

# Do We Have the Courage to Change?

*Adaptating to climate change from the inside-out*

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# What is successful adaptation?

- ▶ Moser, S. and Boykoff, M. (2013) **Successful Adaptation to Climate Change: Linking Science and Policy in a Rapidly Changing World**. New York: Routledge.

Should we consider humanity «successful» in adapting to climatic changes that we are actually responsible for?

Despite the best of intentions, is our «technical» approach to adaptation setting us up for disaster?

Is it really possible to adapt to the non-linear environmental and social consequences of climate change?



# Climate change adaptation

Technical problem



One that can be diagnosed and solved by applying established know-how and procedures; Can be addressed with more resources and greater expertise.

Adaptive challenge



Requires a change in mindsets, priorities, beliefs, habits and loyalties. Calls for an increased capacity to take perspectives, view problems from multiple dimensions, recognize patterns, and create innovative alternatives.

(Heifetz et al. 2009. *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership*. Cambridge: Harvard Business Press. )



# Norway



- ▶ Population: 5 million
- ▶ GDP USD 485.8 billion (2011)
- ▶ GDP per capita \$98,102 (2011)
- ▶ UNDP HDI: #1 in 2012
- ▶ 5th largest oil exporter (2.3 m. barrels/day 2010)
- ▶ Oil sector employs 40,000 (indirectly, 206,000)
- ▶ CO<sub>2</sub> emissions = 10.54 tons/person
- ▶ Considered to have a very high adaptive capacity





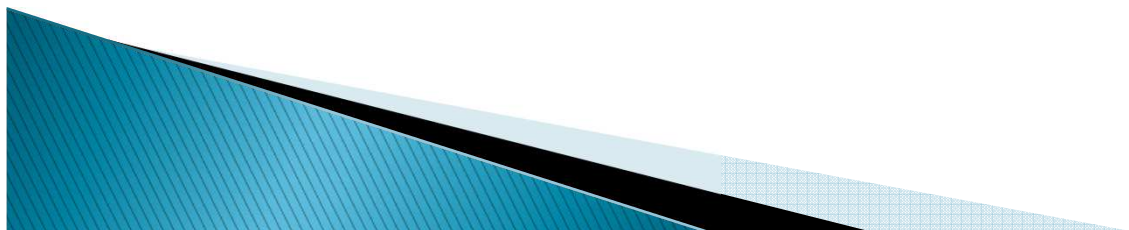
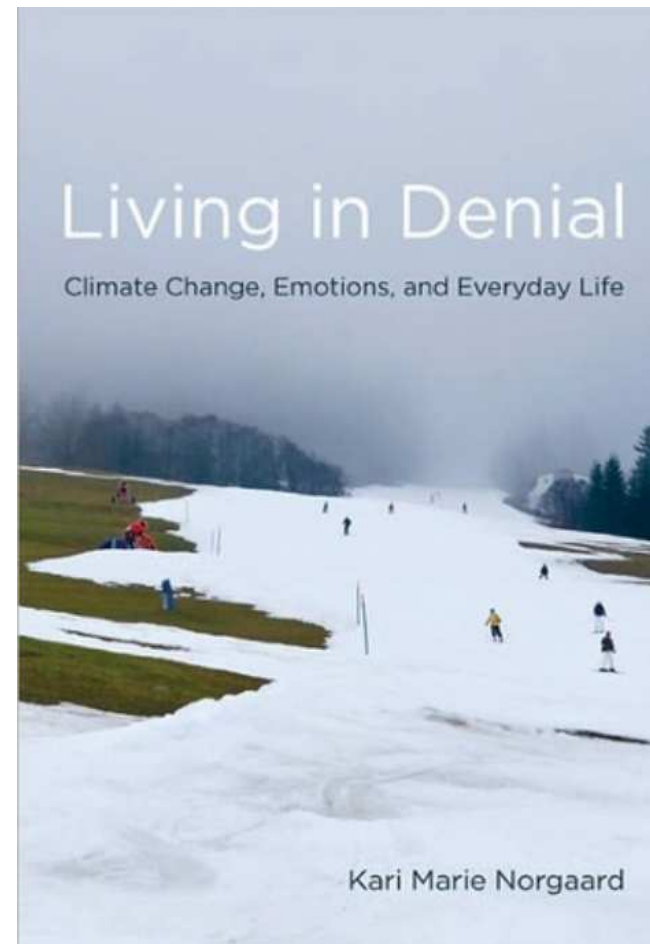
HEY! THIS WILL BE GREAT FOR NORWAY!

Consequences of Climate Change in Norway:

- Higher Temperatures
- More Rain
- Shorter Snow Seasons
- Higher sea levels
- Increased runoff

*W. King*

«socially organized denial as the process by which individuals collectively distance themselves from information because of norms of emotion, conversation, and attention and by which they use an existing cultural repertoire of strategies in the process.»



# The adaptive challenge



Economic legacy?

Ecological legacy?

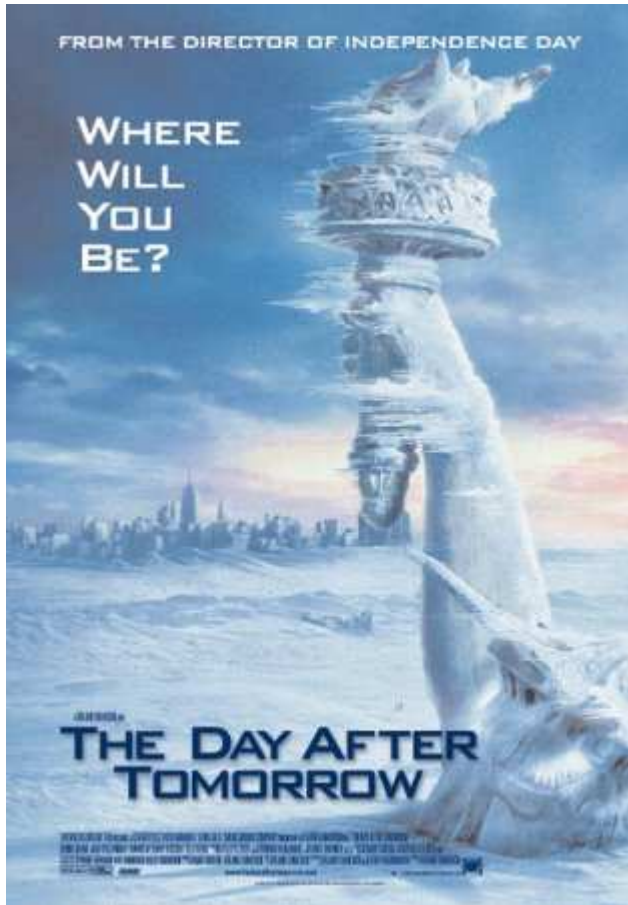


# Adaptation from the inside-out

- ▶ Meeting an adaptive challenge calls for exploring the «emotional ecology» underlying the challenge.
- ▶ Involves examining the individual and collective values, beliefs and worldviews that perpetuate the problems to which we are adapting.
- ▶ Involves working with structures of meaning-making and considering the role of consciousness in adaptation processes.
- ▶ Worldviews frame the space in which we operate, structuring our responses according to our assumptions and beliefs (re: attribution, sense of agency, access to resources and power, potential options considered desirable and feasible).







# Changing the script

- ▶ Those with power and vested interests in maintaining current systems are likely to actively resist any challenges to the dominant paradigm.
- ▶ We are unlikely to develop a common, shared worldview anytime soon, and understanding and working with different perspectives is going to be critical.
- ▶ Adaptation is not a neutral process -- it prioritizes some objectives over others.
- ▶ From an evolutionary perspective, adaptation calls for a powerful sense of collective agency to change systems, rather than adapt to systemic changes.



# Who needs to change?

- ▶ Changes that create anxiety and uncertainty are often avoided. Who actually desires that kind of change?
- ▶ Forcing others to change or adapt to change can be considered oppressive and disempowering;
- ▶ It is easier to inspire change than to force it – but this might mean that one has to change oneself, rather than simply convince others to change.



# Do we have the courage to change?

- ▶ Disasters and epic events can be catalysts for deep change;
- ▶ But intentional practices and experiential education can also influence worldviews;
- ▶ Adapting from the inside-out is neither the opposite of or an alternative to current approaches to adaptation, but a powerful leverage point for changing systems – simply because it changes the way that we see the system;
- ▶ *Successful adaptation* is about transformation, not in response to change, but as a way of deliberately creating the change that we want in the world.

