Albert, which has a specific focus on the television and film industry, is one.[12] This non-profit organization is connected to the British Arts charity BAFTA and supports media and film companies with training, tools like a carbon calculator, and advice on storytelling.

Sometimes climate efforts start within the organization before they spill over to editorial. Austria's public service broadcaster ORF serves as an example for a media organization implementing a sustainability strategy in concert with partners from other industries. In June 2021 ORF became part of the Klimaaktiv-Pakt; eleven large Austrian companies with 110,000 employees committed to reducing their CO2 emissions by half until 2030 compared to 2005 levels.[13]

Anita Malli is responsible for sustainability at ORF and the broadcaster's environmental initiative Mother Earth.[14] An essential part of curbing the carbon footprint is cutting down on travel, she explains. At ORF, flying is no longer permitted for distances of less than 500 kilometers. There is a certificate for green production and a restriction of advertising for products that are harmful to the climate. Much of this is required by government regulation. ORF studios run on electricity from renewable energy, there is a waste reduction concept, and much more. "Touching mobility is the hardest," Malli says. Changes tend to be met with some resistance. At headquarters in the outskirts of Vienna, employees now have to pay if they come by car and want to park on the premises—alternatively they get a subsidized pass for public transport and access to bikes.

In Malli's experience success is largely determined by drive and effort in middle management: "This is where the action is. Some people are passionate about this, they go the extra mile. But you have to be persistent and not afraid to come across as annoying in the rest of the organization." ORF has experimented quite a bit with implementing different sustainability practices—with varied success. Malli: "The only things that happen fast are things that don't interfere too much with people's behaviour. And when leaders commit to change and say: 'This is the way we will be doing this from now on'."

If newsrooms are to cut down on their carbon budgets, they need to address travel, too. This can be difficult. There are expert meetings and conferences, travel to far away regions struck by natural disasters. Reporting on the ground is a requirement for great climate reporting, particularly when images need to be produced. Phil Chetwynd of AFP is very conscious of the ensuing conflicts. "Travel remains a tricky issue because you have to take a certain number of flights. It helps that AFP has journalists all over the world. And the pandemic has shown what is possible without travelling. But we haven't quite got to the bottom of this." Awareness within the newsroom is growing, though, he says. "Particularly our younger colleagues demand that we develop a serious corporate responsibility strategy."

Neighbouring Radio France has an encompassing sustainability strategy which includes a plan to phase out advertising for environmentally harmful products and services and reduce its carbon footprint by 40 percent by 2030. A particular focus is put on 'digital frugality' which entails a strategy to reduce the energy consumption of digital products. In an industry that has started to embark on digital strategies quite recently, reflecting on the energy use of products like newsletters or high-definition images will be new—and disturbing for many. France Télévisions' news brand NOWU, which targets young audiences, is experimenting with just that: building a digital product that is energy conscious and thus fully credible to its users. Consultant Fergus Bell says that the industry is only at the beginning when tackling this issue: "It is super hard and painful. It is currently impossible to buy a net zero domain, for example. And you need a carbon audit."

It could be a sound strategy for regulatory or self-regulatory bodies which certify media for trust and accountability standards to include sustainability certification as well. Transnational or international bodies can facilitate collaboration and network building. For public services media, the EBU has engaged in a variety of ways by sharing of good or best practice on content, strategy, and knowledge, which is one reason the EBU News Committee commissioned this report.[15] Making the media environment more sustainable environmentally should soon become an integral part of a trustworthy media environment.

CASES

CASE

PRACTICE WHAT YOU PREACH: RAI DEVELOPS A SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

HOLDING LEADERS ACCOUNTABLE: ASKING EVERYONE 'WHAT THEY THINK THEY SHOULD BE DOING'

Reducing emissions, limiting energy consumption, reaching net zero—achieving sustainability is difficult for any organization and broadcasters are no exception. One of the main challenges is that it often requires significant changes to business practices and operations, which can be costly and time-consuming to implement. Additionally, many organizations face pressure to prioritize short-term targets over long-term sustainability goals and the complexity of their operations can make it challenging to fully understand and address their impact on the environment and society.

To overcome these challenges, strong internal governance structures must be in place to ensure that sustainability considerations are integrated into decision-making at all levels of the organization. This may involve establishing clear sustainability goals and targets, as well as creating systems to measure and report on progress towards those goals. However, achieving sustainability is a longer process and requires a change in culture. One of the broadcasters who is working towards establishing such structures is Italy's Radiotelevisione Italiana (RAI).

RAI's sustainability initiative was launched by the new chair of the board of directors, Marinella Soldi, at the end of 2021. "She believed that we needed to have a more structured focus on sustainability from a governance standpoint, too," explains Micol Rigo, RAI's Deputy Director for Sustainability, who is tasked with implementing and overseeing the plan. "Sustainability has always been there in our charter and mission but there was a need to redefine the governance

structure around it and its role within the company's wider strategy, in line with the increasing focus on the topic at the EU and national level."

At RAI, different departments used to deal with sustainability. "But we needed to redefine our approach to sustainability through a coordinated centralized approach both online and offline and to enhance our mission around sustainability," Rigo says. Central to this is the so called 'materiality matrix', i.e., the set of values (and risks)—in terms of environmental, social, and governance (ESG) standards—related to RAI's activities and content, which forms the basis of the company's ESG strategy and sustainability reporting.

"We are now interviewing all the directors across RAI, as well as the CEOs of the group companies (Rai Cinema, Rai Way, RaiCom and Rai Pubblicità)," Rigo explains. Her team has met the representatives of the unions as well as some key external stakeholders, such as the sector associations (APA and Anica, Confindustria Radio TV) and representatives from civil society. A questionnaire will also be sent to all of the more than 13,000 employees, Rigo says, but she admits that taking stock and coming up with a plan that takes into account all aspects of RAI's operations is a laborious process. So far, her team has interviewed more than 50 people, including directors in the departments across RAI's divisions and companies. "We are not simply asking what they are doing; we are asking them what they think they should be doing, what are RAI's priorities in terms of sustainability and what their plan is to achieve them." Obviously, this is a complex process, and Rigo sees her team's role as not only to identify initiatives as they come along, but also to stimulate ideas and projects that may then be developed by the various departments in a coordinated effort.

Instead of just looking at themselves, RAI is also turning its gaze outwards. Without external benchmarks, the thinking goes, it is hard to measure the progress being made. Rigo explains: "Our consultants gave us a benchmark of 34 companies, ranging from the big five EBU public broadcasters to private media companies, platforms and other publicly held companies which are on similar journeys." Using a carefully designed matrix which tracks progress for

different connected issues and topics, ranging from consumption to innovation and diversity, RAI's Sustainability ESG department is working closely with other departments to create a plan. The aim is to set out objectives and targets as part of a process which will then need to be monitored and tweaked along the way.

However, the sustainability plan is not without challenges. For the plan to work, it needs to be brought into alignment with the company's charter (defining RAI's remit), which is currently being negotiated with the government. Yet, the biggest challenge in Rigo's eyes is internal: "We are talking about a switch of mentality inside the company and the realisation that behaviours need to change." But the good news is that "people are not yet aware of how much of a difference they can already make by changing small things in their daily behaviours."

Ultimately, RAI hopes to set an example both for the industry and society. Rigo: "We EBU members can take this as an opportunity to reinforce our role in society. It's so important nowadays that we all have this awareness and that we set the example for everybody. We have the tools, we have the mission, we have the structures—now it's about communicating it and living it, too."

Problems to solve

- Ensuring sustainability across all levels and departments of Italy's public service broadcaster, RAI—including content.

What was done

- A dedicated team is tasked with developing, implementing, and monitoring a sustainability plan in consultation with different stakeholders of the broadcaster.
- Participation of everyone is ensured by interviewing all directors and sending a questionnaire to the more than 13,000 employees.

Success story

- The process is ongoing.

Lessons

- Achieving a change in mentality is the most difficult aspect. Honest and frequent communication is necessary.

CASE

GUIDANCE FOR EDITORS: NRK'S CLIMATE JOURNALISM STRATEGY

TWO DESKS AND THREE AIMS: EXPLAIN, ENGAGE, AND CREATE ACCOUNTABILITY

A newsroom that doesn't have a digital strategy will face closure sooner rather than later. But how essential is a climate journalism strategy? Very, according to Helje Solberg. She is News Director at Norwegian public broadcaster NRK. And like many others who have been driving this topic in their organizations, she has been invested in environmental journalism for a long time. In her first job, as a summer intern with a local newspaper close to the Russian border, she covered pollution stories. Back then, more than three decades ago, it was about a nickel factory impacting local life. Now it is all about climate. "This is one of the biggest challenges of our time," Solberg says. "It is at the core of our mission as public service media. We did not cover this sufficiently in the past."

Systematically looking into blind spots of NRK's coverage was the first thing the broadcaster did on its quest for an effective climate strategy. Conversations with many people in and outside the organization as well as surveys revealed significant gaps. "We found that depth and breadth were insufficiently developed. We didn't have systematic coverage," Solberg says. Hans Cosson-Eide, head of the climate desk in Oslo, goes into more detail: "Our climate coverage was very much driven by single ideas which lacked coherence. It was too often based on reports from interest groups or companies with their own agenda. We didn't have a holistic strategy. Our annual audience survey revealed that people didn't think our climate change coverage met their needs. They didn't read it."

In a first step in 2020, NRK reorganized its newsroom. The broadcaster established not one, but two climate editorial teams, one at headquarters in Oslo with ten journalists and one in the city of Bergen at Norway's west coast with five. "We cover the current news from Oslo and lead in-depth and investigative coverage from Bergen," Solberg explains. This separation minimizes the risk of climate coverage being swallowed by other, seemingly more urgent news needs. "Journalism that is slow moving on a major crisis will easily lose out to big news like the war in Ukraine," she says.

To make sure that everyone understands the importance of climate coverage, the broadcaster developed a guide including a set of rules. The goal is "to enable everyone in Norway to participate in climate debates and to make informed choices, and in this way to develop and strengthen democracy." Journalists are advised to encourage debate on the 'how' of battling climate change but to avoid false balance. Content should be guided by clear principles. It should explain, engage audiences, and create accountability.

"Our climate journalism has three pillars: breaking news, investigative journalism, constructive journalism," Solberg says. From Cosson-Eide's perspective, more focus is the key. "The biggest shift is that we are producing less but more thorough journalism. We consider carefully: should we visit and interview someone, should we do a traditional news story or a video format? What we are not doing is mass producing news stories that repeat the same message."

Since then, NRK's climate coverage has, in Solberg's words, become less sporadic and less driven by industry. "We have made our mark in the field, I think. After COP26 we were praised for having the best coverage in Norway." In digital storytelling, she is particularly proud of a story bringing the inner workings of the ocean close to people, its title: 'SOS from the ocean'.[1] A data journalism story about Norway's contribution to climate change sparked a lively debate in the country.[2]

NRK

This is NRK's climate journalism

The goal of NRK's climate journalism is to enable everyone in Norway to participate in climate debates and to make informed choices, and in this way to strengthen and develop democracy. NRK shall tell world-class climate stories, for the general public.

Current, prevalent climate research indicates that man-made climate change is taking place. NRK is fact-based, and this is the foundation of their coverage.

The important societal debates now revolve around how to adapt to, or brake, global warming. Our coverage should primarily be about how action is being taken, not if action is necessary.

Be conscious of false balance: NRK is dedicated to covering all sides of a story, but when we provide time to those who deny climate science, we are obliged to pose the proper questions. If NRK often advances discussions about whether climate change is man-made, we can give the general public the impression that researchers are less in agreement than they actually are. At the same time, we must pose relevant questions in response to all (others) who make claims in the climate debate.

There are many reasons to accentuate differing views in the climate debate: This can, for example, apply to how quickly global warming is taking place, or be about which solutions are best to reduce warming. There are many unanswered questions here. It is also important here that journalists are aware of the background of their interview subjects, and how one can challenge them in a positive way. Just as with any other topic, we must make it clear which interests the person concerned represents. We must also clarify if the interviewee's stance is based on established science, or if the science does not provide clear answers on the matter under discussion.

Solberg didn't experience any internal resistance. "I don't think it is very controversial at all. It has helped that we have been very clear that our journalism is based on facts and science." Cosson-Eide remembers some tough groundwork, though. "Some people said: 'Why do we need a strategy at all, why is it not like any other journalism?'" he recalls. They were worried that NRK would verge into activism. But in time Cosson-Eide saw progress: "The tough part was to establish the strategy outside of our climate group. The first year we spent a lot of time and energy following up on stories that were not quite in line with our strategy, particularly articles with a false balance approach. Now our strategy has disseminated into the whole organization."

As a matter of public credibility, NRK also makes sure its climate strategy doesn't stop at its journalism. The broadcaster measures and reports its climate footprint.

1 https://www.nrk.no/sos-from-the-ocean-1.15763366

2 https://www.nrk.no/klima/xl/norske-co_-utslipp_-slik-gar-norge-fra-a-vaere-miniputt-til-gigant-pa-klimastatistikken-1.15600846

It is also a partner of Albert, a UK based non-profit organization which helps film production companies to reduce their environmental impact and emphasizing climate storytelling (see Q&A with Albert's Director Carys Taylor, page 140).

NRK's Climate Strategy seeks to introduce more 'humour and heart' into its climate journalism. According to Cosson-Eide that remains one of the tougher aims: "We have a Snapchat account that has fantastic numbers," he says. "We are reaching 200,000 people below 35 through that medium." In the future he would like to see a little bit more wit and humour in NRK's climate coverage. A comedy series on climate change scores highly on his wish list.

The advantage of having a strategy is having a clear definition of what needs to be done—and what needs to be stopped or left for others to do. Cosson-Eide: "You have to prioritize. Every year we identify four to five things we will focus on, and we pay less attention to anything else."

Problems to solve

- Newsroom gets side-tracked by competing news events.
- Audiences engage much better with compelling, in-depth coverage.
- Journalists need guidance on how to cover climate change.

What was done

- Launch of a climate strategy with reporting principles.
- Newsroom reorganization with a news-focused climate team in Oslo and a team in Bergen focused on 'slow journalism'.

Success story

- Growing audience engagement.
- Continuous climate coverage.

Lessons

- Discovering blind spots is key.
- You need a strategy—and to follow up with it.
- Separating breaking news coverage from in-depth reporting works.

CASE

GETTING CLIMATE COVERAGE UP THE NEWS AGENDA AT CBC

GRASSROOTS SUPPORT AND AN INTERNAL 'CLIMATE SUMMIT'

When top editors at the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation decided climate change needed to move up the broadcaster's news priorities, they hit on a job announcement that was both practical, and symbolic: one of Canada's best known foreign correspondents, after years in Washington covering the Trump years, would become CBC's first international climate correspondent.

On the one hand, the appointment of Susan Ormison, a veteran broadcaster at CBC since 2001, signals how important the climate story is, says Brodie Fenlon, head of news at CBC. On the other hand, the logic was that since every news programme clamours to have Ormiston's work, climate stories would finally get the placement and the profile they need.

"That's part of the workaround," says Fenlon, "which is that we'll just put the best journalist on the beat."

The appointment is just one move in an experiment with newsroom structure and collaboration on climate stories at CBC, which was founded in 1936 and is Canada's largest news organization.

While climate stories have long been covered by the broadcaster's science journalists, particularly on its long-running programme Quirks & Quarks, the last several years have pushed the topic up the news agenda—and made clear climate coverage needed to rise further, says Fenlon.

That has largely been because of major news events. Climate conferences including COP26 have attracted unprecedented levels of coverage, to be sure. But Canadians have also been increasingly experiencing the impacts of climate change first hand: In the summer of 2021, a 'heat dome' over British Columbia was directly linked to 619 deaths, while devastating wildfires have become a near-annual occurrence. The country is also home to vast swathes of the Arctic, where the impacts of climate change, especially on the Indigenous communities who live there, are particularly pronounced.

And yet, climate stories have often struggled to find a place in the news flow in between disasters, Fenlon says. And while audiences regularly say they want more and better climate coverage, he says that coverage then often struggles to get viewers and high-profile scheduling. It's a struggle to which most news organizations can relate.

"It's the sameness issue," he says, pointing out that climate stories can often feel repetitive. "And then it's the size and scope of the issue. It's such a massive story, it's almost too big."

That overwhelming scope can also feel at odds with what ends up at the top of the country's top news programmes.

"A lot of climate journalism actually steps outside the daily news cycle," Fenlon points out. "And we're working to find a way to broaden our own definition of 'news' so that we can have these stories lead a newscast."

Political polarization over climate has also mounted, he points out. From audiences to politicians, polarization means work by journalists is scoured for any mistakes that can be used to discredit overall climate coverage.

"The scrutiny on our work is intensifying, driven by political interest and, I think, polarization," Fenlon says.

But besides making the case that climate is a news priority—"and then it has to be repeated over and over," says Fenlon—CBC's newest efforts focus on tying together a lot of the climate coverage that is already being done, and building collaboration.

In 2021, the broadcaster hosted an in-house 'climate summit' in Toronto to bring together everyone in the organization who was working on climate change stories, whether they were full-time climate reporters—largely on the outlet's climate-focused podcast, What On Earth?—part-time climate reporters focused on politics in Ottawa or Vancouver, energy reporters in Alberta, or local news reporters in the Arctic.

"It was around 60 people who had climate as part of their job description, whether it's a soft beat or whether it's their whole job," says Alison Broddle, senior director of the current affairs and investigative departments at CBC, who led the summit. "I had no idea that we had that many people."

The result was a renewed focus on collaboration, including reporters realizing that they were already working on similar projects. Reporters created a dedicated collaboration channel and regular meetings to communicate what climate stories were being produced, and make sure that when a good story is in the works, it gets good placement on both the local shows and the national evening shows.

The coordination also resulted in the decision to create a new coordinating climate producer role, whose job is to find, coordinate and amplify the broadcaster's collective climate coverage. The next plan, says Broddle, is to create focused climate literacy training for journalists who feel they need a stronger scientific grounding.

A lot of the blueprint for that level of collaboration has come out of covering the pandemic, she says. The idea is to take methods that have "served us well during the pandemic, and not just throw them all out the window and make all the meetings focused in a boardroom in Toronto again," Broddle says. "I think that would not serve us well."

Another focus for helping climate climb the news agenda is to put investigative resources behind covering it, points out Broddle; in a sense, finding the big climate stories, rather than waiting for them to arrive.

Interactive and consumer-focused climate news have also done well, says Fenlon: One project allowed readers to plug in their postal code and examine heat islands in their neighbourhood, which was part of a larger story about income inequality in cities and how different communities were impacted by rising temperatures; another used a consumer-focused programme to talk through how to install solar panels. It's the 'pocketbook' approach that helps climate stories feel more urgent and personal, he points out.

These coordinated impacts to prioritize climate projects are in their infancy, admit Fenlon and Broddle; the collective results of such a shift aren't yet clear. And the biggest challenge to the organization's climate strategy is likely to be, yet again, the news cycle.

"I think it's just keeping the momentum and the focus," Fenlon says. An example is in February 2022, "when [the invasion of] Ukraine happens, and you're watching the world order change."

But there is grassroots support for building a shift in climate coverage within the organization, even as Canada also must balance its role as a major oil and gas producer and despite political polarization, Fenlon says. Ultimately, the onslaught of fires, floods and extreme heat across the country has made the topic deeply personal—and left no one untouched.

"Everyone gets it, because everyone's living it," he says. "We're really living it in Canada, in the last few years alone."

Problems to solve

- There were many separate activities across the broadcaster but no climate journalism strategy.
- Climate was pushed off the news agenda.

What was done

- An in-house ‘climate summit’ was organized to kickoff collaboration across the organization.
- A well-known top journalist was assigned to be ‘international climate correspondent’.

Success story

- Still to be determined.

Lessons

- There was more climate expertise and interest in the organization than leadership expected.
- Leadership has to repeatedly communicate the message that climate is a priority.

CASE

TRAINING AND MORE: EDUCATING THE NEWSROOM AT RADIO FRANCE

"THERE IS A KNOWLEDGE BATTLE OUT THERE"

For Vincent Giret, Head of News and Sports at Radio France, the pandemic made all the difference. When COVID hit France and the world, dealing with statistics and virus behaviour became the new normal for journalists. This was when newsroom leadership realized they had a real problem. "It was a crash test experience for our newsrooms. We asked who had a science background in their university education. Probably less than 20 out of 800 journalists raised their hands," Giret says. There was no way around it: Radio France's journalists had to become experts without a formal science training. This was important in a different context, too: The issue of climate change was an increasing role in coverage, and its complexity demanded more insights than a few facts which could be googled in preparation for an interview.

A couple of years and plenty of effort later, Radio France declared the 'ecological turnaround' in September 2022.[1] While the broadcaster emphasized that as a public service provider it had always recognized the importance of environmental issues and the climate crisis, it now wanted to step up the effort in a holistic way. It published an all-out, ten-part strategy, expanding beyond the newsroom to the organization itself. This included several commitments, including the following: to make the fact of human-made climate change indisputable, to use appropriate data and vocabulary, to emphasize solutions-oriented journalism, to establish the climate beat across all programmes and channels, to be digitally frugal, and to phase out advertising for products that are harmful to the climate.

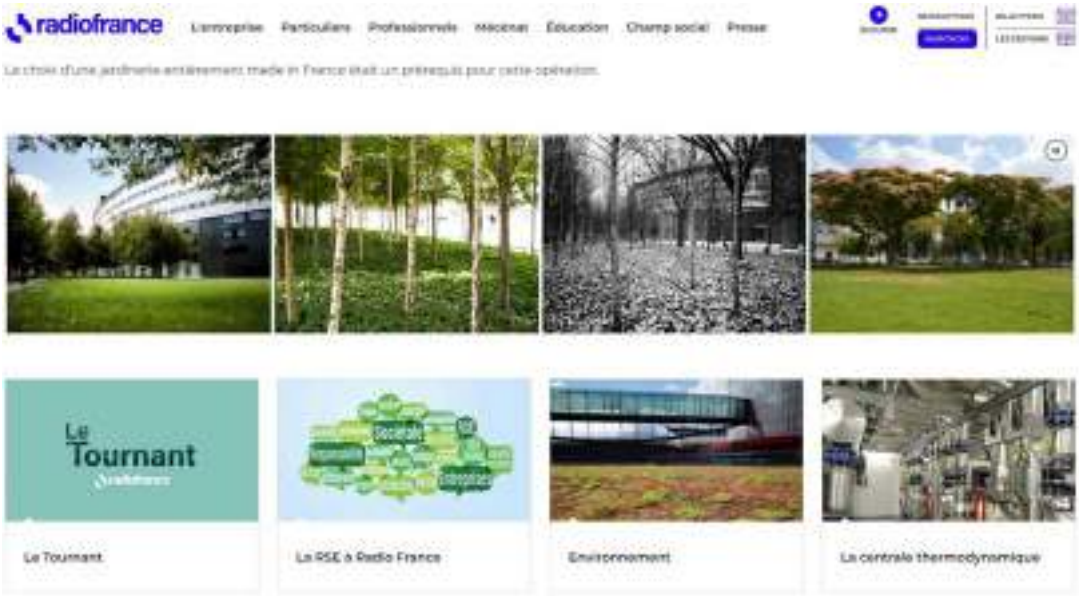
The education and training of the newsroom in all things climate was declared to be a core strategic step. It was to be "the biggest training programme in Radio France's history for journalists, producers, production teams, and news anchors." The understanding of environment and science issues was no longer to be a matter of specialists alone, but an indispensable knowledge base for all teams in the newsroom.

"We need to train all of them now to have an impact," Giret says. For example, it was vital for the journalists to be prepared when doing interviews. "It is important to ask good questions in live programmes. If you don't have a minimum background, it is very difficult to ask the right questions." He recalls a politician who was running for office who said in a half sentence that a certain number of wind turbines offshore produced as much energy as a nuclear reactor. "That was not true, but if you don't have that background, it is very hard to call someone out on facts."

The first pillar of the plan consists of classical training sessions with small groups. For 200 people in the newsroom, training will be mandatory. They have to

commit to 20 hours of different sessions over the next three years. The training includes five modules, ranging from how to discuss science topics to what you must know about climate change, energy, biodiversity, and environmental health respectively. The broadcaster's budget will cover the additional staff needed to replace those who will be trained.

In addition, there are master classes for all staff. About 1000 employees will take part in the classes, including editors, producers, and others involved in programme production and administration, such as documentation and guest booking. The first one took place in September 2022, it was a four-hour lecture in a large auditorium which was broadcast, recorded and subsequently made available to everyone. "Five scientists gave us key background briefings on climate change and energy," Giret says. Radio France is planning to hold one of these master classes every quarter, the second one on biodiversity. "With these masterclasses, we will build a digital library of content, available to all employees." Every desk will have a main point of contact, someone who is climate savvy and will make sure coverage is informed. "You cannot expect a handful of specialists to do it all."



It has paid off that Vincent Giret was not new to the climate challenge. In fact, he has been familiar with the issues around it for several decades, thanks to French engineer Jean Marc Jancovici. The founder of the think tank The Shift Project has been a major influence on how the crisis has been perceived among decision makers in France.[1] Jancovici was a pioneer in raising newsroom awareness on climate change in France. He used to organize weekend trips with journalists to teach them about the subject for many years. "It was skiing and training, and he is a very good teacher," Giret says. The engineer helped Giret and his team of four specialist climate journalists to develop the programme and was a speaker in the first masterclass. "Jean-Marc will play an important role in our action and training plan."

For operations, Radio France launched a tender that had a lot of response from the market. "The training market is incredible, there are tons of organizations doing this now," Giret says. Choosing between the providers has been a challenge, but climate expertise is growing all around the organization, so there

is an increasing number of journalists who can support the effort. “Those who are good at this are the new elite.”

Giret admits that the summer of 2022 was very useful for the effort. Heat, drought, and other climate disasters were making news all over the country. And it might be no accident that the commitment to climate journalism seems to be particularly pronounced in France. Small, specialist media circulated a climate pledge—similar to an effort in Austria—but Radio France stopped short of signing it. “We decided to support it, but not to sign it,” Giret says. “Journalism and editorial are at the heart of our job. It is difficult to have rules from outside guide our work.”

It is still too early to judge how newsroom participation will shape up. The leadership team did not sense much resistance, but was there enthusiasm? Giret is hopeful, as several of Radio France’s senior editors attended the first training sessions. “There is a knowledge battle out there. This is the most crucial challenge for journalism.”

Problems to solve

- Most journalists don’t have a background in science.
- If there is too little climate knowledge, journalists have a hard time identifying greenwashing or calling out mistakes.

What was done

- A major training plan was developed for more than 1000 staff, 200 journalists will be required to participate in 20 hours of special training on climate change and related issues.
- A wider ten-part strategy was adopted which encompasses the entire newsroom and the rest of the organization.

Success story

- It is early days in the programme, results are not in yet.

Lessons

- The market for climate-related training is booming. It is tricky to identify the best consultants.

CASE

KNOWLEDGE SHARING IS KEY: AFP'S 'FUTURE OF THE PLANET' HUB

'THE TOMORROW STORY STARTED TO BE A TODAY STORY'

The issue of climate change wasn't exactly new to Phil Chetwynd, Head of Global News at French News Agency AFP. In fact, he had discussed it quite a bit around the dinner table with his wife who is an expert on environmental investing. But as with relationships, sometimes it takes a while until things are made official. "We formally made the future of the planet an editorial priority in 2019," he says. Back then France was thrown into a summer that broke all temperature records, the data about the speed of change was alarming. "This really changed our thinking. The tomorrow story started to be a today story," Chetwynd recalls. AFP's 'Future of the Planet' hub was born.

In addition to the digital world, which was also awarded priority status, everything around creating a sustainable future for humankind was to be given utmost attention. "There was a need to take a much wider view of the story. Climate journalism, that was often very dry science or politics stories," Chetwynd says. It used to be much driven by traditional environment correspondents, many of whom had long been on the beat. AFP leadership found that the social impact and the business sides were neglected. "Now it is about how the world is changing and what are the needs in response to these changes," Chetwynd describes, "a huge amount of this is the changing of business practices, the finding of solutions. The ecological transformation of the economy is at the core."

This was not just a repackaging under a new label: In 2022 AFP merged the business and environment desks. At the beginning of 2023 more than 20 journalists with specialist knowledge on climate change were working at the 'Future of the Planet' hub in Paris alone. Additionally, the AFP team includes fact-checkers who look at greenwashing and photo editors who do their best to capture the story visually.[1]

Ivan Couronne, Deputy Head of the 'Future of the Planet' hub, says that two changes made a big difference: The sharing of sources between business and environment specialists, and that all the stories are now edited by the same people. "This is not trivial, it is central to bringing coherence to our stories." In the beginning it was hard to make business reporters talk to scientists and environment reporters to look into what businesses were doing, Couronne says. "Reporters are so used to their little beats." But given that it has only been a year, they got used to it fast, is his observation.

In addition to the Paris team, AFP can draw on reporters in local bureaus on all continents. "It has been a great motivating factor that the climate beat opens up opportunities to cover interesting stories around the world." The news agency created new jobs for specialists in places that are or will be relevant for climate

change. One reporter will open shop in Manaus on the edge of the Amazon later this year; another one starts soon in Bangkok. This strategy of decentralization helps with holding the travel and emissions budget at bay.

In contrast to many news organizations which approach journalism from a text perspective, AFP has been trying to drive their climate coverage with visuals. "We don't do things unless we have great images. That is how the story is going to attract people's attention," Chetwynd says. A story from northern Canada was timed around the migration of beluga whales, for example. AFP has also made it a priority to send photographers to certain locations without any imminent news agenda, just to shoot compelling stock images that can be used later. "We sent a team on a month-long trip to Antarctica for this, another one on a similar journey to West Africa to document desertification and the corresponding migration of herdsman. It is hard work, sometimes it is boring work. But you can't do just another polar bear eating a trash can."

Another core activity of the 'Future of the Planet' hub is the emphasis on training. Editors and reporters need to understand the basic science behind climate change, and to be able to better identify greenwashing. Couronne alone trained more than 200 journalists on greenwashing internally. "I have trained reporters on every continent, in Bangladesh, Nairobi, Europe, the US," he says. He shows them what to check, which questions to ask, were the red flags are, "for example, when a company has a climate target for 2050 but no interim targets." His advice to others would be, to make the trainings short, frequent, mandatory, incentivize them—and to start from leadership. "You have to evangelize."

In contrast to most newsrooms, AFP developed a style-guide for reporting on climate change—some of which can be found in Chapter 2. It is informed by an important principle: "We want to ensure that we are not injecting too much emotion into it. We want to be fact-based," Chetwynd says.

Even though AFP has professionalized its approach to climate journalism quite a bit, getting engagement is still a challenge. "Audiences are tired," Chetwynd says. "Climate coverage is something they want, because they know it is important, but they don't want to read it." This is why the agency puts a lot of emphasis on

reporting the topic in a constructive way. “We needed a much more 360-degree practical way to tell the story. Our clients demanded that, too.” Couronne confirms that: “Every time we meet clients, they want more solutions.”

The hub covers climate impacts and solutions for all kinds of sectors, including transport, infrastructure, agriculture, and energy. Nevertheless, Editor-in-Chief Sophie Huet-Trupheme made clear at the 2022 Arab Media Forum in Dubai that just focusing on the stories that create hope was not an option for the news agency, which is heavily invested in fact-checking all over the world. “The facts are terrible. But this is our job, and we are not here just to, as one of our climate reporters wrote … create hope. That is not our business,” she said in an interview. Reporting the dire facts and holding power to account was essential to her newsroom’s climate strategy, she said.[2]

Chetwynd admits that the biggest challenge for the climate hub is the competing news agenda. “We launched the hub two months before the pandemic hit. Then, two years later, we had Ukraine. It dies when huge news stories come up like that.” One reporter in the ‘Planet’ team happened to be a Russian speaker; suddenly she was needed for other tasks. “One thing we realized with reporting stories is that it is better to work these things around news events. We piggyback great content. Evergreen content doesn’t work so well.” From Couronne’s perspective the slowness of it all is the biggest challenge: “We are basically covering the industrial revolution. Now we have to electrify the economy. How do we publish stories every day for something that takes decades?” What has surprised him most: “How central climate is in most sectors of the economy now. Even if you cover airlines, climate is central to your industry.”

Problems to solve

- Clients didn’t appreciate climate coverage sufficiently; it was perceived to be too dry and too much politics
- Climate coverage was constantly pushed out of the news agenda
- The topic was dealt with in a silo

What was done

- Business and environment desks were merged to ‘Future of the Planet’
- Investment in climate training for editors and reporters, particularly on greenwashing
- Investment in visual strategy
- Focus on solutions journalism

Success story

- Growing customer satisfaction
- High uptake on stories with powerful visuals

Lessons

- Strong visuals are key
- High customer demand of stories on solutions
- Journalists adapted fast to new desk structure
- Trainings need to be short and frequent

Q&As

Q&A

> ***"Climate Journalism is definitely a way to attract talent"***

MANUELA KASPER-CLARIDGE

Editor-in-Chief, Deutsche Welle

Manuela Kasper-Claridge is Editor-in-Chief of Deutsche Welle (DW), Germany's international public broadcaster. DW provides journalistic content in 32 languages and has been shifting towards digital publication with the intention of reaching more people, particularly in countries where press freedom is restricted. Kasper-Claridge rose to her current role in 2020 after having headed the combined business, science, and environment desk.

In the context of all your news coverage, how much weight does climate coverage have?

It is extremely important, and it is becoming increasingly urgent. It affects all the regions we cover; it is the defining issue of our time. Current conflicts around the world will hopefully end at some point, but the climate crisis and its effects will last forever.

Is this particular to DW because of your global outreach?

It is related to our mission and reach, of course. We see lots of droughts in Kenya and in Arabic-speaking Northern Africa; elsewhere there is extreme flooding like 2022 in Pakistan and frequently in Bangladesh. Our users comment on this a lot. People didn't always connect it to the climate crisis, but they do so more often now. Everybody knows about it. Everybody feels it. In Europe interest grew with the 2015 climate conference COP21 in Paris. The dramatic facts that were presented caught people's attention. DW started more intense coverage much earlier though.

When was that?

I developed an environmental format, 'Global Ideas', 12 years ago. The idea was to create an all-inclusive package of multimedia journalism and education materials to highlight best practice projects and solutions to fighting climate change around the world. Also, we wanted to inspire others to take action as well. Together with the team I received many awards for it. It is now translated into six or seven languages. One of the decisive factors was this: I am not from political journalism background but from environmental journalism, business, and science

journalism. This allowed for further journalistic perspectives beyond the well-known political one.

Is this why you were chosen as Editor-In-Chief?

It might have played a role.

Newsrooms tend to complain that people demand environmental coverage, but they don't consume it that much. How successful are you in attracting audiences?

Our social media formats are very successful, as well as our TV formats in cooperation with regional partners like our series 'Eco Africa', which has since been adapted to markets in six countries. We produce Eco Africa in French, Portuguese, English, Hindi, Tamil and Brazilian. Written articles, particularly explainers, work well too. Instagram and TikTok are becoming ever more important.

What do you know about your 'heavy users'?

Young and female users are very engaged with the topic. Many women in Africa are interested; they feel the effects very drastically, and are looking for solutions. In Asia women are also dedicated consumers of DW climate coverage. Across the globe young people are very interested. In fact, when people apply for a job at DW, they often quote our environmental coverage as the reason why they chose us. We have trainees from all parts of the world.

So, great climate journalism is a recruitment tool?

Climate journalism is definitely a way to attract talent. People keep telling me: If an organization produces something like that, I want to work there.

What kind of journalism works best?

Solutions-based journalism. The topic is often depressing and negative, people can only bear so much of it. So, we are looking for people who are making things more sustainable. Audiences appreciate that. Explainer video formats work very well, too. They shouldn't be too complicated, just tell people: What does it mean for me? We have a very successful format, 'Planet A', meaning, there is only one planet. It's dedicated to young users. In it some of our younger reporters explain and experience concepts such as how carbon offsets don't work the way we are told they do and how fast fashion is poisoning holy rivers in India. We had 36 million video views in the first one and a half years. We have just started a new channel on TikTok under the label Planet A.

What doesn't work at all?

I cannot remember a real failure. Of course, some videos work better than others. Planet A grew slowly for the better part of the first year, then suddenly it took off. It takes patience, it wasn't easy to get it right. We personalized it more, put more people in front of the camera, made it a bit more entertaining.

Do you treat climate journalism predominantly as a science topic, a business topic, or a political topic?

It encompasses all departments because all of society is affected. It demands cooperation between all desks: business, science, even culture. 60 colleagues work on our environment desk, we have increased headcount there. But we have climate correspondents in other departments as well. We are doing much more cross-over work. Very often, the environment desk or the politics desk are in charge, but also regional desks, depending on how and where the story plays out.

You mentioned 'Eco Africa': Do you often create formats centrally and then adapt them to certain regions and cultures, or do you craft most things for a particular market or audience?

One size does not fit all. Asia, for example, has their own problems and issues that don't always translate to those in Africa. Of course, the climate crisis is a global topic, but you often have to focus stories on one region and one audience. And then see what gets the most positive feedback.

How do you go about it?

These stories don't work in an abstract way. Our reporters and editors come up with ideas, look at the comments and the news agenda, then we discuss. We make sure we are meeting the needs of our users and interview users regularly to get their opinions. We have correspondents who are on the ground and partners who know the regions very well. We try to be as close to our audience as possible. It is not a good idea to decide about the topics while sitting at your desk in Europe and then develop a story in Africa top down. Good stories need constant interaction.

Are you personally involved in these discussions?

It depends on the format and scale. I get involved in the bigger things.

How would you rate DW's performance in climate reporting in total?

There is always room for improvement. We need more continuity. When there is news like the war in Ukraine, then you tend to shift focus away from the climate crisis...

Has the war helped or hurt climate coverage? There is a big debate on energy security after all.

It hasn't helped, but the topic wasn't entirely lost, since we had this really hot summer with fires and flooding at the same time as the war. The war shifted the conversation on energy but not exactly to environmentally friendly energy.

What is the most difficult thing about climate reporting?

It is too depressing. Where is the positive news? That's why we try to package things differently, emphasizing solutions no matter what the scale.

It is not the politics surrounding the topic? Media are often accused of being activist and biased for a green political movement if they focus on climate journalism.

All our journalists know the difference between activism and journalism. This is very important.

What about internal resistance?

Maybe there is some, but not that I know of. I think everyone realizes the topic is a huge issue, but as journalists we will always have discussions on what aspects we should focus on more.

Do you have a stylebook on climate coverage like The Guardian?

We have reporting guidelines, published by the editor-In-chief and environment department. We aim to be clear and precise and convey urgency. We use the present tense, talk about the climate crises. A no go with us is apocalyptic language. But the guidelines are there to help, not to control. I don't police them.

What about a visual policy?

We don't have visual guidelines. We probably should. You often see these apocalyptic scenes; you don't always need that.

What are your next steps?

We will focus more on background, and explanatory reporting. Additionally, we want to continue increasing our outreach and dialogue with younger users.

Does your organization measure its own carbon footprint?

We publish a sustainability report every two years. We are aiming at a reduction of CO2 of 30 percent over 2019 levels by 2030. So far, we are on track. We are reducing plane travel, improving energy efficiency and re-examining our supply chain. We measure the carbon footprint of our film productions. We want to be climate neutral by 2045.

Q&A

> *"It doesn't have to be a David Attenborough film to have an impact"*

CARYS TAYLOR

Director of Albert

Carys Taylor is the Director of Albert, an organization which helps the film and television industry champion climate-friendly storytelling, as well as measuring and reducing its carbon footprint. Taylor formerly worked at BBC Studios and in the energy sector. In her view, the media has yet to understand its full potential in pushing for more sustainability. Albert is part of the British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA).

Albert is helping film production companies to reduce their environmental impact, in particular their carbon footprint. Among your clients are many public service media. How did it come into being?

Eleven years ago, an engineer at the BBC had the idea they should be recording their carbon footprint, and he designed the original version of the carbon calculator which Albert now offers. It was clear that this could be useful industry-wide, and the BBC gifted the technology to BAFTA, so it could be made available without cost. For the first ten years this was an informal project, and at the beginning of 2021 it became a formal subsidiary of BAFTA: that's when I came in.

What were your ambitions when you started?

There is an immense—and rapidly increasing—demand for support in the sustainability space. People realize the importance of working differently but are not sure what to do about it. So, this is an opportunity to drive change. I came from the energy industry—National Grid—where I helped policymakers to understand the energy transition. I found there was a massive disconnect between the political appetite to reach Net Zero and the public knowledge (and therefore the mandate) of how to get there.

So, you brought an outside perspective to the table?

In some ways. Before this I worked at BBC Studios. Taking on the job at Albert, I came back to the film and TV industry with a deeper appreciation of the role it has in enabling audiences to participate in democracy. There is no bigger conversation we need to have as a society than about how to address the impacts of climate change.

Tell us a bit about what you offer to the industry. What are Albert's most popular tools?

We educate, enable, and celebrate. We educate through free training, much of it online. We have education partnerships with at least 40 universities across the UK, providing a full undergraduate module for students studying film and TV. This way, we generate the talent pipeline for sustainable practice to future-proof the industry. We enable through various toolkits. We are best known for our Carbon Calculator Toolkit, which is bespoke to the industry. It has localized carbon factors for all over the world and has unique benchmarks.

We also established the Sustainable Studio Standard for the physical studio spaces, as well as an editorial engagement tool, which is gamified. It comes up with different reports and insights, showing what audiences would like to see more of and less of. It contains case-studies and little clips as examples. Lastly, we celebrate: We reward best-practice. I'm increasingly talking to award bodies about storytelling awards. Rather than issuing a green award for footprint reduction, which should become standard, it should be about making sure that the story has an impact, even if it doesn't specifically talk about climate change.

So, content matters more than processes and structures?

This is what we want to focus on: inspiring audiences, empowering audiences, finding solutions to tackle climate change, making sure that the story has an impact, regardless of the genre. It doesn't have to be a David Attenborough film to do this.

That should be interesting to many news organizations: How do you measure whether a story has an impact?

That's a tough one, but we are working on it. We convened the Climate Content Pledge at COP26 last year and now the broadcasters are collaborating on research into the impact of climate content on viewer behaviour. We just welcomed a research fellow on board to examine this in more depth. I think we also need to look at the advertising industry: We can learn a lot from the way they tell stories, the methods they use that lead to sales.

Could you give us an example?

One example which comes to mind is from the HBO series 'Succession'. One protagonist, Greg, was disinherited from his uncle's will, and his uncle told him he was writing Greenpeace into his will instead. The next day 20,000 people went online to look up how to put Greenpeace into their will. We can draw on examples from other practices like seatbelt use or drink-driving and study how storytelling led to behavioural changes there.

It's probably difficult to establish causation with behavioural changes.

Yes, we are working on the methodology. First, we need to establish a measurable baseline, developing a catalogue of items or practices that play a role in stories and recording these. Then you could compare, for example: How often have heat

pumps featured in films, and how has the demand for heat pumps developed during that period, acknowledging the other conditions around that like tax incentives.

What do you consider great storytelling around climate change?

It is about authenticity and nuance, not necessarily hitting it on the nose. A good story is engaging to a particular audience in its own right. Climate change has affected all of us, so there is, of course, a climate angle to most stories. For example, 'the Morning Show' on Apple TV is about a morning news show, and one of the journalist protagonists gains prominence because of the passionate way she covers the story of a protest at a coal mine. The show is mostly about abuse in broadcasting, so people might not even have noticed the climate aspect but great storytelling authentically reflects the world we live in.

You mean sneaking in climate content is possible everywhere?

I don't like that language; it is not about sneaking, that would be inauthentic. There are opportunities everywhere. Young people are increasingly more aware. Broadcasters want to attract young audiences, but they are at risk of haemorrhaging them, because their content is less relevant.

The interest of the younger generation in climate seems to be obvious. What's holding broadcasters back?

There is evidence that young audiences are increasingly more concerned about climate change than older demographics. The pandemic has been a tough time for broadcasters and producers, and there is probably a little bit of regulation fatigue. People compare it to diversity and say there's only space for one issue at a time. But the reality is, these are related topics which shouldn't be seen as issues but as opportunities to make better content, which is more relevant to audiences.

You are saying that being diverse and inclusive implies that you tackle the climate challenge?

The topic of climate justice is huge. The West has contributed the most to the problem, those who suffer have contributed the least, they tend to be non-white so there is a race dynamic on the injustice of climate change, too.

What are your plans for the organization?

Albert has been moving into a new phase, as the demand for our support increases. We doubled our staff over the last two years to 15 people, and we are still recruiting. We have had some amazing applications, there are many people with production experience who care deeply, particularly young people. But we need help, also from governments. Green production comes with a huge price tag, but it can have a massive impact on society.

Who are Albert's clients?

We have ten members on our directorate which include the likes of the BBC, Discovery, Netflix, Sky, ITV, and Channel 4. And then we have a consortium which includes about 18 production companies. We are funded by contributions from them so the tool kits and training can be offered free at point of use. They are used by small and large companies all over the world, pretty much in every region. I am really keen that we develop local partners who can deliver local expertise in the native tongue with cultural sensitivity. For example, we shouldn't go to different territories saying "Electric vehicles are the solution!" because the infrastructure there might not be right. If we are developing narratives based on audiences in the West, that is not going to be helpful.

What has surprised you most doing your job?

You can speak to people in our industry about climate content and they will not understand the argument for it. They see climate as niche. Some in the industry argue: "People come to us for entertainment, they don't want to be reminded of uncomfortable things." I find it depressing at times that they don't see the opportunities here.

For those who want to get started fast on the organizational side of things: What could be a quick win to reduce emissions?

It is always travel and energy. Do we really need to fly that many people so far? If you want to do something fast to reduce your emissions, switch to green energy and take your staff from business or first-class flights to economy.

There's probably not that much flying business or even first-class in most of the media industry. Do you and your staff still fly?

We don't fly domestic, unless there are exceptional circumstances such as a rail strike. In the UK we consider domestic flights avoidable. It is obviously different in countries like Australia or America. Of course, we need to be sensible and every situation is unique.

Are you an optimist or pessimist on this kind of change?

I am totally on the fence. I don't think that we are going to wipe out all of humanity but I am afraid of huge social issues, huge suffering. All of the issues we cover in news: war, famine, mass migration, they are going to get worse without intervention on climate. Traditional warfare is going to be more likely because of increased competition for land and natural resources. On the more optimistic side, there will be more social tipping points. This is where Albert comes in. We need to deepen the people's understanding. They might recycle, yes. But many would never know to look into their pensions and investments, they wouldn't necessarily consider switching to green energy, they may not approve the wind farm down the road. Our industry can shed a light on these opportunities.

How optimistic are you regarding the media industry specifically?

I am optimistic that we will meet targets to drive down emissions. But we need to go further in converting enough brilliant, creative minds to shape the debate. When I go to events, I have realized this is still seen as a siloed area. We have a lot further to go on the storytelling side.

4

THE BIG PICTURE – WHY FOCUSING ON CLIMATE CAN SOLVE MANY PROBLEMS FACING JOURNALISM TODAY

CHAPTER

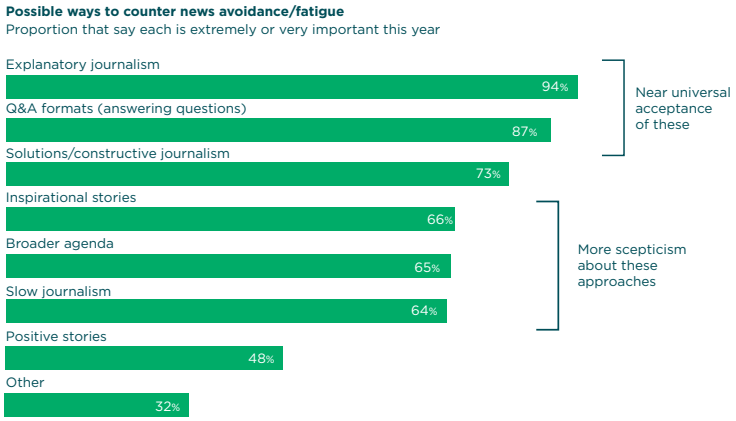
As this report has demonstrated, communicating climate change is challenging and can be costly—especially if it is done with impact in mind. It is clear from an ethical perspective why newsrooms should take on this challenge: Their responsibility to inform the public about threats that face humanity and to report on pathways to change. But there are other good reasons to invest in excellent climate journalism. And these might be sufficient to convince those editors and media managers who are still hesitant—be it because of a shortage of resources, internal opposition, suffocating organizational structures, external headwinds, or other reasons.

A central hypothesis of this report is: News media that develop their climate journalism and sustainability strategies don't only future-proof their journalism, but potentially their entire organization. To put it differently, investing in sustainability journalism can contribute to making news organizations more sustainable. This is because the climate issue exposes quite a few of the major shortcomings facing journalism today and provides opportunities for their amelioration. This, in turn, will make journalism more attractive to audiences and increase its legitimacy in an age of distraction, opinion, and information abundance—to paraphrase the subtitle of the 2021 EBU News Report. This chapter discusses some of the most relevant calls to action:

1. Climate journalism is about the future; today's journalism is stuck in the now. It needs to develop strategies to keep and increase its legitimacy in the attention economy.

Newsrooms still place excessive focus on quick news and daily business. Too much is reported, too little explained. This not only makes outlets vulnerable to competition in the attention economy, where only the fastest actors win if no value is added. It also doesn't go down well with audiences that are unwilling to pay for content when it's available everywhere and outdated tomorrow. Today's journalism does not reflect nearly enough on possible perspectives and solutions to all kinds of societal, economic, and political challenges. There is huge potential here—which many news media sense. In Nic Newman's 2023 'Trends and Predictions' report, based on a survey of 303 media leaders from all over the world, almost nine out of ten respondents to that question said they wanted to invest in explanatory journalism (see Figure 6).[1]

FIGURE 6: HOW MEDIA LEADERS WANT TO COUNTER NEWS AVOIDANCE IN 2023



Source: Nic Newman (2023), p.17

Additionally, by shifting the weight toward the future, climate journalism embraces the needs of younger generations, the age demographic most prone to news avoidance. There is no longer any guarantee that those who are in their twenties today will eventually consume traditional media as previous generations did. They may not consume news at all nor engage with the institutions of democracy. In a world of information abundance, convincing young people of journalism's significance and trustworthiness is an investment in its very survival. Climate reporting could be an engine to achieve that.

2. Climate protection needs hope to inspire action; today's journalism focuses mostly on drama, omissions, and failures. Constructive and solutions journalism provide a way forward.

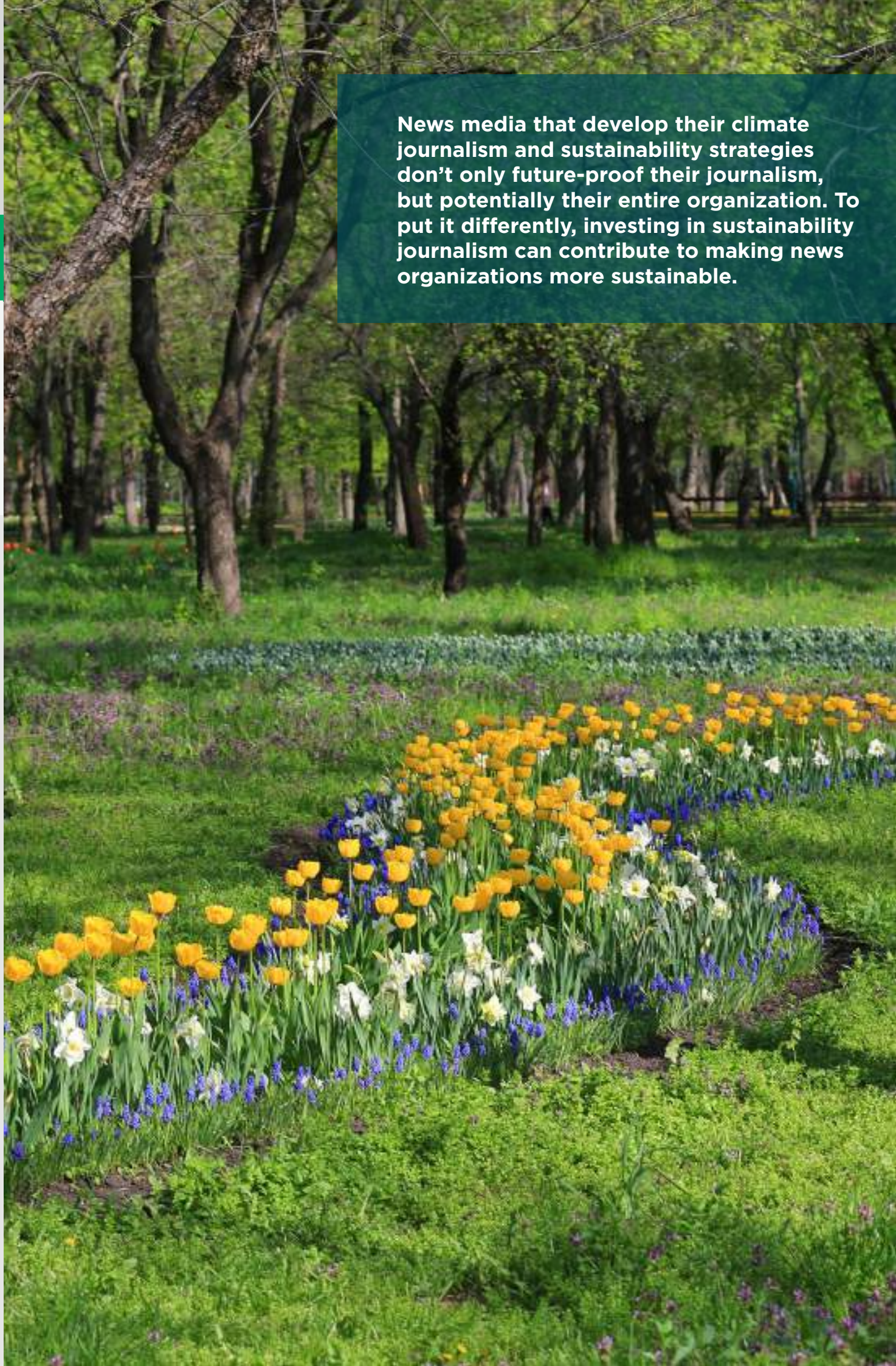
This negativity bias is also expressed in the use of language. Journalism all too often does little more than warn, threaten, or scare. But insights from psychology reveal that this could be counterproductive. Constant doom and gloom can result in numbness and disengagement. This doesn't mean that media should abandon its watchdog function and focus solely on 'positive' stories. Holding power to account is one of journalism's most important functions, not just in democracies. But painting a more realistic picture of the world, where a surprising number of things work despite so many ongoing calamities, could help individuals and groups to feel empowered.

"Hope is a muscle. It gets stronger the more you work it, and working it is not optional. The duty of hope means despair is unethical," Irish writer Maria Farrell wrote in 2018[2] about defiance in the face of climate change, channelling the motto of Irish diplomats who worked on the protracted and often seemingly hopeless peace process in Northern Ireland.[3] Journalism should embrace this motto. Just as many other societal problems do, climate change needs collective responses, and these responses are fuelled by hope and the expectation that investment in making a difference today might pay off. This is no 'head in the clouds' strategy of denial. To the contrary, progress and discoveries in so many fields are in constant abundance globally, as Nanette Braun of the UN reminded us in her Q&A (see page 36). Those working in the field report that the appetite of investors has never been as pronounced as today.[4]

Journalism should recapture the excitement of the new, the same kind that children experience when connecting the dots for the first time. Admittedly, this isn't a task for journalism alone. The entire educational system needs to be revamped towards continuous learning in a fast and ever-changing world. But the media can and should play a big part. To deliver on this, journalism has to become much more constructive, and solutions-oriented.

3. In climate protection, what counts is what has been done; today's journalism still focuses too much on what has been said. The dominant journalism paradigm should build on data rather than on quotes.

Journalists tend to take great pride in grabbing a snappy quote from high profile individuals. Following and closely watching decision makers is the paradigm



News media that develop their climate journalism and sustainability strategies don't only future-proof their journalism, but potentially their entire organization. To put it differently, investing in sustainability journalism can contribute to making news organizations more sustainable.

of political journalism that has seen many journalists rise to the top of news organizations. That's why it serves the competitive spirit of reporters. It is a convenient way of producing news—pinning down a quote often is much easier than deep-diving into facts. And it explains the blatant overproduction of 'he said, she said' journalism which is very popular in the news (or on Twitter), but arguably less so with audiences. When publishers analyze the needs of their users, keeping up with what has been said, stated, or demanded by public officials is just one aspect of what audiences expect from news media. But other desires, like being entertained, enlightened, inspired, or advised, aren't met with quite the same fervour. Quote-heavy journalism often suggests that something has happened, when in reality things moved at all. Coverage of climate summits like the COP meetings are good occasions to draw attention to the topic. But the climate itself doesn't care about what has been said. It bears witness to what has not been done.

This gap in volume between the coverage of communicated intentions, action taken, and impact is not dissimilar to the situation more broadly in journalism—with the exception perhaps of the sports beat, which is heavy on results. If journalists focused more on outcomes than zeroing in on declarations of intent, political coverage would benefit greatly. Illuminating a candidate's previous record of trustworthiness would reveal much more to voters than the information provided by a charismatic speaker who can outperform their competitor in a TV debate. It is time to break the dominance of poor habits in political journalism and replace or at least supplement them with the practices from science journalism which embraces facts, discovery, and learning. Naturally, political journalism is important to affect change. But it needs to be pursued with a focus on audience impact rather than the desire to impress the competition.

4. Climate journalism that works approaches audiences with respect in a language they understand; today's journalism often elevates itself above them in a know-it-all manner. Journalism needs to be diverse and inclusive.

As has been noted throughout this report, the era of an old mass media that addresses one singular public is gone. This public never existed, of course, but much of the journalism ecosystem consciously or unconsciously accepted that it wouldn't reach sizeable proportions of society, be it because they lacked language skills, education, habitual news consumption patterns, or interest—perhaps because they never felt represented and addressed by editorial choices. Ironically, those outlets describing themselves as proponents of quality journalism were those most likely to be ignorant of those some researchers call 'news outsiders'.[5] Modern (digital) journalism is based on the notion that different audiences need to be served on different platforms with different content in different tones of voice.

If it is to have an impact, even different sets of values can be activated. As evidence shows, the single most important factor inspiring people to take action is the behaviour of those they perceive as their peers—be it neighbours, people of their age cohort, or other role models, even influencers. No one has probably

been more influential in recent years than Greta Thunberg when it comes to engaging young people in the battle against climate change. A TV piece on the outsized carbon footprints of the world's richest one percent will most likely have much less impact on emissions than the fellow millionaire or admired investor who starts driving an electric vehicle, turns vegan and sells their private plane.

Addressing different groups with different sets of values and experiences requires more diversity in newsrooms on all levels including leadership and a culture of listening that enables a variety of voices to be heard. A proposition would be that the real quality journalism is one that develops products, crafts stories, and conveys messages in a way that attracts and lands with a particular audience—whether it is about climate or other important content. The aspiration should be journalism that learns by listening to and engaging audiences, including critics, and not simply addressing them. The future of journalism is diverse and inclusive.

5. Climate journalism needs to be local; today's journalism too often pushes for reach and scale while neglecting the needs of audiences around the corner. Journalism needs to recapture its significance as a community-building institution.

When the possibility for online advertising entered the world of journalism, parts of the industry embarked on a journey that turned out to be a risky detour: They optimized their offerings for clicks and gave away content for free. Local journalism by definition doesn't generate the opportunity of scale with a few rare exceptions. But it is badly needed in a democracy. Much has been written about the decline of local news outlets and emerging news deserts, predominantly but not only in the US.[6]

As described in previous chapters, many of today's challenges are complex and require collective action solutions that can most effectively be leveraged at the community level. Strong local journalism can pull communities together by informing, inspiring, and connecting people. At the same time, strong local journalism can contribute to the industry's sustainability as it offers something that is unique and indispensable in a world of global noise. Ideally, people will pay for it or—as in the case of public service media—will appreciate their money has been well invested.

6. Climate journalism needs to have an impact—it needs to reflect on its own practices and make use of academic research, particularly in the field of communication studies. Journalism needs to adopt a learning mindset.

Journalism will profit from familiarizing itself with scientific knowledge in many respects. Content in any kind of reporting will profit from reporters drawing on scientific insights. There is a lot to be gained from reading statistics correctly and following up on the latest findings in a variety of subjects—a connection that was painfully clear during the pandemic. The connection between journalism and academia could use significant strengthening, as Matt Winning, the climate

scientist and stand-up comedian points out in our Q&A (see page 92). As he frames it, scientists tend to be great in doing research but lousy in communicating it, while journalists are good at simplifying and explaining but less skilled in examining every shred of evidence.

A case worth mentioning specifically is the missing link between journalism and communication studies. Until recently, journalists and media leaders have not routinely reflected on insights from communication science and the psychology of human communication. This has considerably slowed down digital transformation and is a grave mistake in general. Every journalist should care about the potential effects of their work and its presentation on audiences, as this shapes its potential impact. Will it capture people's attention or overwhelm them? Could it inspire them to take action or will it make them feel guilty or scared? Does it ask too much or too little of the particular audience? The current focus in the profession tends to be on the 'what': what is investigated, reported, explained? But too little attention tends to be given to the 'how' and 'to whom': how material is presented to which kinds of audiences to resonate with them.

As one editor reflected, what is the point of a carefully researched long read when people quit reading it after ten seconds? Apart from the fact that broadcasters and publishers don't have resources to waste, what is all the effort about, if it doesn't inform or even shape behaviour? Findings about news consumption habits, news avoidance, the psychology of reacting to information and misinformation are abundant. Using them extensively is in the direct interest of news managers, reporters, and product developers, empowering them to inform, test, adjust, and develop their production.

7. Climate journalism profits from collaboration; most of today's journalism is still a one-newsroom or even one-reporter affair. Journalism needs to become collaborative.

The challenges of getting climate journalism right are sometimes too big to be tackled alone. Further, no one should seek to reinvent the wheel when they could be learning from others. Climate coverage is complex and climate change doesn't respect borders. The impact of different types of climate journalism has yet to be evaluated, learning from mistakes fast is crucial to improve products and ramp up efforts. All of this goes equally for most areas of journalism. Getting in touch with others who are affected, exchanging data, knowledge, insights, and good practice can speed up innovation in all kinds of areas.

Many media brands have already experienced how regional, national, or even cross-border collaboration can pay off. This is reflected in many collaborative ventures that would not have existed in this form even a decade ago. Global or international networks of investigative journalists like the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) or the Global Investigative Journalism Network are invested in large-scale investigations of wrongdoing by institutions and powerful individuals. There are bilateral or trilateral research cooperations joining forces for single projects, like the large-scale research into a failed carbon offset scheme conducted by The Guardian, Die Zeit, and Source

Material.[7] And there are international institutions like the European Broadcasting Union which are well-suited to providing formal and informal platforms for sharing knowledge, experience, and content—indeed, this forms the major reason the EBU is sponsoring this report.

The same holds true for cooperation within organizations. Digital transformation has made dents in the walls between editorial, business, and technology. Organizations that develop sustainability strategies are by the very nature of these strategies forced to look at the whole portfolio of their practices. It isn't enough to sharpen single parts and departments as this will soon be branded as greenwashing. The goal of journalism should be to make an impression on audiences, not the competition. The goal of media organizations should be to contribute to a sustainable information environment. In the modern, connected world, collaboration is the new competition.

Summary: How journalism can profit

1. Climate journalism is about the future; today's journalism is stuck in the now. It needs to develop strategies to keep and increase its legitimacy in the attention economy.

2. Climate protection needs hope to inspire action; today's journalism focuses mostly on drama, omissions, and failures. Constructive and solutions journalism provide a way forward.

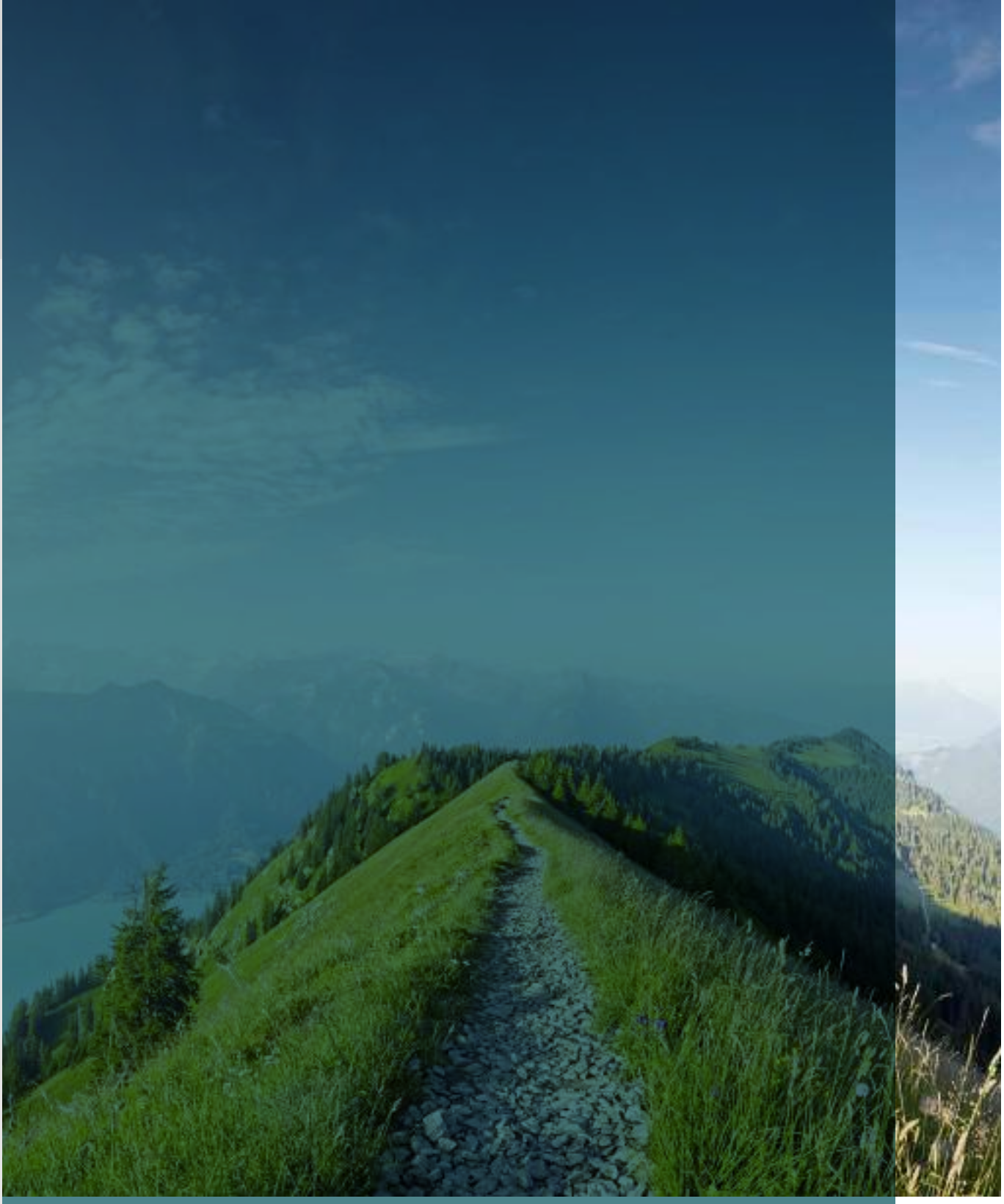
3. In climate protection, what counts is what has been done; today's journalism still focuses too much on what has been said. The dominant journalism paradigm should build on data rather than on quotes.

4. Climate journalism that works approaches audiences with respect in a language they understand; today's journalism often elevates itself above its audience in a know-it-all manner. Journalism needs to become diverse and inclusive.

5. Climate journalism needs to be local; today's journalism too often pushes for reach and scale while neglecting the needs of audiences around the corner. It needs to recapture its significance as a community building institution.

6. Climate journalism needs to have an impact—it needs to reflect on its own practices and make use of academic research, particularly in the field of communication studies. Journalism needs to adopt a learning mindset.

7. Climate journalism profits from collaboration; most of today's journalism is still a one newsroom or even one reporter affair. Journalism needs to become collaborative.



CONCLUSION

THE FUTURE OF CLIMATE JOURNALISM IS NOW

Given the scientific evidence on global warming, developing strategies for effective climate journalism and creating sustainable media organizations is not only the right thing to do, from an ethical perspective it's mandatory. Only with strong public support can the world fulfil the Paris Climate agreement of limiting warming to less than 1.5 degrees Celsius—a goal that is already out of reach, as scientists say. A commitment of all societal actors is essential for implementing the changes that are needed to make economic systems and societies resilient and fit for a future that will be full of volatility and require innovation and adaptation on a vast scale. And if it hasn't yet, it needs to start today.

The media has several roles in this: educator, translator of complex scientific material, communicator between democratically elected representatives and their electorate, the institution which holds power to account and a source of encouragement when chronicling progress. If it is to live up to all these roles and responsibilities, it has to step up. The very legitimacy of media organizations depends on it.

There is no doubt that some of this adaptation will be demanding, costly, and not always go down well with everyone in different audiences. As climate change rises up the political agenda and its urgency becomes ever clearer, the routes to tackling it have been politicized in many countries. Critics are fast to accuse media of being biased—for how a journalist uses language or frames climate stories, and occasionally, for covering the topic at all. Some of these critics are backed by powerful economic interests, others still will simply feel uncomfortable receiving difficult and challenging information and wary of the prospect to potentially having to give up on privileges and harmful lifestyles.

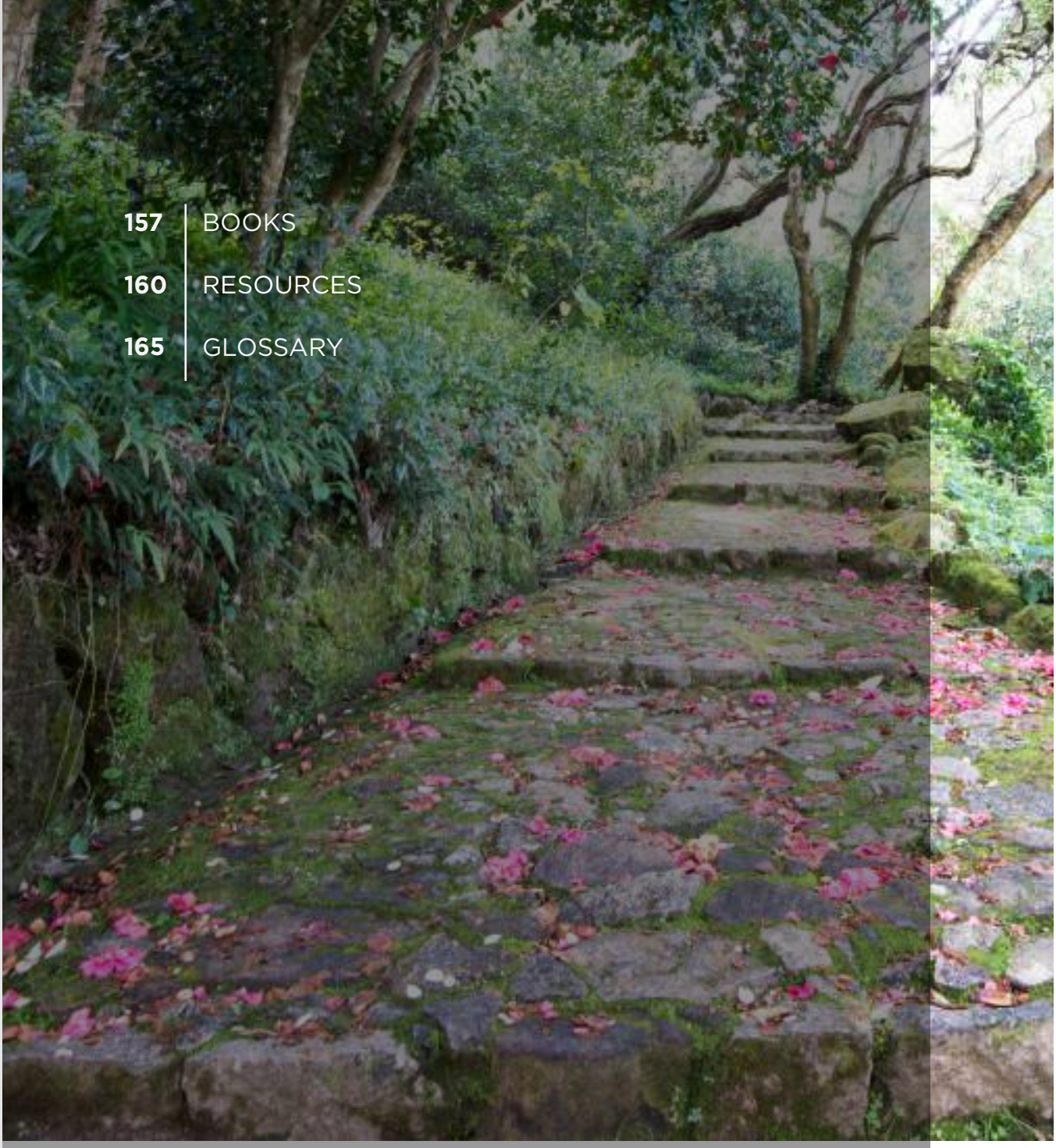
However, examples show that hurdles can be overcome. Particularly those not motivated by ideology might just need a few nudges and a vision of what a desirable future could look like when it's built on renewable energies and low greenhouse gas emissions. Even sceptics might come around when understanding that lifestyle changes might have additional benefits such as a healthier, cleaner, and less stressful environment. Evidence shows that much of

the communication challenge can be managed, and it can open exciting new territory. This is not the worst perspective for journalists, many of whom picked their profession because they have an appetite for discovery, learning, and making a difference.

And there is even better news. High quality climate journalism could help media organizations to become more sustainable by transforming their journalism: They can shift from being quote-driven to knowledge and fact-driven; they can battle news avoidance by making coverage deeper, more constructive and solutions-oriented; they can attract young audiences and talent, and foster diversity and inclusion; they can help with community building on a local level; and they can support the development of learning mindsets and foster collaboration. These impacts would confirm and increase the legitimacy of journalism as an ethical barometer and a responsible institution in a world of noise and abundant information. And it could help sustain and enhance livelihoods on this planet. That is a huge amount of impact for a relatively small amount of strategic effort.

Public service media have a huge role and responsibility in all of this. They have the mandate, the reach, the resources, and the public's trust as they deepen their coverage of climate change. They are not constrained by the commercial logic that dominates private publishers' considerations. It is a sad and worrisome fact that in many countries public service media struggle for legitimacy. They are under attack by political forces, mostly from the far right, and the need for their existence is called into question by those pushing the idea of an unrestrained market. Internally, many suffer from siloed ideas and innovation being hampered by bureaucracy.

Focusing on the climate challenge could be the much-needed pull to re-establish public service media's legitimacy with the—often silent—majority who need guidance on an issue that in some countries and situations is already a matter of life and death and which definitely defines the livelihoods of younger generations on a global scale. It could help to engage younger people with public broadcasting and attract talent to organizations which provide purpose and meaning—something many job applicants crave. It could also inspire public broadcasters to join forces across countries and cultures, to learn from each other and to jointly develop solutions. Embracing climate journalism to the fullest as a truly collaborative venture can be a tremendous opportunity for public service media. It might be the key to their very survival. And, it would be a truly winning strategy if it at the same time helped humanity survive and prosper on a cleaner, sustainable planet.



GUIDES

CLIMATE GUIDE – BOOKS: COMMUNICATING THE CLIMATE CHALLENGE

For those who would like to further read up on how to communicate the climate challenge, here are a few books we found useful for different needs.

LANCE BENNETT, 'Communicating the Future—Solutions for Environment, Economy and Democracy' (Polity Press, 2021) This book is about the big picture. Lance Bennett, a renowned political scientist and communications professor, advocates for a holistic approach to the climate challenge that requires new economic thinking and its communication. He analyzes how the environmental issue has been framed—and attacked—since its emergence in the 1960s in the context of neoliberal economic thought, and identifies what alternative models and narratives could be. Some readers might be put off by Bennett's assertion that the term 'sustainable development' has led the world down the wrong path. But his comprehensive analysis will remind even them that communication shapes reality by influencing how people act. This opens one door to hope.

MAXWELL BOYKOFF, 'Creative (Climate) Communications—Productive Pathways for Science, Policy and Society' (Cambridge University Press, 2019) Maxwell Boykoff chairs the Department of Environmental Studies at the University of Colorado. In this book, which bursts with insights and references, he discusses how to increase the impact of climate communications by approaching different audiences in ways that speak to them. He draws extensively on sources, which can make reading a bit of an effort—the bibliography is 53 pages—but his passion for the topic and his hope for what could be achieved shines through in every chapter. This makes it a stimulating read for those who would like to dig deeper.

KATHARINE HAYHOE, 'Saving Us—A Climate Scientist's Case for Hope and Healing in a Divided World' (One Signal Publishers, 2021)
In this book, climate scientist Katharine Hayhoe explores how to have meaningful conversations about climate change across political and ideological divides, and where to find hope and encouragement amid anxiety about rising temperatures. Hayhoe unites a readable explanation of the science with a personal touch, drawing on her experience as an evangelical Christian from Canada teaching—and talking about—climate change in a conservative corner of Texas, often to other Christians. It's not an inherently religious book but is, for the climate topic, an unusually readable, practical, humane, and hopeful one. A must read.

GEORGE MARSHALL, 'Don't Even Think About It: Why our Brains are Wired to Ignore Climate Change' (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014) This is the book more newsroom leaders should have read when it was published in 2014. An easy read, it dives into the psychology of climate change communications. It challenges some common assumptions by drawing on research and many examples—for example, the belief that people affected by natural disasters would be more open to debate climate change (they tend not to be). Marshall didn't know about the pandemic and the war in Ukraine when writing this, so his outlook might strike some readers as a bit too hopeful. But the book is a great introduction for journalists who like to think about the potential impact of their reporting.

ANDREAS MALM, 'Corona, Climate, Chronic Emergency' (Verso, 2020) This book is written by Swedish scholar Andreas Malm, once described by Naomi Klein as "one of the most original thinkers on the subject of climate change." Malm offers a critical analysis of the intersection between the COVID-19 pandemic and the global climate crisis, arguing that these are not isolated events but instead reflect a larger, systemic failure and a transition to a new era of chronic emergencies. It is particularly relevant for those interested in understanding the links between climate change, health, and economic and political systems.

NAOMI ORESKES AND ERIK M. CONWAY, 'Merchants of Doubt: How a Handful of Scientists Obscured the Truth on Issues from Tobacco Smoke to Global Warming' (Bloomsbury, 2010) This riveting investigative classic follows several campaigns where scientists were paid to discredit scientific consensus—including on climate change—by muddying the waters for the average media consumer with tactical spin, and the exploitation of the journalists' training to explore 'both sides' of an issue. The goal was to portray the science on climate as less settled than it really was, and halt regulation in the process. A cautionary tale.

POPE FRANCIS I, 'Laudato Si. On Care for Our Common Home' Highlights the urgent need for action to protect the environment and address the ecological crisis and calls for a new global effort to promote sustainable development, respect for creation, and the reduction of inequality and poverty. Praised by leading climate scientists for its scientific accuracy, the encyclical ties together multiple forms of justice and highlights the interconnection between environmental degradation, poverty, and human suffering, thus encouraging people of all faiths and none to see the ecological crisis as a moral and spiritual challenge which demands a collective response.

NICHOLAS STERN, 'Why Are We Waiting? The Logic, Urgency, and Promise of Tackling Climate Change' (MIT Press, 2015) Lord Stern's book argues for immediate and decisive action to tackle the issue of climate change. Stern, a leading economist and professor at the London School of Economics, outlines the economic and environmental impacts of climate change and argues that the costs of inaction far outweigh the costs of action. He emphasizes the urgency of the situation and the need for a transformation of the world's energy systems and economy.

PER ESPEN STOKNES, 'What we Think About when we Try Not to Think about Global Warming' (Chelsea Green Publishing, 2015) If you need a book about how to constructively deal with the climate crisis, this is the one. Per Espen Stoknes is a psychologist with a PhD in economics, and serves as the Director of the Centre for Green Growth at the Norwegian Business School. His interdisciplinary experience and knowledge, his deep connection to nature, and his optimistic outlook make this a read that provides profound insights and the hope that humanity can turn this calamity around. Refreshingly, Stoknes refuses to accept prevailing paradigms. The book is from 2015, Stoknes has published other works since, but this stands the test of time.

GRETA THUNBERG (ED.), 'The Climate Book' (Allen Lane, 2022) A collection of essays from a wide range of experts and provides a comprehensive and easily digestible overview of the causes, consequences, and challenges of climate change and the actions that can and need to be taken to address it. Accessible and relatable, its message is clear: Climate change is an urgent issue that requires immediate action. It is an ideal resource and companion for time-pressed journalists.

MATT WINNING, "Hot Mess - What on earth can we do about climate change?" (Headline, 2021) Matt Winning was already a climate expert when he decided to try uniting his day-job with his hobby: stand-up comedy. At the center of his experiment was a genuinely thorny question: can climate change be funny? And if it is, can climate change jokes actually teach us something? Winning, a Scot based in London, uses his (extremely) British humour as a means to an end—helping his quick and robust run through of the science, economics, and policy of climate go down a little easier. In addition, he gains extra impact by marrying it with more personal themes, including the arrival of his first child. A good read for those who feel they need to get more basic knowledge about climate but are too scared to ask.

CLIMATE GUIDE – RESOURCES FOR EDITORS AND REPORTERS

Here is a list of useful references and trusted sources for reporters and editors who need further information and insights on climate related matters.

Clean Energy Wire (CLEW)

This Germany-based organization works across borders, helping build cross-country collaborations on energy transition topics. Its international network is designed to bring together journalists who are focused on climate and energy, and the organization provides research tours, events and workshops. It also has plenty of resources on energy and climate topics and is jointly funded alongside the German-language climate communications website klimafakten.de.

Climate Tracker

An Australia-based nonprofit, Climate Tracker offers training, fellowships and resources to build capacity on climate journalism, particularly in the Global South. It's well known for its fellowships for reporters to cover COP conferences, but it also publishes climate stories, produces media analyses of climate coverage, and hosts multiple regional-focused training programs and fellowships, making it a particularly good resource for finding talented young climate journalists around the world.

Constructive Institute

The Aarhus University-based Constructive Institute, much like the Solutions Journalism Network, focuses on re-examining how journalism can engage avoidant audiences and tackle serious challenges to democracy. The Institute also offers training, fellowships, handbooks and resources, and is more focused on European and Scandinavian news organizations.

Covering Climate Now

This US-based organization, founded out of the Columbia Journalism Review (CJR) in partnership with news organizations including The Guardian, collaborates with over 500 outlets around the world in order to raise the profile of climate journalism. Organizations can join CCN, but the organization has lots of valuable resources for individual journalists and editors, too, including briefings and workshops, and handbooks on how to cover climate topics or integrate solutions journalism. Through CJR, it also regularly profiles and offers case studies of great climate journalists and projects.

Earth Journalism Network

Internews' Earth Journalism Network offers on the ground training and resources for climate journalists in the Global South, as well as publishing climate news—including cross-border reporting investigations, hosting useful webinars on topics from bushmeat to climate migration, and producing reporter resources and toolkits on climate and environment topics. It has also co-founded several excellent environment-focused news sites, including Third Pole, Mekong Eye, and the African investigative outlet Oxpeckers.

Solutions Journalism Network

This New York-based organization is focused on spreading solutions journalism—an approach to journalism that "complements and strengthens coverage of problems". The aim is to sidestep division, polarization and news avoidance—and while the network and other comparative organizations address broader challenges in journalism, climate coverage is a recurring theme. The network offers training, including for specific mediums and regions, as well as publishing stories and offering fellowships.

Oxford Climate Journalism Network

This program from the Reuters Institute at Oxford University admits 100 mid-career journalists every six months, from all beats and a wide range of countries. The network combines 12 digital seminars with leading experts on subjects including climate science, extreme weather attribution, finance, biodiversity, and mental health, along with workshops and discussion groups designed to build climate literacy and confidence in newsrooms. The network also puts on leadership courses for invited senior editors and produces original climate communications research.

A SAMPLE OF RESOURCES, INTERACTIVE MAPS AND DATA SOURCES:

Reporting extreme weather and climate change: a guide for journalists

This guide from World Weather Attribution, a research group which assesses the links between extreme weather events to climate change, is available in several different languages and a valuable tool for journalists. In particular, a one-page checklist on the final page offers a useful guide to different weather events and their general links to climate.

The Global South Climate Database

A joint initiative between the Oxford Climate Journalism Network and the UK-based publication Carbon Brief—a must read for in-depth climate explainers—this database provides contact details and areas of expertise for physical and social scientists based in or from the Global South. Experts are available in a range of languages and cover topics from water management to carbon trading to flood risk management. At the time of publication, it included 800+ entries.

Our World In Data

This Oxford-based data group compiles publicly available data on everything from poverty to human rights into easy to understand, downloadable graphics and charts. But its sections on climate, energy, agriculture, and biodiversity are particularly illuminating—and it also provides a second service, teaching journalists where to find good climate data.

Climate Visuals

This project, from NGO Climate Outreach, uses strong research and a handy fact sheet to communicate why good climate visuals matter—and what tends to work, and what doesn't. It also includes a climate visuals library.

Attributing extreme weather map

This map from UK-based publication Carbon Brief is a useful accompaniment to the World Weather Attribution website, and features global disasters linked to peer-reviewed papers—including where discernable human influence wasn't found.

Carbon Brief also has several other useful maps, including one on global coal power and another on proxy data linked to climate change, from ice core data to tree rings and pollen.

Climate Action Tracker

A valuable resource for journalists who are tracking climate pledges against what has actually happened, this site looks at both countries and certain global industries, including shipping. A powerful tool for reporting on greenwashing.

Climate Trace

Another satellite-based tool to track climate emissions and carbon intensity, with a free map to track carbon-intensive assets in incredible detail: across both countries and sectors, as well as downloadable emissions data for various sectors. It also includes a 'compare' function to compare sectors and countries. A valuable tool not just for climate journalists but for business and investigative teams, too.

Concentration of CO2 Chart

This chart from the UN Environment Program is worth a bookmark from beat reporters and top editors alike—it provides a quick-glance update on where CO2 concentration in the atmosphere is now, updated to the previous month. The data can be viewed in full screen interactive mode for presentations or downloaded.

IPCC Working Group I Interactive Atlas

Based off the 2021 Working Group I report, this global atlas lets you sort for different variables (days above 35 degrees, snowfall, sea ice concentration), and season. There is an option to download data or pdfs of charts. Particularly useful is the ability to visualize global heat levels under scenarios up to 4 degrees. This is the 'simple' interface; a more complex version is also available.

Global Energy Monitor

This San Francisco-based nonprofit creates global, interactive maps of energy infrastructure, from coal plants to steel plants, wind farms and solar parks, alongside financing—complete with downloadable data. Each section includes an interactive map, as well as a data dashboard and summary tables; the Monitor also produces in-depth reports on areas of the energy industry.

International Energy Agency

The Paris-based intergovernmental agency produces reams of data and research on energy, emissions, and new technology. It also has data on things like electric vehicle ownership, and tracks energy financing costs, and critical minerals policy. It updates a database of governments' climate and energy policies, updated to the current year. The agency will usually make behind-the-paywall data available to journalists, along with researchers and experts.

Air Quality Monitoring Platform

The UN Environment Program's live, interactive and global map of air quality and air pollution around the world, including the location of current fires.

UN Biodiversity Lab

This interactive map includes global data on biodiversity around the world, including statistics and charts on biodiversity loss and downloadable data sets. Particularly useful is its search function: search a country or region, and the map will tell you how much of its biodiversity is still intact, including tree cover and fire activity (date ranges vary).

UN Freshwater Ecosystems Explorer

This interactive map from the UN shows how freshwater lakes, reservoirs, wetlands, and mangroves have changed globally since 2000, and is searchable by country. Some data is downloadable.

Earth Observatory

Although not super easy to navigate, NASA's Earth Observatory is a comprehensive resource on everything from snow cover to rainfall to surface temperature and fires, with downloadable data. The most recent maps are accurate up to a few months ago.

Copernicus

The EU's earth observation program website is also rather difficult to navigate, but has a huge store of European, Arctic, and global data for those willing to put in the work. Its climate change specific arm (C3S) offers open-source data sets on everything from temperature data to flood risks. The website is offered in multiple languages.

The Humanitarian Data Exchange

This UN-backed data site compiles vast public data sets from across the world, and is particularly useful for understanding and tracking the intersection between climate, health, food insecurity, and conflict. Useful maps include one on drought in the Horn of Africa, and striking data visualization projects, like this one showing the journey of a young girl to get water in the Sahel. Climate data can be found by country and is generally updated each month.

CLIMATE GUIDE – GLOSSARY: WHAT EVERY EDITOR NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE

This glossary provides basic knowledge around climate change. It can be used as essential reading for every reporter and editor, no matter which subject area they cover.

Climate coverage can quickly descend into jargon, much of it unfamiliar to audiences. The UN negotiation process alone can generate its own acronym-heavy glut of terms, requiring journalists to introduce and explain a new set every year.

Below is a glossary of many of the most commonly used climate terms. Other climate glossaries, from which these definitions have been drawn, are available below.

Anthropogenic: originating or produced by human activity. Often used to denote that climate change is caused by humans, as in 'anthropogenic climate change.'

'Adaptation' versus 'Mitigation': Adaptation refers to adjustments to limit the impact of current or expected climate change. For example, building a sea wall, or programs to manage the health impacts of extreme heat.

Mitigation, by contrast, refers to lowering emissions, and therefore warming. For example, shifting away from fossil fuels and towards renewable energy is mitigation.

Adaptive limits: The point at which adaptation to climate change is no longer possible. A 'hard' limit means no options are left, whereas a 'soft' limit means no options are available at that time.

Attribution: When used in a climate context, 'extreme weather attribution' is a research field where scientists determine whether a certain extreme weather event was made more likely by climate change.

'Afforestation' versus 'Reforestation': Afforestation refers to the planting of trees in an area where a forest didn't exist before—for example, grassland. Reforestation refers to the replanting of trees in areas where tree cover previously existed. These terms are particularly relevant for nature-based solutions stories.

Biodiversity: The diversity of biological life and systems on earth. Biodiversity is rapidly dropping around the world. A separate but related COP conference on biodiversity is held annually (see: 'COP Conferences').

Carbon: In climate conversations, 'carbon' is usually used as a byword for carbon dioxide, or CO2. CO2 is produced both naturally (for example, when you breathe) and by burning fossil fuels—the direct cause of rising concentrations of CO2 in the atmosphere. It is the most abundant human-produced heat-trapping gas, or greenhouse gas (see: greenhouse gases).

Carbon budget: The term carbon budget is usually used to describe the cumulative, net quantity of CO2 that can be in the atmosphere while staying within a specific temperature rise.

'Carbon capture and storage (CCS)' and 'Carbon capture utilization and storage (CCUS)': Carbon capture and storage refers to capturing CO2, usually from an industrial process like a power plant or concrete plant, and permanently storing it, sometimes in underground geological formations. CCUS 'utilizes' the carbon in another process, for example in the fertilizer industry.

Carbon credit: A carbon 'credit' is a transferable, tradable financial instrument that is equivalent to a reduction in emissions. Typically, one credit equates to the removal of one tonne of carbon or another greenhouse gas, with a price either fixed or floating on a carbon 'market' (see: carbon market.)

Carbon market: A market for selling or trading 'carbon credits'. A carbon market is, in theory, an economic method for incentivizing the lowering of emissions (see: carbon pricing).

Carbon neutrality: Achieving carbon neutrality means achieving 'net' zero emissions (see: net zero) where the carbon that is emitted and the carbon reduced are in balance. One common metaphor is a bathtub: to keep the water level stable while the tap is still on, water must also be removed. It does not mean that the emissions themselves are zero.

Carbon offset: This refers to a reduction of emissions that balances out—or 'offsets'—emissions produced elsewhere, and is a key tool for achieving carbon neutrality. The term is often used to describe CCUS or tree planting projects. However, many products marketed as 'offsets' do not achieve meaningful emissions reductions, or any reductions at all.

Carbon pricing: Carbon pricing refers to putting a monetary value on the cost of carbon per tonne, and is typically used to incentivize reducing emissions. This price can be set by governments, or through a market (see: carbon market).

Climate change: Climate change refers to changes in the long-term averages of temperatures and patterns of weather (see: 'climate' versus 'weather'). Climate Change is primarily caused by humans burning fossil fuels, which produces greenhouse gases including CO2 (see: carbon; greenhouse gas), which then trap heat in the atmosphere. The concentration of these gases is directly linked to the average global temperature: as concentrations go up, the world gets warmer.
A common metaphor used by climate experts to explain climate change is that these additional gases act like a blanket wrapped around the globe, trapping the sun's heat.

Climate emergency: The term 'climate emergency' is used to describe the urgency of addressing climate change and the enormous danger associated with inaction. The term is used by the United Nations, but is also officially preferred by some publications, including The Guardian, as an alternative to 'climate change'. Other common variations include 'climate crisis' and 'climate breakdown'.

'Climate' versus 'weather': The difference between the two is largely one of time. Weather refers to short term conditions in the atmosphere, whereas climate as a general term refers to long-term averages. Climate change, therefore, refers to shifts in these long-term averages.

Climate justice: The UN defines climate justice as a movement that frames climate change as an ethical, political, and human rights issue. The term is often used in conversations around the financial and political divide between the wealthier countries that bear the largest responsibility for climate change, and the poorest countries that are most directly feeling its impacts.

'Climate risk': The term 'climate risk his particular significance for the UN's IPCC reports. It refers to the 'adverse consequences' of 'climate change', both directly from warming temperatures and from human responses to warming temperatures. The IPCC frames risk in terms of vulnerability, exposure, and hazards.

COP Conferences: COP is the acronym for 'Conference of the Parties' in the context of the UN, and in simple terms refers to the governing body of a UN convention. (See: UNFCCC). The number linked to each COP conference refers to a specific meeting of a specific body. So COP27, for example, is a shortened way of referring to the '27th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change'. Whereas COP15, held in 2022 in Montréal, refers to the 'Fifteenth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity'.

Decarbonization: This refers to the process of shifting economic and energy systems away from fossil fuel dependency, particularly in electricity, industry and transport systems, according to the IPCC. It frequently comes up alongside the term 'energy transition' to describe the transition of global energy systems away from fossil fuels and towards non-emitting energy sources.

Decoupling: In a climate context, decoupling means when economic growth no longer directly correlates to increased fossil fuel demand. Relative decoupling means both are growing but the rate of fossil fuel consumption is slower, whereas absolute decoupling means an economy is growing without any increase in fossil fuel demand.

ESG: This is a catch-all investment term that means 'environmental, social and governance' and can encapsulate everything from CO2 emissions, to gender diversity, to human rights violations. For investment purposes, the ESG credentials or lack thereof of a company or investment can be framed from either a risk perspective (the risk of losing money because of poor ESG credentials)

or an opportunity perspective (the opportunity to make money because of positive ESG credentials). However, ESG metrics and scores are currently not standardized, and there is a huge amount of variability in how individual companies or funds' potential risks or advantages are disclosed to investors, and how that information is assessed.

'EU taxonomy': The EU taxonomy of sustainable economic activities is a categorization system that lists which activities are considered 'sustainable' by the EU, and which are not. It is seen as a crucial tool to target greenwashing (see: greenwashing) and underpins the European Green Deal.

Geoengineering: This refers to large-scale interventions in natural systems in order to combat climate change, and is also called 'climate engineering'. Geoengineering is deeply controversial among scientists and policy makers. The London School of Economics' Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment notes that geoengineering projects usually fall into two areas: removing CO2 from the air, and trying to limit the amount of sunlight that reaches earth.

Global average surface temperature: This is the measure used to track how the globe's average temperature is changing. Temperatures are collected regularly in a range of locations around the globe, and the temperature at the time of collection is then compared to the long-term average for that location and on that day of the year.

Global Biodiversity Framework: Officially known as the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, or GBF, this agreement of COP15 in December 2022 is often described as the 'Paris Agreement for biodiversity'. The agreement features 23 targets, but the best known is nicknamed the '3X30': the agreement to protect at least 30% of the globe by 2030.

Greenhouse gases: The combined gases responsible for causing climate change. While carbon dioxide is the primary greenhouse gas, others include methane, nitrous oxide, hydrofluorocarbons, perfluorocarbons, and sulfur hexafluoride.

Green hydrogen: Hydrogen is a fuel source that can be used as a clean-burning alternative to natural gas, which makes it a promising option for shifting transport and industrial emissions. However, hydrogen is only as 'clean' as the fuel used to produce it—most hydrogen is currently produced using fossil fuels. Green hydrogen, by contrast, is hydrogen produced from non-emitting energy sources.

Greenwashing: Misrepresenting a process or activity as better for the environment than it is. In order to combat greenwashing, financial regulators are increasingly drawing up definitions of what is a 'sustainable' activity, and cracking down on misleading claims.

IPCC: The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is the United Nations' body to assess climate science and provide it to governments. It does not conduct its own research, but volunteer experts assess all the available climate

science and provide summaries. The Panel was first formed in 1988, and now has 195 member states. Its work is divided into three Working Groups—physical science; impacts, adaptation and vulnerability; and mitigation—plus a task force.

Kyoto Protocol: Signed in 1997, the Kyoto Protocol was the world's first binding agreement to cut emissions, and was focused on developed countries. The Protocol was ultimately signed by 192 countries, but negotiations were so complex it only went into force in 2005.

'Loss and Damage': This term is used to describe the ongoing negative impacts of climate change. This includes loss of life and economic losses, as well as non-economic losses, for example to cultures and heritage sites. It is closely tied to UN negotiations around how and whether larger emitters should help smaller emitters adapt to and recover from the impacts of warming temperatures. One of the key outcomes of COP27 in 2022 was the creation of a 'loss and damage' fund.

Maladaptation: When it comes to climate change, maladaptation refers to adaptation efforts that backfire, making climate risks worse.

Methane: Methane is a hydrocarbon, and the main component in natural gas. It is the second most common greenhouse gas after CO2, and while it disappears from the atmosphere much more quickly, its warming potential is more than 25 times stronger.

Mitigation: Mitigation refers to lowering emissions, and therefore warming. For example, shifting away from fossil fuels and towards renewable energy is mitigation.

Adaptation, by contrast, refers to adjustments to attempt to limit the impact of current or expected climate change.

Nationally Determined Contributions: This is the plan that each country that signed the Paris Agreement (see: Paris Agreement) was required to submit laying out how it will reduce its own greenhouse gas emissions in line with the agreement.

Nature Based Solutions: Nature-based solutions, or NBS, are solutions to climate change and biodiversity loss that are inspired by and/or work with nature itself. This typically means such solutions also have other economic, cultural or social benefits. Examples include restoring or protecting forests and coral reefs, or using green roofs and natural cooling solutions in cities.

Net Zero: Achieving 'net zero' emissions means that the carbon that is emitted and the carbon reduced are in balance. It does not necessarily mean that emissions themselves are zero (see: 'carbon neutrality').

Ocean acidification: Oceans absorb large quantities of the CO2 emitted by humans. But as CO2 levels in oceans increase, oceans become more acidic. This causes widespread disruption to ocean ecosystems, including coral reefs.

Overshoot: In the climate context, this means temperatures blow past the targets set by the Paris Agreement. Some climate models forecast temperatures will 'overshoot' 1.5C before 2050, and controversial carbon removal processes will be required to subsequently bring temperatures back down.

Paris Agreement: The Paris Agreement is a legally binding agreement to limit global temperature rise to below 2 degrees, and preferably below 1.5 degrees Celsius, by 2050, compared to pre-industrial levels. The landmark agreement was signed by 196 parties in 2015 at COP21 in Paris, and entered into force in 2016. Under the Agreement, countries' climate commitments become more ambitious every five years.

Parts Per Million (PPM): In climate, 'PPM' is used to refer to the concentration of a greenhouse gas in the atmosphere, usually carbon dioxide. It is another way of assessing the scale of emissions—for example, in 2021, the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere hit 414.72 ppm, a new annual record.

'Pre-industrial levels': Limiting temperature rise compared to 'pre-industrial levels' in the baseline for the Paris Agreement. In theory, this simply refers to temperatures before the Industrial Revolution. But the IPCC uses 1850-1900 as its reference period—a period after the Industrial Revolution began—because that is the earliest time period when global temperature data is available.

Scope 1, 2 and 3: These are terms used to define emissions linked to a company or organization. One way to think of them is like the concentric rings on a tree, moving outwards. Scope 1 refers to a company's emissions directly linked to assets they own or things they do. Scope 2 refers to the emissions associated with the energy the company buys to run its operations. Scope 3 refers to all the direct and indirect emissions associated with the business, at all stages of the life cycle of its products or services—from creation to disposal.

Tipping Point: These are climate thresholds that if exceeded can lead to cascading effects that are often unpredictable, sudden, and irreversible. Potential well-known tipping points include the collapse of the Greenlandic Ice Sheet, or a coral reef die off.

UNFCCC: The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is the framework for international efforts to address climate change, including the IPCC and COP conferences. It came out of the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, as one of three 'Rio Conventions'; the other two address biodiversity, and diversification. The convention was formally signed in 1994, and has been ratified by 198 countries, who are known as 'Parties to the Convention' (see: COP Conferences).

Zero Carbon: Zero carbon means that a product, service, company or country is producing no emissions at all. This is distinct from 'net zero' carbon emissions, which means that some carbon emissions are being produced, but they are being offset or removed.

Key Glossaries:

IPCC Special Report Glossary (IPCCC)

UNFCC Process Climate Acronyms and Terms (UNFCC)

UN Climate Negotiations Glossary (Carbon Brief)

Climate Change Glossary (UK Met Office)

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List of Interviewees

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Friborg, Charlotta	Head of Programming SVT News	Sveriges Television Aktiebolag (SVT), Sweden
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