



I WILL WRITE A LETTER AND CHANGE THE WORLD

The Knowledge Base Kick-Starting Norway's Rainforest Initiative

by Erlend A. T. Hermansen

In September 2007 two Norwegian NGOs wrote a letter to leading Norwegian politicians urging them to establish a climate initiative for protecting rainforests. Two months later, at the United Nations climate summit in Bali, Norway committed to donate three billion NOK annually to prevent tropical deforestation, making Norway the leading global donor in what has become the REDD+ mechanism (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation). This article provides a detailed analysis of the making of the rainforest initiative, placing particular emphasis on the knowledge base of the initiative, most notably a decisive letter. Close contact with policy makers in the process ensured legitimacy and credibility for the proposal. Important for the initiative's rapid progression was that it came in the middle of the run-up to the negotiations of a cross-political climate settlement in the Norwegian Parliament. The rainforest initiative became one of the hottest proposals in the climate policy 'bidding war' between the government and the opposition. All these events must be seen against the background of 2007 being a year when public concern and media coverage about climate issues peaked. Politicians were under pressure to act, and the rainforest proposal's perfect fit with the Norwegian climate mitigation main approach of pursuing large-scale cost-effective emission cutbacks abroad made it pass swiftly through the governmental machinery. In conclusion, the article suggests the metaphor of the perfect storm to explain how the NGOs exploited a situation which made the rainforest initiative an indispensable part of Norway's climate policy.

Keywords: NGOs, climate policy, REDD+, Norway, STS

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When Letters Make a Difference

The climate summit in Bali, December 2007: Jens Stoltenberg, Norwegian Prime Minister at the time, announces to the United Nations' Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) that Norway will contribute three billion NOK (about 500 million USD) annually to prevent tropical deforestation. The news had been made public at a press conference in Norway a few days earlier, and to most observers it had come as a surprise. Suddenly Norway had become the leading contributor to the so-called REDD+ mechanism (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation).

The architects behind the proposal were two environmental non-governmental organizations (NGOs), The Norwegian Society for Conservation of Nature (Norges Naturvernforbund - SCN) and the Rainforest Foundation Norway (RFN). A few months earlier, they had sent a letter to leading politicians arguing the case for Norway to commit to this cause. Norway's International Climate and Forest Initiative (NICFI), as it came to be known, turned out nearly identical to the proposal by the two environmental organizations, except that the sum eventually was cut by half. NICFI set two Norwegian records that year. One was the very amount granted, the other was the time span to pass the policy. It all happened within two weeks of top-level climate policy gameplay. This article covers the details behind the proceedings with special consideration to the decision criteria laid out in the letter. The letter is particularly interesting as it was a result of ongoing processes, while also setting new processes in motion. While NICFI is significant in a national and international setting, little has been written about the state of knowledge the whole initiative was built on¹. This article aims to fill parts of this knowledge gap.

In terms of theory, the article employs resources from science and technology studies (STS), environmental sociology and political science. According to Yearley (2005), who has studied NGOs and their workflow in detail, two distinguishing features are a focus on international solidarity and a close (and in part paradoxical) relation to science. As for the first issue, international solidarity, we will see that the way RFN acted across national borders was a decisive factor in this instance. Regarding the second issue, the relation to science, this case holds special interest. First, as the letter was decisive, a thorough analysis of its content and assertions, and not least the knowledge base in which the letter is founded, will contribute to an understanding of how NICFI came to be. Since the knowledge base (i.e. primarily the letter) is so concentrated, the data scope is plentiful. Second, the letter draws from several knowledge sources, which means that knowledge

has been extracted and synthesized, which makes it interesting as seen from a STS perspective.

According to Sundqvist et al. (2015), all research that is to be used in policymaking must be synthesized in a process that relates to two basic dimensions: formalization and separation. Formalization primarily concerns how to choose and compile knowledge (cognitive formalization) and who should do it (social formalization). Different academic disciplines perceive formalization in very different ways. 'The evidence movement', drawing heavily on medicine, makes the argument that formalization is important 'to get the science right'. It aims to maximize objectivity through methods that are as sophisticated as possible, such as meta-analysis. Other traditions, such as STS, remain critical towards formalization, arguing that subjective judgments are unavoidable, regardless of how sophisticated the methods are. The same discussion can be related to the climate field, where there is a huge variation in the formalization of science-for-policy initiatives. Some are highly formalized, such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which has established detailed instructions on how to produce reports. Other initiatives, such as the UK-based Climate Change Committee (CCC), adhere to relatively low levels of formalization. The CCC is tasked with advising the British government on carbon budgets, goals and means, but the procedures the committee follows to prepare its recommendations are not particularly formalized. Largely, they are dependent on professional judgment. Thus, the level of formalization can be gauged from low (e.g. CCC) to high (e.g. IPCC).

Separation concerns the distance between knowledge producers and users. Again, there is a huge variation, both academically and practically. An argument often made in political science is that research and policymaking ought to be separated in order to be able to 'speak truth to power'. Other branches of the social sciences (including STS) conversely argue that the boundary between research and policy is fluid and blurry, and that full separation between science and policy is an illusion. Rather, one should be candid about the connections between the realms of science and policy. On the practical side, the IPCC has solved this dilemma by operating with varying degrees of separation in various stages of the report cycle. In some parts of the process scientists and government representatives work together, while they are separated in other parts of the process. As for CCC, there are no special mechanisms in place to keep scientists and policy makers separated. On the contrary, close connections to policy are expected. In sum, regarding separation, IPCC scores at a medium level, while CCC's scores quite low.

Sundqvist et al. (2015) argue that it is important to unite the debates about formalization and separation, both academically and practically. However, there is room for further development of this framework. Firstly, there has been no attempt at a theoretical examination as to how different degrees and combinations of formalization

¹ Hermansen (2015) contains a more theoretical analysis of the case. Hermansen and Kasa (2014) takes an approach based on a wider empirical analysis, both in time and space.



and separation can have policy impacts (or lack thereof). An analysis of this case, where knowledge played a major role in ensuring the proposal was enacted, may enhance the framework laid out by Sundqvist et al. on this particular point. Secondly, little attention has been paid to the causal relationship between formalization and separation, i.e. whether these dimensions affect each other and, if so, how. Through an analysis of the two dimensions in a process that actually led to policy change, the case can contribute to enhancing Sundqvist et al.'s theoretical framework. Thirdly, this framework has as of yet not been used to analyze how actors in civil society (such as NGOs) relate to formalization and separation. So far, such analyses have been restricted to the relation between researchers and policy makers. But since NGOs are considered among the most trustworthy sources of scientific knowledge (Yearley 2005), it is interesting to take a closer look at how NGOs relate to formalization and separation as they synthesize knowledge with a particular goal, in this case the letter. I will analyze the emergence of NICFI based on these theoretical positions.

This article is based on the process-tracing method, which "attempts to identify the intervening causal process – the causal chain and causal mechanism – between an independent variable (or variables) and the outcome of the dependent variable" (George and Bennett 2005: 206). In this case, the dependent variable is policy change, more precisely the approval of NICFI. The objective is to analyze the causal chain of factors that led to the outcome, and to uncover the interaction between the various factors. The data material consists of a chronological media analysis from November 2006 until November 2012, document analysis of political, administrative and other documents, eleven semi-structured interviews,

one telephone interview and one unauthorized conversation. The quotes are taken from the interviews. Additionally, a workshop was organized with the most important actors from public administration, academia and NGOs. Norway is a small, transparent and egalitarian country where links between civil society, NGOs and the policy-making elite remain close (Bortne et al. 2002, Dryzek et al. 2003, Grendstad et al. 2006, Gullberg 2011). Consequently, NGOs sometimes gain considerable policy impact, as is the case here. In fact, NICFI is one of the most important impacts NGOs have had in the history of Norwegian environmental policy. The tight relations between various actors in political processes allow for a research design that is sufficiently robust to catch the relevant information to explain the approval of NICFI, and yet flexible enough to grasp details that play a part in shaping the interaction between the various explanatory factors.

First, the letter is presented in detail, followed by a discussion of how it relates to formalization. Next is an analysis of the way the main actors worked to build support for the initiative by enrolling various actors at different times, a point relating to separation. Following that, other factors that came into play will be assessed, such as coupling the two issues of rainforest and climate, the process surrounding The climate settlement ('Klimaforliket' - the cross-party parliamentary climate agreement in Norway), other special circumstances in 2007, and how the proposal 'matches' with the rest of Norway's stand on climate policy. By way of conclusion I argue that the proposal was passed as a result of 'a perfect storm' of the circumstances above. The role that the 'cherry-picked', barely formalized and separated knowledge base in the letter played to set these factors and processes into motion can hardly be overstated.

The Letter that Changed Global Rainforest Policy

"Not too late: Save the rainforest – save the climate!". This is the heading of a letter sent by SCN and RFN to the cabinet on September 27, 2007 (SCN 2007). The letter was signed by Lars Løvold of RFN and Lars Haltbrekken of SCN, and was later given the moniker 'The letter from Lars & Lars'. It was addressed to Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg, Minister of Finance Kristin Halvorsen, Minister of the Environment Helen Bjørnøy, Minister of Foreign Affairs Jonas Gahr Støre and Minister of International Development Erik Solheim. In short, Lars & Lars make the case that Norway ought to spend six billion NOK annually to preserve rainforests in developing countries. They claim this would amount to ten percent of the costs to end deforestation on a global basis. Ending rainforest deforestation is essential in a climate context, as (according to the letter) emissions from deforestation amount to twenty percent of global greenhouse gas emissions, mostly from rainforest countries in the global South.

Approximately two months later, in early December, Prime Minister Stoltenberg announced that Norway was to allocate three billion NOK annually to combat deforestation and degradation of rainforests. Apart from the fact that the final allotment was half of

what Lars & Lars had proposed, and that the funds were taken from the growth in Norway's Official development assistance (ODA) budget, NICFI is almost identical to the original proposal. Never before has any Norwegian NGO made an inroad with a grant of this size, making this case unique, not just in a Norwegian context, but internationally as well. The decision made Norway the largest donor to the REDD+ mechanism, an international effort to reducing deforestation and degradation of rainforests.

The Letter's Knowledge Base

Lars & Lars use a number of prominent knowledge sources to underpin their argument. The letter points to the Stern report (2007), reports from the IPCC, the US think tank World Resources Institute, the International Institute for Environment and Development as well as Brazilian environmental organizations. One of the main references is the Stern report, which is among the world's most comprehensive knowledge syntheses on climate economy. The report is the result of a commission headed by the renowned economist Sir Nicholas Stern on behalf of British authorities in 2006. The authors of the letter place particular weight on the Stern report's



argument that curbing tropical deforestation is one of the most cost-effective climate measures that can be taken.

Even though the letter points to a number of knowledge sources, it gives no indication as to why these particular sources were chosen, nor how the knowledge from the various sources was synthesized. Put differently, the letter scores low with regard to cognitive formalization. The same goes for social formalization: Rather than being appointed to pen the letter, Lars & Lars appointed themselves.

Tale of the Numbers

In addition to using a number of important knowledge sources, the use of numbers is prominent in the letter, which concludes like this:

Norway's annual contribution to this work should be 6 billion NOK – equivalent to 10 percent of the estimated cost of halting deforestation in the world. This constitutes only 1,300 NOK per year per capita in Norway, but can reduce greenhouse gas emissions by over 700 million tons per year. Norway will become more than 10 times climate-neutral. If Norway manages to get the ten to fifteen richest countries in the world to give as much as Norway, we will have eliminated 20 percent of the world's emissions (author's translation).

Two figures in the letter merit special interest: 1) Norway ought to foot ten percent of the global rainforest bill, and 2) global emissions caused by deforestation and forest degradation amount to twenty percent of global GHG emissions.

It is interesting to note how Lars & Lars have arrived at the number ten. In an interview, Lars Løvold says:

We proposed NOK six billion annually, and it was only based on letting Norway take ten percent of the cost, according to the Stern report.

Interviewer: Why exactly ten percent?

Well, Norway had become a rich country, largely based on oil exploration, and we thought ten percent was a significant but realistic amount for a limited period.

Lars Haltbrekken's answer to the question of why they arrived at ten percent was this:

It's a simple way to solve a problem. When you have a price tag, you can say 'okay, the ten richest nations can take the bill and

split it' instead of arguing with x number of countries about it.

In other words, there was no rigorous process leading to the ten percent proposal. Rather, it was more of a judgment by Lars & Lars, meaning the suggestion was weakly formalized.

The second important aspect of the calculation is that it builds on the premise that twenty percent of global greenhouse gas emissions come from deforestation. However, more current figures from the IPCC (2014) name eleven percent, approximately half that amount. The reason for this dramatic change is that coal has become a relatively more predominant emission source, while emission estimates for deforestation have been refined.

If we return to the letter, twenty percent were reported, with reference to the World Resources Institute (WRI). The Stern report, which is frequently referred in the letter, operates mainly with eighteen percent, but also with twenty percent one place (Stern 2006 p. 216). The Stern report itself points to the World Resources Institute several places. In its report by its Working Group 1 in 2007 (IPCC 2007a), the IPCC presented the figure as being about twenty percent, while the Norwegian Ministry of the Environment used 17,4 percent with reference to the IPCC, albeit without mentioning that this number was derived from Working Group 3 (IPCC 2007b). An estimate made by renowned scientists in 2009 applying the same methods as those used by the IPCC spans from about six to seventeen percent, with twelve percent being the best estimate (van der Werf et al. 2009). The 2013 report from IPCC's Working Group 1 concluded with ten percent (IPCC 2013), while IPCC's Working Group 3 landed on eleven percent in 2014 (IPCC 2014).

Once again, we see that the process leading to the figure was weakly formalized. Instead of synthesizing the conclusions found in the various knowledge sources available in late September 2007 (such as the IPCC, the Stern report and WRI), Lars & Lars chose to refer to WRI. That is in itself an interesting choice, as usually the IPCC is considered the most authoritative knowledge source. Another point of the numbers exercise in this section is to illuminate how important it is to present numbers and costs to make a political impact (Asdal 1998, 2011, 2014). For instance, the same amount of money would approximately get you twice the amount of carbon in 2007 as compared to 2014. The high figure in 2007 conceivably influenced the outcome of the proposal. However, in 2007 most of the estimates from authoritative knowledge sources ranged from seventeen to twenty percent. Norwegian politicians found the proposal good enough to jump on the bandwagon.

Enrolling Actors, Building a Case

In the political environment, the proposal swiftly gained attractiveness among many. A number of factors contributed to Lars & Lars' proposal falling on fertile soil. Among the most important was probably the fact that the proposal was considered specific,

robust and thoroughly prepared. Most importantly, it was deemed credible, just like Yearley (2005) has found that environmental organizations are considered the most trustworthy sources of scientific knowledge.



An important reason for the proposal's success was that Lars & Lars had gauged the feelings about the proposal beforehand, several months before writing the letter. For example, they met with one of the Socialist Left Party's (Sosialistisk Venstreparti) members of Parliament, Heidi Sørensen of the Standing Committee on Energy and the Environment, in spring 2007 to discuss the idea (Søllhusvik 2012). It gradually took shape, and the letter was sent by the end of September. According to Lars Haltbrekken, the Socialist Left Party, represented by Minister of Finance Kristin Halvorsen and Minister of International Development Erik Solheim, were important collaborators:

Kristin Halvorsen was important. And the fact that she was the Minister of Finance. She didn't take long to get the picture when I and Lars [Løvold] met with her at the Ministry of Finance. I guess she was the first to hear our proposal. After all, we were aware that she was the one who had to open the moneybag. She adopted the idea quickly, and she got a strong co-player in Erik Solheim.

There is broad agreement that the letter played an important role in this process. However, Lars & Lars did not just mail the letter, they followed up with opinion pieces in the media and mentioned the initiative in numerous interviews. The effort they devoted to lobbying central politicians may have been even more important. The ruling red-green coalition cabinet, made up of the Labour Party (Arbeiderpartiet), The Centre Party (Senterpartiet) and the Socialist Left Party, in 2007 submitted to Parliament a white paper on Norwegian climate mitigation policy. The opposition criticized the white paper as lacking in ambition, and all the Parliamentary party groups discussed it that fall. Lars & Lars continued lobbying both government and opposition politicians. They attended meetings in Parliament to gain cross-partisan attention to their initiative.

To widen and strengthen the proposal's legitimacy and significance, RFN had Márcio Santilli (a major player in the Brazilian environmental movement) flown in to meet with politicians in the Parliament and present the so-called 'Zero Deforestation Pact'. This pact was a concrete plan for reducing deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon to zero in seven years, estimated to cost 1 billion BRL (about 3 billion NOK or 500 million USD) annually. The pact had been developed by a coalition of prominent NGOs in Brazil and was gaining political momentum in 2007. Lars Løvold feels this was important to the outcome:

We knew we had to create an understanding that this was a realistic course of action. And in that regard I would say that the visitors from Brazil were quite important for convincing the politicians.

In other words, the Norwegian process was congruent with a parallel and similar process in Brazil (Kasa 2013), something that was important to the outcome in Norway as well. Lars & Lars were

able to build a bridge between these processes across the Atlantic Ocean and bind together important actors, networks and knowledge. Marina Silva, Brazil's Minister of the Environment at the time, participated in events arranged by RFN as well. Again, this clearly underlines Yearley's (2005) point that an important feature of ENGOs is their attempt to globalize environmental issues.

In Norway forces gathered. SCN and RFN came together, even though the organizations are quite different. SCN is the oldest and largest member-based environmental organization in Norway. It has chapters in counties and municipalities all over the country, and its leadership is elected through democratic processes, in other words a grass-roots movement (Reinertsen and Asdal 2010). RFN is in another category. This foundation was established in 1989 as the Norwegian branch of the Rainforest Foundation International, and was a sort of spin-off from SCN. As opposed to SCN with its approximately 20.000 members, RFN has only five: SCN, Nature and Youth (Natur og Ungdom), The Environmental Agents (Miljøagentene), The Development Fund (Utviklingsfondet) and The Future in Our Hands (Framtiden i våre hender), the latter being Norway's second largest member-based environmental organization. Lars Løvold has led RFN since it was founded (except for a leave in 2013-2014), and during the 25 years of its existence, it has grown to become Europe's largest rainforest preservation organization with more than forty employees. In contrast to SCN's grass-roots model, RFN is reminiscent of an interest organization. The two organizations take part in several cooperative venues, such as Forum for Development and Environment (Forum for Utvikling og Miljø - ForUM), but traditionally they have worked side by side with their core issues. When they have cooperated, it has mostly been on a campaign basis, but following their joint proposal and its accept, the cooperative model has undergone a change. This is how Lars Haltbrekken sees it:

We have cooperated with the Rainforest Foundation Norway on a campaign basis for years, but after we made our joint proposal we have worked together much more closely.

In addition, Lars & Lars made an effort to gain support for their common demand from other ENGOs. In fact, Norwegian ENGOs seem almost surprisingly coordinated towards the parliamentary hearing on the climate white paper on October 19, 2007. Here is Haltbrekken's account:

We were able to unite other environmental organizations in supporting our proposal. I believe the environmental organizations gathered around five proposals [for the hearing], and the rainforest proposal was one of them. And we used all the means at our disposal to gain acceptance for the idea.

In summary, the process was characterized by close contacts between Lars & Lars, centrally placed politicians and the environmental movement in Norway and abroad. In many ways, the writing of the letter as such was a midpoint in this process.



Lars & Lars kept in close contact with major politicians before writing it, and later on they used it to expand their case. Thus, the letter and process score low both in terms of separation and formalization. It may seem that a low level of formalization and

separation can make for quick processes and lead to major policy changes. However, before analyzing this, a number of other factors that may have influenced the outcome must be taken into consideration.

Rainforest + Climate = True

The fact that RFN and SCN joined forces for this initiative, managed to get the other ENGOs on board and played on two fronts simultaneously, both in Norway and abroad, was decisive. That the two ENGOs came together in this case is in itself interesting. Traditionally, the core issue for SCN has been classical nature conservation, focused mainly on Norway. Gradually SCN has become more engaged in climate matters, especially from the mid-2000s and on. RFN, on the other hand, has had rainforest preservation as its main cause throughout the years, and with a special focus on indigenous people's rights and biodiversity. Rainforests have always also been a matter of climate, but leading up to 2006, the main focus for RFN had been indigenous people and biodiversity, while climate questions had taken a back seat to these priorities. This started to change in 2003, when an alliance of Brazilian research NGOs and US forestry scientists brought forth the idea of rainforest preservation as a 'payment for performance' climate initiative at the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). This idea truly gained momentum when the 2006 Stern report concluded that preserving rainforests was one of the most cost-effective and urgent climate measures at hand. In parallel, Brazil developed and started implementing ambitious strategies for rainforest preservation, including 'compensated reduction' of deforestation. Lars & Lars paid close attention to this twist and used it for all its worth. Arguably, they united their main issues fall 2007, SCN's focus on climate and RFN's on rainforests. This is explicit in the letter's heading: "Save the rainforest – save the climate!". In other words: Rainforest + climate = true. This juncture was decisive in their proposal making headway.

Lars & Lars joined rainforests with climate and served the proposal to Norwegian politicians. Politicians immediately saw the issue in a new light: Preserving the rainforests might be a cost-effective climate measure. There are strong indications that this juncture was the decisive factor (Hermansen 2015). That said, there has always been a connection between rainforests and climate. Why did Lars & Lars decide on this particular time to make the juncture so pronounced? And why did it all happen so fast, in less than two months?

A Norwegian Record in Climate Politics

In a January 2007, Lars Haltbrekken on behalf of SCN suggested in Norwegian newspaper *Aftenposten* that Parliament should agree on a number of long-term climate goals. He made the case that the climate issue was too important for a partisan blame game as to who was best or worst in environmental policies. He made the case that Norway has a tradition of finding cross-partisan solutions in

important matters that affect a majority of its population and need a long time perspective, such as the pension settlement in March 2007 and the Social Security act in 1967. The Social Liberal party's (Venstre) convention had already passed a resolution proposing a climate settlement in December 2006, but even though it was reported by the news agency NTB, it did not gain much attention in the public. However, Lars Haltbrekken's proposal did. An *Aftenposten* journalist asked several politicians about their opinions in the matter. Generally, the proposal was well received in political circles. The following day, the newspaper published an editorial endorsing the suggestion. Several other media followed, and the proposal garnered some attention.

However, when the cabinet presented its white paper on climate by the end of June 2007, there was no explicit mention of a climate settlement. According to Helen Bjørnøy, who was Minister of the Environment at the time and bore the main responsibility for the report, the work was cumbersome:

The white paper [on climate mitigation policy] came to be in an uphill struggle, and Jens [Stoltenberg, Prime Minister and leader of the Labour Party] was one of those who had their foot on the brake.

Nevertheless, things started to happen in the opposition parties during the summer. A number of them invited ENGOs to meet with them and discuss possible climate measures. Lars & Lars repeated their rainforest proposal on several different occasions. On November 8 2007, The Conservative party (Høyre), The Christian Democrats (Kristelig Folkeparti) and the Social Liberal party issued a joint press release demanding the government come aboard a climate settlement. The three opposition parties wanted to go much further than the cabinet, and proposed that Norway should reduce its emissions by 38 percent compared to expected emissions in 2020, or approximately 27 percent compared to the 1990 level, as opposed to the government's proposal to stabilize emissions on a 1990 level by 2020. In the press release, the opposition parties advocated that Norway should become climate neutral in 2020 rather than 2050, as the cabinet had proposed in its white paper. Additionally, they demanded that three billion NOK be allotted annually to preserve rainforests. In an addendum to the press release the parties presented a list of measures, and the rainforest issue was among the most important. However, the opposition had reduced the allotment by half as compared to the original proposal in the letter from Lars & Lars, who originally suggested six billion.



The Social Liberal party's Gunnar Kvasheim led the Standing Committee on Energy and Environment, which made him a pivotal person in the process leading up to the climate settlement. According to Kvasheim, the final sum was mostly a matter of assuming political stances among the various parties, mainly the cabinet and its opposition. As the opposition worked on its counter-proposal to the government's white paper, Børge Brende, who was the Conservative party's spokesperson on environmental issues at the time, had suggested to set aside two billion NOK annually for rainforest preservation. The Social Liberal party responded by suggesting three billion, 'just to jack the pot' and set its mark on Conservative party's proposal. Eventually, the opposition agreed to propose granting three billion annually. In other words, the final sum was more the result of climate policy bidding war than knowledge as such.

It is interesting to note that the opposition was the first to field a massive commitment to rainforest policies, since the letter was originally sent to politicians in power. There is much to suggest that the comprehensive lobbying Lars & Lars invested in throughout these months, particularly aimed at the opposition, was very important. However, there was also an internal struggle in the cabinet.

The parliamentary negotiations started shortly after the opposition had presented its list of demands, and rainforest preservation quickly became a major talking point. According to several sources, AP and Stoltenberg put up considerable resistance during the talks, stating that the costs of an overly ambitious climate policy might become exceedingly high, especially where large national GHG cuts were concerned. In fact, AP and SV were

both so adamant in the matter that SV went public to ask the opposition's help in moving AP. The negotiations about a climate settlement had gone on for a few weeks when Stoltenberg suddenly invited party leaders and environmental spokespersons to a meeting at the Prime Minister's office on Sunday, December 9. Here he announced that the government would allot three billion NOK annually for rainforest protection. The announcement was accompanied by a press conference later the same day. The following day the IPCC and Al Gore were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, and four days later Stoltenberg relayed the rainforest message to the UN climate summit in Bali. On January 8, 2008, about one month later, the rainforest initiative was incorporated as a part of the climate settlement joined by all parties except the Progress Party (Fremskrittspartiet).

The letter from Lars & Lars had kick-started the world's most comprehensive REDD+ initiative on the donor side, and the single largest Norwegian climate commitment ever. This all happened in record time. Even the initiators themselves were astounded by the speed. In other terms, the negotiations about a climate settlement caused a unique policy window (Kingdon 2003) to open and make NICFI possible (Hermansen 2015). When the climate settlement was renegotiated in 2012, the general principles were left untouched. The rainforest commitment remains one of the most important parts of the climate settlement, and at the UN climate summit in Paris December 2015 NICFI was extended to 2030. SCN was an important architect behind both these pillars in Norwegian climate policy - the climate settlement and NICFI - with good help from RFN. But is it a coincidence that all this happened just when it did?

2007 – Year of the Climate

When Lars & Lars mailed their letter at the end of September 2007, climate ranged high both on the national and international agenda. Everything points to this making the difference and ensured the proposal was well received and passed in record time.

The overture began as early as 2006, when the climate documentary film *An Inconvenient Truth* was released, based on former US vice president Al Gore's tour to gain attention to the climate issue. Later the same year the Stern report was published. Moreover, The Low Emission Committee (Lavutslippsutvalget) published its green paper 'A climate-friendly Norway' ('Et klimavennlig Norge'), that put forward a way for Norway to reduce its emission of greenhouse gases by fifty to eighty percent by the year 2050, quickly and 'startlingly cheap', to quote committee leader Jørgen Randers, professor at the Norwegian Business School (BI). In January 2007, Lars Haltbrekken publicly demanded a climate settlement. During the same year, IPCC published its fourth assessment report in four steps, the first in February, the very same month that *An Inconvenient Truth* won two Academy Awards, one of which as best documentary. At the end of June, the government published its white paper

on climate. Immediately the opposition and environmental movement derided the white paper as lacking in ambition. Lars & Lars sent their letter on September 27, three days after PM Stoltenberg had attended a historic high level climate summit hosted by the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. More than eighty heads of state were present. On October 12, the Nobel Committee announced that Al Gore and IPCC would share the Nobel Peace Prize. They were both nominated by the Conservative party's environmental spokesperson Børge Brende and the Socialist Left Party's Heidi Sørensen. Six days later, on October 18, the latter was appointed state secretary in the Ministry of Environment under Erik Solheim's leadership. Solheim himself had his ministerial post expanded from international development to Minister of Environment and International Development. Three weeks later the opposition, led by the Conservative party's Børge Brende, sent its demand of a climate settlement to the government. The news about Norway's rainforest commitment was published on Sunday, December 9, the day before Al Gore and the IPCC were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo. Concurrently, the Parliament debated the climate settlement. On December 13, Stoltenberg announced Norway's

rainforest initiative at the UN climate summit (COP 13) in Bali:

Through effective measures against deforestation we can achieve large cuts in greenhouse gas emissions - quickly and at low cost. The technology is well known and has been available for thousands of years. Everybody knows how not to cut down a tree.

Shortly thereafter, the Norwegian tabloid newspaper *Verdens Gang* proclaimed Stoltenberg 'king of the rainforest'.

In many ways, the Bali meeting was the 'final' of the 2007 year of the climate. All informants agree that this was decisive for the rainforest decision. Climate was on everyone's lips, and politicians were under strong pressure to take action. In sum, a number of incidents elevated the climate issue in 2006 and 2007. To the right the most important events are listed chronologically.

Public Climate Concern and Climate in the Media

There is no doubt that much happened in the realms of climate science and policy throughout 2006 and 2007. Interestingly, the heightened attention to the climate issue correlates well with public concerns and media coverage on climate. Actually, Norsk Monitor, which has monitored the level of climate concern among Norwegians since 1985, report that the population had not been this concerned about global warming in ten years: In 1997 and 2007, 59 percent made up the categories 'very worried' and 'quite worried' about global warming. After a peak in 2007, the level of concern declined again (Aasen 2015). The peak in public concern in 2007 correlates with the amount of environment- and climate coverage in the media. Figure 1 shows a distinct peak in the coverage of these topics during 2007.

Naturally, the Stern report, the Low Emission Committee and their green paper, the IPCC reports, the governmental white paper, the climate summit in New York, the climate settlement negotiations and the Nobel Peace Prize garnered some media attention, which in turn affected the public mood. The ENGOS, mainly SCN, operated in the thick of all this. And they operated on several levels at once: Shaping opinions, influencing the media, making specific policy

Timeline

2006

June: Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth* released.

October: The Stern review released. The white paper 'A climate-friendly Norway' presented to the Government.

2007

January: SCN proposes a Norwegian Climate Settlement between all political parties. The EU passes ambitious climate targets.

February: *An Inconvenient Truth* awarded with two Academy Awards, including best documentary.

February-September: The IPCC releases its fourth assessment report in four stages.

June: The sitting government presents a white paper on climate policy, strongly criticized by the opposition.

September 24: UN Climate Summit in New York hosted by the Secretary-General (until then an unprecedented high-level event on climate change attended by over 80 heads of state or government).

September 27: Letter from Lars & Lars.

October 12: It is announced that IPCC and Al Gore win the Nobel Peace Prize. Lars & Lars lobby their proposals heavily.

November: Opposition challenges government with proposal of a climate settlement, negotiations start.

December 7: Stoltenberg has lunch with Stern, meets with sitting British PM Gordon Brown.

December 9: NICFI announced on a press conference in Norway (a Sunday).

December 10: IPCC and Al Gore are awarded with the Nobel Peace Prize.

December 13: NICFI launched by the Prime Minister at UNFCCC COP 13 in Bali.

2008

January: The Climate Settlement agreed, NICFI integrated.

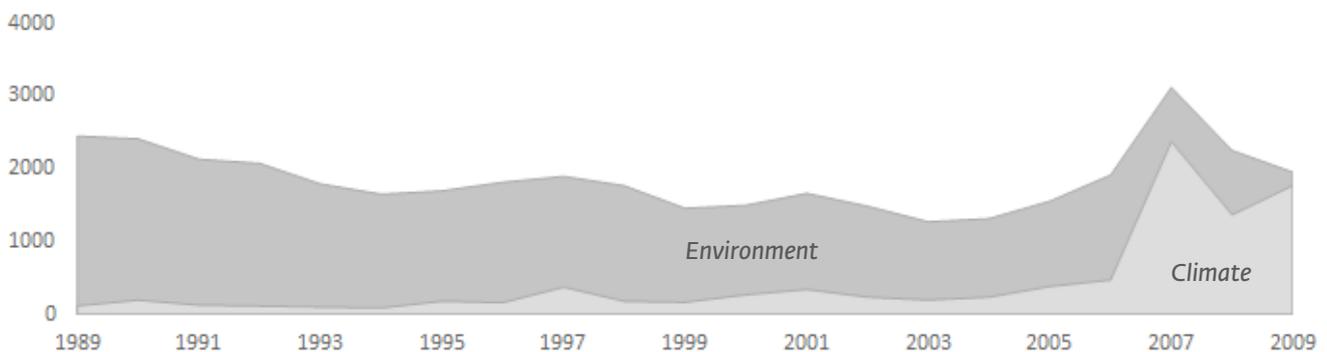


Figure 1. Number of headlines that mention either climate or environment in four news outlets: Aftenposten, Nordlys, VG and NTB. The illustration is taken from Tjernshaugen et al. (2011).



proposals and lobbying on their behalf. It certainly merits mention how the organizations worked to frame the rainforest issue as a climate issue. Haltbrekken puts it this way:

The rainforest issue got a boost when it became part of the climate debate. So far, it had been a matter of indigenous peoples and biodiversity, but now it has become a climate issue as well.

Rainforest: A Good Fit with Norwegian Climate Policy

We have already seen how knowledge, networks of actors and timing were decisive for making Norway's rainforest commitment a reality. However, there were aspects in the proposal itself that made it extra palatable for politicians and bureaucrats alike. This contributed to the fact that the initiative passed the decision making process so quickly.

Traditionally, the Socialist Left Party (SV) has been a party that has kept a visible profile in environmental and climate issues and worked towards a more progressive policy in this regard. It met resistance from the Labour Party (AP) in the cabinet, AP being the party most concerned with fiscal issues and cost-efficiency. Generally speaking Labour has pushed for emission reductions where they can be implemented cheaply, in practice mostly abroad where such reductions do not put Norwegian jobs in peril. These differences became quite apparent during the work on the white paper, which turned into a regular tug-of-war between SV and AP. Since AP was the major party in the coalition government, SV was stuck with a climate white paper it considered too unambitious. An interesting side of rainforest preservation was that the two points of view came together over this initiative: SV could obtain a major climate commitment with a large amount of funding, considerable attention among the electorate, and potentially major and quick emission cuts. AP on their side could have cost-efficiency and safeguard Norwegian jobs. Stoltenberg, an acquaintance of Stern, had showed an avid interest in the Stern report. Because of that, Bjørnøy and SV used this prominent report actively in the climate white paper negotiations:

We used the Stern report for all its worth [regarding 'timing' of GHG cuts]. It must have made quite an impression on Jens. The most important thing you can say to him is that something is based on an economic calculation.

Particularly Stern's rainforest calculations caught Stoltenberg's special attention. In the spring of 2007, AP had made climate the main topic for the party's convention. Here Stoltenberg presented a slide with a range of actions, forest preservation being among the most cost-effective. Rainforest preservation also caught the eye of several members of SV. However, while there was a certain interest in both parties, the rainforest initiative did not initially make it into the climate white paper. Things did not come into serious motion before Lars & Lars sent their letter, and the opposition adopted the idea as part of a climate settlement proposal.

The Norwegian public administration traditionally has a hand in shaping policies. Officially, the Ministry of the Environment bears the

main responsibility for questions concerning climate, but in reality the Ministry of Finance has been the major actor in shaping Norway's environment and climate policies (Asdal 1998, 2011, 2014). The main reason is its role as a supra-ministry: The Ministry of Finance shall approve all decisions regarding the national economy. Consequently, the Norwegian climate policy toolbox is traditionally designed with a high degree of cost-efficiency in mind. It primarily consists of economic policy instruments, such as emissions trading and taxes. Numerous climate-related initiatives have been halted in the Ministry of Finance due to concerns over cost-efficiency, and many regard the Ministry of Finance as being conservative in terms of climate policy.

Hence, it is interesting that certain aspects in the proposal made it more acceptable for the administration in the Ministry of Finance. Generally, this Ministry is less concerned with the official development assistance (ODA) budget, as spending usually takes place abroad (Hermansen and Kasa 2014). The initiative would incur no extra costs, since the funding came from a projected and planned increase in ODA spending. In fact, it could help Norway reach its ODA target (one percent of the gross national income). Since the Norwegian economy grew strongly at the time, there was no lack of ODA funds. The administration also saw additional upsides: Result-based payments might open for better control with ODA spending, and it could be both a good aid and climate initiative (two for the price of one). Finally, there was a possibility to conjoin the REDD+ mechanism with international emissions trading, which was then (and remains to this day) Norway's overarching position in the UN climate negotiations.

There is no doubt that having the ear of centrally placed politicians and meeting little resistance in the administration was decisive. However, the proposal also aligned well with Norway's climate policy in a wider sense. The country plays a somewhat paradoxical role in the international climate policy landscape, as it has both strong climate ambitions and is a major petroleum producing and exporting nation (Reitan 1998, Gullberg and Skodvin 2011, Tellmann 2012). The oil-generated wealth combined with an existing high share of renewables has made domestic GHG cuts expensive in comparison to cuts abroad. Due to these fundamental provisions, Norway adheres to 'international cost-efficiency' as a main principle in its climate policy (Asdal 2011, 2014). In real terms, this often means less costly cuts abroad. As seen from a Norwegian perspective, the rainforest proposal fitted well into the climate policy landscape. Rainforest preservation was considered cheap in relation to its potential effects, it would take place abroad, where the politicians would not have to worry about political goodwill and reelection, and simultaneously send



an important message to the international climate negotiations, including helping to resolve the distrust between poor and rich countries in the negotiations. Cash on the table is sparse in

international climate negotiations, and Norway can obviously come up with lots of it, at least as long as policy proposals comply with the principle of 'international cost-efficiency'.

Cherry-Picking Rainforests

In the introduction, three points were outlined where Sundqvist et al.'s (2015) theoretical framework on formalization and separation had potential for being further developed. First, there is an absence of studies of how various degrees of formalization and separation can lead to political impact (or not). As we have seen from this case, knowledge played a major role in making this proposal reality. I have made the point that the knowledge base, as exemplified by the letter, was formalized only to a small degree, since there was no system guiding the composition of knowledge or who compiled it. Instead, Lars & Lars appointed themselves to synthesize the knowledge base the letter depends on, and they picked and mixed knowledge in a way that fitted with their point of view, something often referred to as 'cherry-picking'. That said, they also chose some of the most robust, thorough and formalized knowledge sources to be found, such as the reports by the IPCC and the Stern report. However, they make use of these knowledge sources in a mostly generic way. The letter also refers to very informal sources, such as "calculations from environmental organizations in Brazil". Thus, there is a wide arc spanning from strongly to weakly formalized sources. The question remains whether they would have made an impact if the letter was not based on sources like the IPCC and the Stern report, however generic.

Another point made was that this case shows the marks of a low degree of separation. The arguments in the letter all but evolved through a dialogue with important decision-makers. This very fact is probably an important reason why the proposal was passed so quickly and unencumbered. Several informants have also made the credibility of Lars Løvold and Lars Haltbrekken an important point: Since the proposal originated with them, it was trustworthy. Thus, the social capital Lars & Lars brought to the table was an important factor. In summary, there is much to suggest that low degrees of both formalization and separation can make for rapid political processes and considerable political impact. Yet the speed and impact cannot be explained solely by the low degrees of formalization and separation. There were a number of other factors that came into play, such as the process involving the climate settlement and climate itself ranging high on the political agenda.

The second factor pointed out as having a potential for enhancing Sundqvist et al.'s (2015) framework concerns the causal relationship between formalization and separation, i.e. whether these two dimensions exert any influence on each other, and if so, in what ways. There are aspects in the two preceding paragraphs that may indicate that weak separation can enable weak formalization and vice versa. Since Lars & Lars made contact with the political community at an early stage, planted the idea and developed it in a process that involved an ever-widening circle of actors, they became progressively more important as 'guarantors' for the proposal, maybe even more so than the knowledge base itself. All the while, a number of informants name the letter itself as the most important document in the process. Thus, the personal credibility of Lars & Lars and the letter related to each other. In conclusion, this may point to the fact that weak separation combined with personal trustworthiness can make a low degree of formalization possible. Conversely, a low degree of formalization enabled a low degree of separation as low formalization is less time-consuming, and timing was a decisive factor. In sum, low degrees of both formalization and separation pre-conditioned each other in a two-way causal relationship, which in turn most probably was decisive for the outcome.

The third entry point for developing the Sundqvist et al. (2015) framework was analyzing how civil society actors (like NGOs) perform in terms of formalization and separation compared to other actors such as scientists and decision-makers. We have seen that this theoretical framework also can be useful for studying other actors and their knowledge production aimed at policy-making. Yet it has proved necessary to introduce nuances into certain areas of Sundqvist et al.'s (2015) framework. For example, whether and how the letter is a formalized source of knowledge is a point of contention: It is weakly formalized as such, yet it depends on highly formalized sources (like the IPCC and the Stern report) to stand on its own. Furthermore, it is necessary to include other factors for explaining how the letter became credible and authoritative among decision-makers, namely Lars & Lars' and social capital and personal credibility on the issues at stake. Yearley's (2005) proposition that NGOs are among the most trustworthy sources of scientific knowledge still holds its ground, but it is worth pointing out that this is conditioned by individual social capital as well.



A Perfect Storm

Throughout this article we have seen how RFN and SCN gained traction for the idea that Norway ought to spend several billion NOK each year to preserve rainforests on the opposite side of the globe. The initiative by Lars Løvold and Lars Haltbrekken was of crucial importance to Norway's most ambitious climate commitment so far, simultaneously placing Norway as the leading global donor to rainforest preservation by the sheer size of the allotment. Lastly, it all happened in record time: Just over two months.

The two-page letter from Lars & Lars played a momentous role in this process. We have seen that a low level of formalization combined with a low degree of separation enabled a quick and efficient decision process. While we have also seen that the arguments in the letter built on quite highly formalized knowledge sources, such as the IPCC and the Stern report, the process to choose exactly those sources and the procedure to compile them, was not particularly formalized. Rather, it was a case of cherry-picking. Close contact with the decision-makers throughout the process, as well as Lars & Lars' social capital and personal credibility in environmental matters, validated the content of the letter. In other words, this case reveals a two-way causal connection between a low degree of formalization and a low degree of separation.

An important factor for their success was the fact that these two organizations colluded. They each had considerable expertise and wide networks, in Norway as well as abroad. But the proposal did not achieve a critical level of support until they joined forces as well as their networks and succeeded in uniting large parts of the rest of the environmental movement. Combining the rainforest issue with the climate issue was decisive for the proposal to become widely recognized.

2007 was a special year in terms of climate, both due to the public level of concern and the media coverage. In addition, a number of focusing events took place, the Nobel Peace Prize awarded to IPCC and Al Gore being the most important. In this respect, Lars & Lars were lucky regarding their timing. On the other hand, it is important to bear in mind that they were instrumental in preparing the ground for much of this: They exerted influence on opinion leaders, amongst others by using the media. However, their most important contribution was probably pushing politicians to negotiate the climate settlement. When the opposition took to the idea of both a climate settlement and a commitment to rainforests – and challenged the government – the issues really started to gain momentum.

An alliance formed between the political opposition and the environmental movement, which also had an ally in the Socialist Left party inside the red-green cabinet. This resulted in a political bidding war about climate policy integrity with the rainforest being a major topic. It was a bidding war Lars & Lars did not directly partake in, but won all the same. The proposal was also a good

fit with Norway's leading climate policy principle of 'international cost-efficiency'. In retrospect, a number of politicians have wanted to take credit for the rainforest commitment. Nevertheless, Lars Haltbrekken is cautious when it comes to naming a political winner in the game:

Let me be immodest enough to say that SCN and RFN made the proposal and should get the credit for it, but which political parties that deserve the credit, whether it's Stoltenberg or Børge Brende; they were both very important. And I believe both were crucial to get it done [...] It's very important that there are many who want to take credit, since that means securing its future.

All over, the process leading up to the rainforest commitment appears to be a rather unique occurrence of knowledge, networks and timing with two environmental organizations as the core architects that also made several threads and processes come together. Haltbrekken realizes that 2007 was a special year:

We wouldn't have gained any foothold for such a proposal in 2003. And I'm not sure we would have gained acceptance last year [2013], either, when IPCC came, because it wasn't the same surge.

In August 2014 the evaluation department at Norad (the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation) presented a real-time evaluation report of NICFI prepared by a consultancy (Norad 2014). NICFI generally gets positive reviews, but also some challenges are highlighted. Despite considerable funds and generally good progress, the rainforest commitment has so far not led to the major GHG cuts initially hoped for, Brazil being an honorable exception. But the trend in Brazil was already positive before the Norwegian funds arrived, and it has proven difficult to establish any clear causal relationship between the Norwegian funds and verified emission reductions, as opposed to the rhetoric from many Norwegian politicians. The positive developments in Brazil are under constant pressure by powerful economic interests, primarily from the agricultural sector, partly driven by Norwegian consumption, particularly soy. Brazil's difficult economic situation also contributes to putting pressure on the forest.

In other countries, it has taken time to establish systems for preserving rainforests, and consequently verified emission reductions. Furthermore, it has proven difficult to get more nations to join as REDD+ donors than initially assumed. Norway remains the largest donor by far, having pledged 3170 million USD (Climate Funds Update 2015). The UK is next on the list, with 411 million USD, followed by Germany with 275 million USD. At the climate summit in Paris December 2015 (COP 21), the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) agreed to include REDD+ in the international climate agreement, but not all details are set yet.



Nevertheless, Norway has undoubtedly played a major role in this process, in large because of the substantial funding, and will continue to do so.

Rainforest preservation is and will remain important to international climate policy in the years ahead. Since international rainforest policies and the major features of Norwegian climate policy concur, Norway will continue to be an important contributor to rainforest preservation in the time to come. At the climate summit in Paris December 2015 (COP 21), Norway announced that NICFI will be prolonged until 2030, without revealing any more details. At the same time, Parliament most probably will cut back the allotment in 2016 by approximately 200 million NOK to cope with the refugee influx from Syria and other countries. That aside, Norwegian politicians will in the future have to present more verified results (Hermansen and Kasa 2014). However, regardless of the REDD+ development in the coming years, it is highly likely that 2007 will stand out in Norway's history of climate policy as well as international climate and rainforest policy. The year when a perfect storm of public concern, knowledge, politics, media coverage,

national and international contexts – and certainly the efforts by environmental NGOs – all came together, resulting in the world's largest REDD+ initiative on the donor side.

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