MOOC: Risk communication

Week 2

Know your cases.

Case: Climate change risk communication

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Outline

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1. Role of climate change (CC) communication
2. What defines CC communication? How is it specific?
3. Baltic-Nordic and USA examples
4. Guidelines for Effective Climate Change Communication

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Role of CC communication

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- *Education and communication are among the most powerful tools the nation has to bring hidden hazards to public attention, understanding, and action.* Citizens, governments, and the private sector cannot factor climate change into their decisions without a reasonably accurate understanding of the problem. To make informed decisions, people must have at least a basic knowledge of the causes, likelihood, and severity of the impacts, and the range, cost, and efficacy of different options to limit or adapt to climate impacts. (Liverman, Raven & Barstow, 2010)

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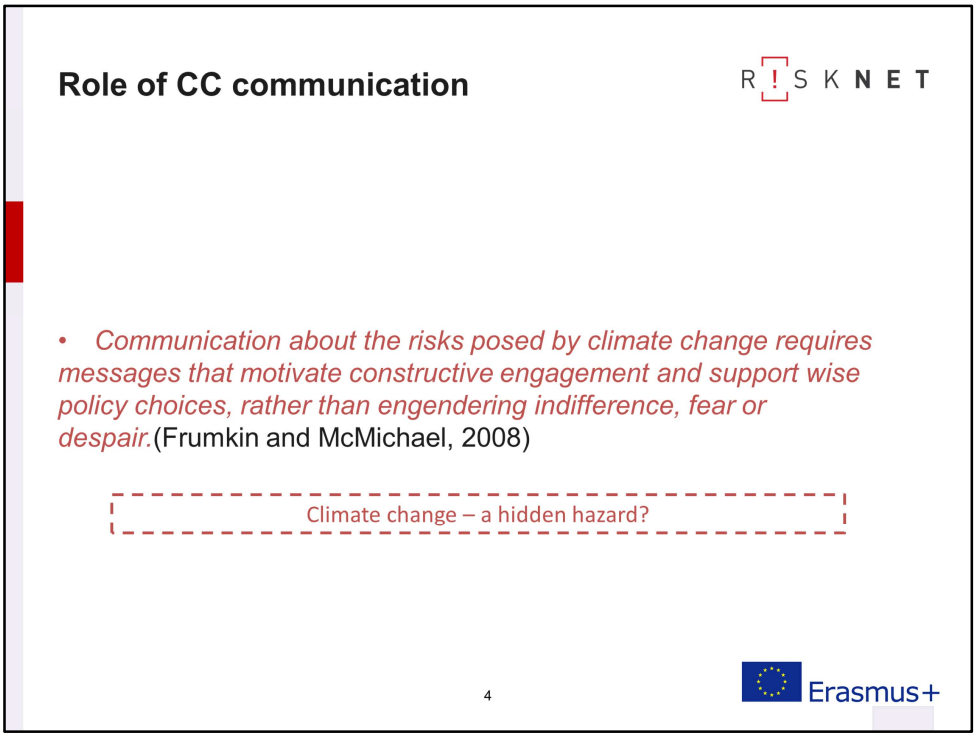
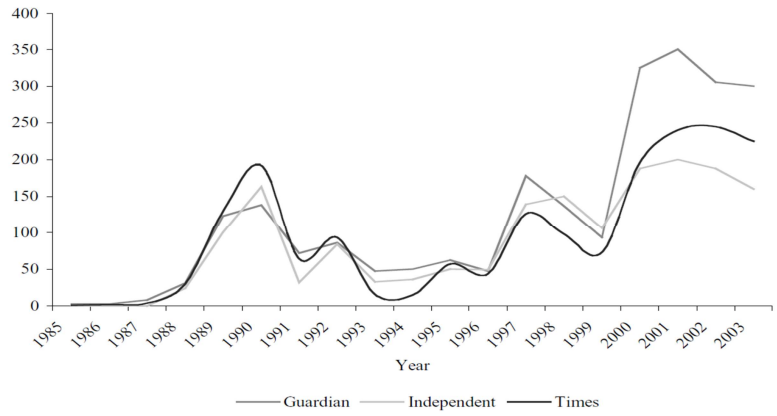


"**C**limate change is difficult to communicate by its very nature. Greenhouse gases are invisible, and their accumulating effects (e.g., global warming, precipitation changes, and extreme weather events) can take years before they are felt. Worldwide warming trends are hard for the average person to detect amidst the variability of everyday weather and the causes are far removed, in both time and space, from the impacts. Climate change is thus an example of "hidden hazards"—risks that, despite potentially serious consequences for society, generally pass unnoticed or unheeded until they reach disaster proportions" (Liverman, Raven & Barstow, 2010)

Increasing intensity of CC discourses

Distribution of newspaper articles on climate change in UK: 1985–2003



Source: Carvalho, Burgess, 2005

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Intensity of CC discourses

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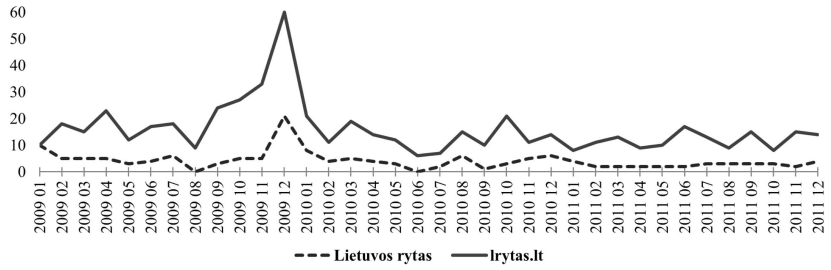
Distribution of articles on climate change in Lithuania: 2009-2011



Source: Jancevskaite, Telesiene, 2013

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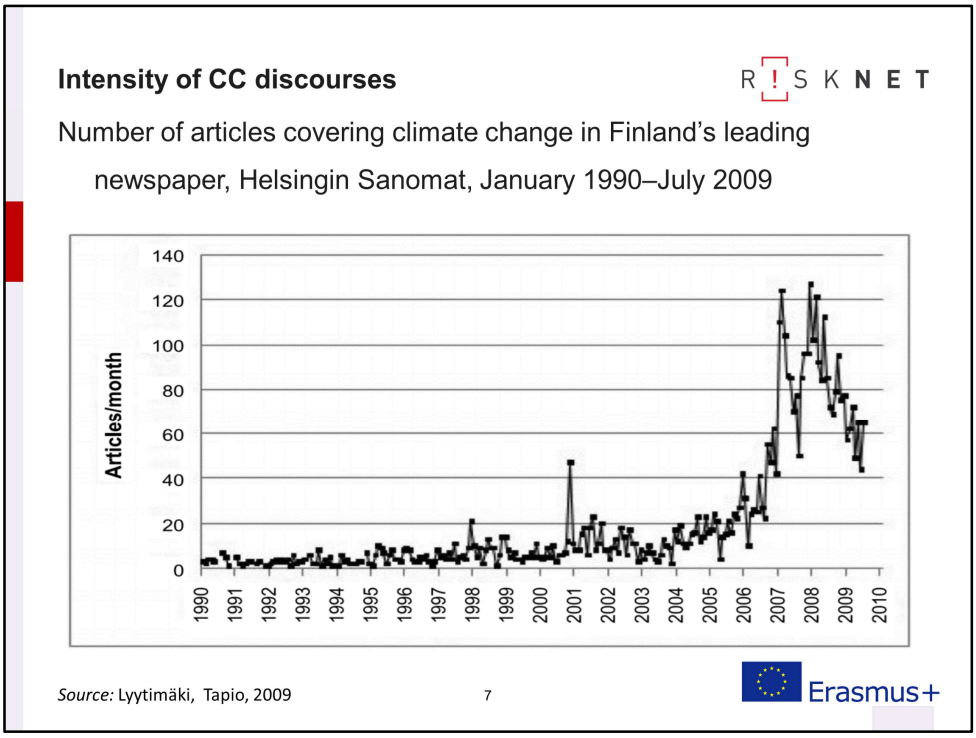
Contrast Lithuanian data with UK data to better understand the possible national differences of CC communication intensity. Be aware of the different UK and LT time periods and of the fact that LT data is only from one online and one printed newspaper (UK data from three newspapers). Thus draw comparative conclusions with caution.



Contrast Finish data to UK and Lithuanian cases.

Think about this (Schmidt, Ivanova, Schäfer, 2013):
"CC has remained on the news agenda for a long time and has become even more important over time [mostly growing intensity in the end of 1st decade of XXIst century".
"[CC] issue attention is on a clearly higher level in those countries with significant (projected) climate impacts".
"we found quite strong correspondence between the pressure to engage in climate action and media attention; media coverage in countries with obligations under the Kyoto Protocol is, on average, more extensive than in others. In addition, […] countries with a high carbon dependency exhibit a particularly high issue attention. It seems that carbon-intensive societies – which are under particular pressure to change lifestyles and the modes of economic welfare generation – extensively debate climate change and politics."

CC Discourse content

In Lithuania (Jancevskaite, Telesiene, 2013):

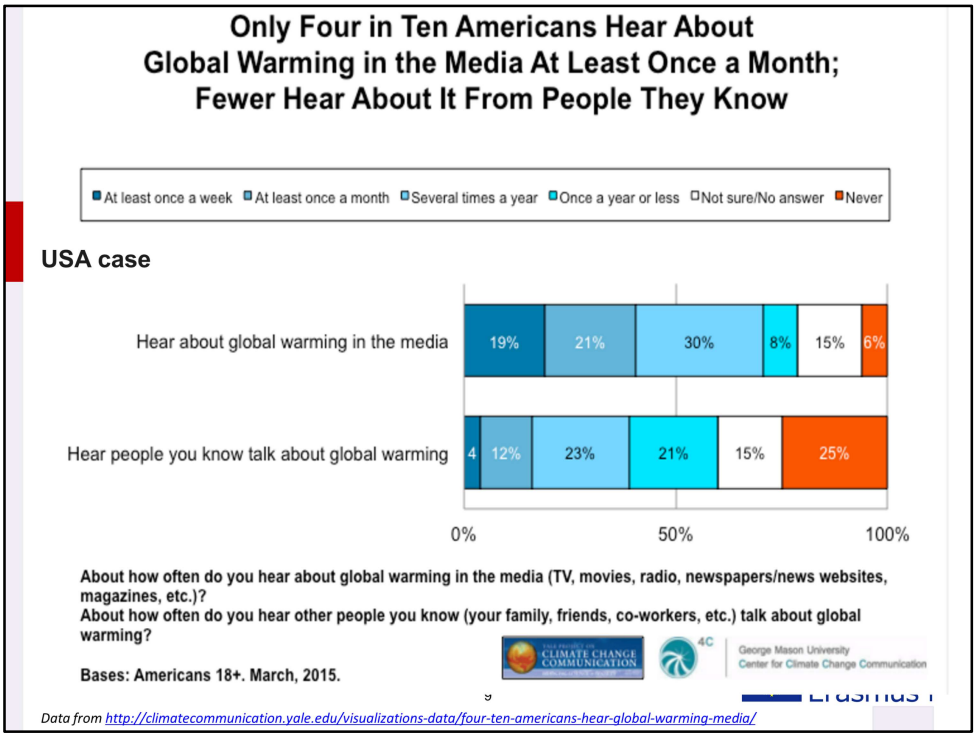
- Main storyline: *CC causes extreme weather conditions, natural disasters, poses a threat to humans and nature*

In Sweden (Hoijer, 2010):

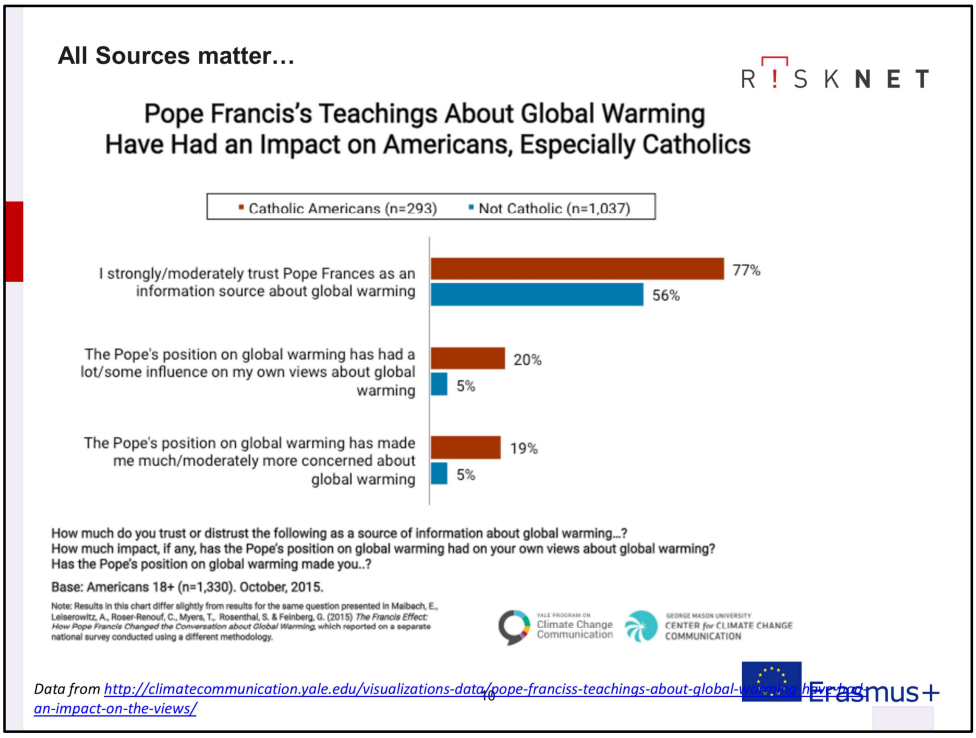
- *use of specific rhetorical and visual aids to link CC to emotions of fear*

In Britain (Gavin, Leonard-Milsom, Montgomery, 2011):

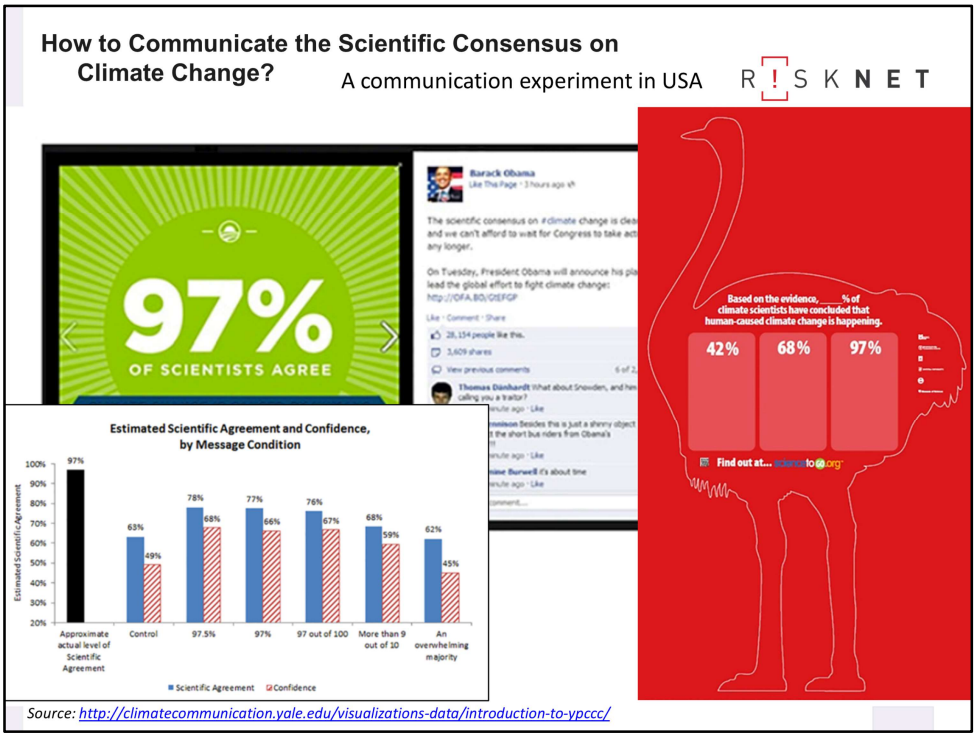
- *linkages to flooding are most often*



Discuss the USA case: Who/What are the main channels of information on CC? How these channels play a role? Who/what should take the most important role? What about different levels of confidence? What about different levels of information accuracy?
Is this somewhat the same or different in Baltic-Nordic countries?



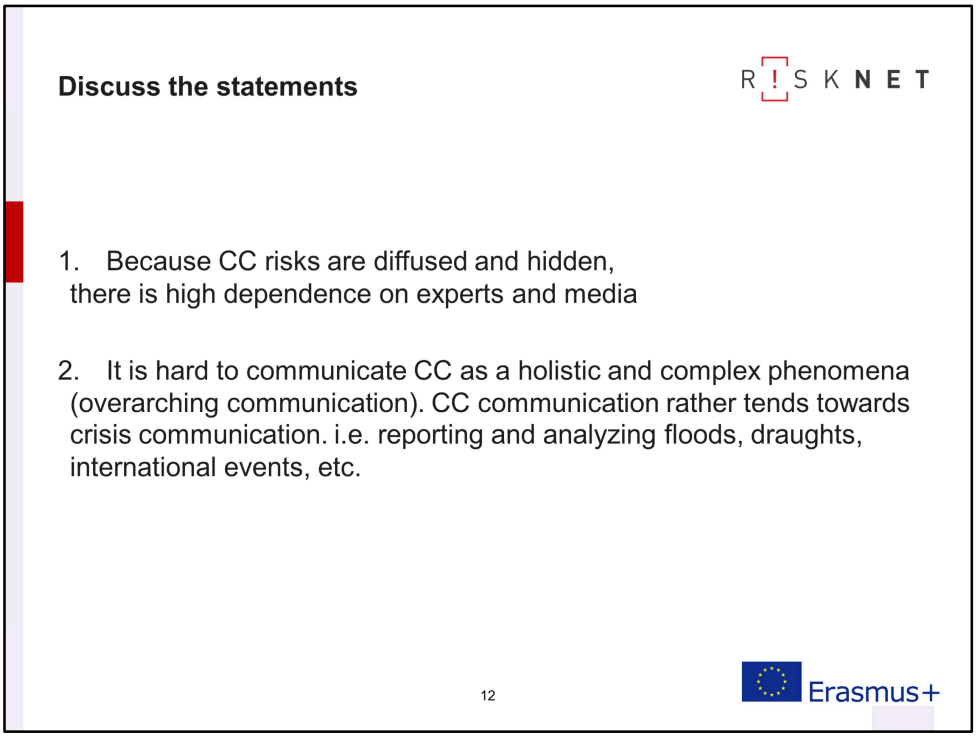
Discuss the role of non-traditional, or often forgotten sources and channels that have influence on CC perceptions.



Source: http://climatecommunication.yale.edu/visualizations-data/introduction-to-ypccc/

More information from; http://climatecommunication.yale.edu/visualizations-data/introduction-to-ypccc/

Discuss how the ways the message is framed influences the ways the message is perceived. In the graph you can see the different phrasing of the same message on the scientific consensus in climate change.



Do you agree or disagree with the statements?

1. Is it true, that CC discourses are often elitist discourses (meaning that they are dominated by experts form scientific or state regulatory, or policy fields), because the CC risks are diffuse and hazards hidden?
   Maybe CC discourses are elitist merely because media in general tends to be elitist following the intrinsic logic?
2. Is it true, that CC discourses had influence on public perceptions? Is it true, that CC discourses did not shape the ways that CC is perceived, but rather had an indirect effect of merely drawing peoples attention to the issue?
3. Is it true, that the intrinsic logic of media (to not prioritize holistic info, but rather focus on single “selling” events) leads towards fragmented CC discourses and crisis communication genres?

Guidelines for Effective Climate Change Communication 1.

Principle	Example
Know your audience	There are different audiences among the public. Learn what people (mis)understand before you deliver information and tailor information for each group.
Understand social identities and affiliations	Effective communicators often share an identity and values with the audience (e.g., a fellow CEO or mayor, parent, co-worker, religious belief, or outdoor enthusiast).
Get the audience's attention	Use appropriate framing (e.g., climate as an energy, environmental, security, or economic issue) to make the information more relevant to different groups.
Use the best available, peer-reviewed science	Use recent and locally relevant research results. Be prepared to respond to the latest debates about the science.

Source: Liverman, Raven & Barstow, 2010

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Guidelines for Effective Climate Change Communication 2.

Principle	Example
Translate scientific understanding and data into concrete experience	Use imagery, analogies, and personal experiences including observations of changes in people's local environments. Make the link between global and local changes. Discuss longer time scales, but link to present choices.
Address scientific and climate uncertainties	Specify what is known with high confidence and what is less certain. Set climate choices in the context of other important decisions made despite uncertainty (e.g., financial, insurance, security, etc.). Discuss how uncertainty may be a reason for action rather than a reason for inaction.
Avoid scientific jargon and use everyday words	"Human caused" rather than "anthropogenic" "Self-reinforcing" rather than "positive feedback" "Range of possibilities" rather than "uncertainty" "Likelihood" or "chance" rather than "probability" "Billion tons" rather than "gigatons"

Source: Liverman, Raven & Barstow, 2010

Guidelines for Effective Climate Change Communication 3.

Principle	Example
Maintain respectful discourse	Climate change decisions involve diverse perspectives and values.
Provide choices and solutions	Present the full range of options (including the choice of business as usual) and encourage discussion of alternative choices.
Encourage participation	Do not overuse slides and one-way lecture delivery. Leave time for discussion or use small groups. Let people discuss and draw their own conclusions from the facts.
Use popular communication channels	Understand how to use new social media and the internet.
Evaluate Communications	Assess the effectiveness of communications, identify lessons learned and adapt.

Source: Liverman, Raven & Barstow, 2010

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