

International online workshop

Friday April 11, 10.00-11.30 CET, online.

Crime and the environment. Discourse-analytical approaches to criminal framings of environmental activism and environmental harm

Environmental issues are increasingly understood in legal terms, as demonstrated by many recent court cases addressing climate change and environmental harm. At the same time, legislation and surveillance targeting environmental activism has increased in several countries. In this workshop, we examine how methods from discourse analysis and corpus linguistics can be used to shed light on these phenomena, analysing empirical cases from France, USA and Norway.

Programme

10:00-10:15 Welcome and presentation of the workshop and participants

10:15-10:35 Maëline Coeur (Université Catholique de l'Ouest, Angers): *The use of the term "ecoterrorism" in environmental controversies: a discursive analysis of the Sainte-Soline megabasin protests*

10:35-10:55 Daniel Lees Fryer (Østfold University College): *"The real terrorists are in government": exploring radical environmentalism and the green scare through the writings of environmental activists*

10:55-11:15 Anje Müller Gjesdal (Østfold University College) & Synnøve Økland Jahnsen (Fafo Institute for Labour and Social Research): *"Environmental crime" as a discursive resource in public debates about environmental harm: a diachronic analysis of Norwegian news media*

11:15-11:30 Final discussion

Abstracts and bios

Maëline Coeur (Université Catholique de l'Ouest, Angers): *The use of the term "ecoterrorism" in environmental controversies: a discursive analysis of the Sainte-Soline megabasin protests*

This presentation examines the discursive dynamics associated with the use of the word "ecoterrorism" in environmental controversies, focusing on the case of protests against the Sainte-Soline megabasins. Based on an analysis of a media corpus, it explores the dual function of this term as both a tool to legitimize institutional repression and a means to criminalize environmental activists. It investigates the strategic reappropriation of this designation by activists, who use it as a lever for alternative discourse aimed at subverting dominant narratives. Grounded by discourse analysis, this study seeks to enhance the understanding of the linguistic and political stakes shaping contemporary environmental conflicts.

Bio

Maëline Coeur is a graduate student in public and political communication master degree, at Université Catholique de l'Ouest, Angers. She is currently finalizing her master thesis, which focuses on environmental controversies, and this year, more specifically, on the use of the word "ecoterrorism" in French context."

Daniel Lees Fryer (Østfold University College): *"The real terrorists are in government": exploring radical environmentalism and the green scare through the writings of environmental activists*

Earth First! is an international environmental activist group founded in the United States in 1980. It promotes radical "ecological resistance" through direct action and is an important precursor to later environmental groups such as the Earth Liberation Front and Extinction Rebellion. In this presentation I examine ways in which activists ("Earth First!ers") present and discuss their ideas and activities in the newsletter and journal *Earth First!* Using a corpus-based discourse-analytic approach, I conduct a series of keyword, collocational, and semantic analyses for different periods of the journal's publication (from 1980 to the present day). These analyses highlight the developments and interrelations of some of the movement's ideas and activities over time (e.g. biocentrism/ecocentrism, deep ecology, social ecology, anarchism, direct action, sabotage/ecotage, social justice). One theme of particular relevance for this seminar, on crime and the environment, concerns Earth First!'s responses to the so-called "green scare", an intensified period of arrests and convictions of environmental activists in the US for acts of "eco-terrorism" (conspiracy, property damage, arson, etc.). As analyses show, Earth First!ers respond by variously questioning, rejecting, or countering accusations of terrorism and criminality, and by rallying around the movement's motto of "no compromise in defense of Mother Earth".

Bio

Daniel Lees Fryer is an Associate Professor in English at Østfold University College. His research interests include multimodality, the discourse of social movements, and critical animal studies.

Anje Müller Gjesdal (Østfold University College) & Synnøve Økland Jahnsen (Fafo Institute for Labour and Social Research): *"Environmental crime" as a discursive resource in public debates about environmental harm: a diachronic analysis of Norwegian news media*

Environmental harm is increasingly conceptualised in legal and security terms, often through the concept of *environmental crime*. This concept, positioned at the crossroads between ethics, green criminology, law and environmental activism, reflects the juridification of environmental struggles, fostering the development of a legal and legalistic discourse, as well as the policing and prosecution of harm against nature. As a concept however, environmental crime can be described as broad and in lack of a clear definition, and it has been argued that it is insufficient to properly address environmental harm. The paper analyses the use of the term 'environmental crime' in Norwegian news media in the time period 2000-2020, with particular attention to the representation of the victims and perpetrators of environmental crime, and argues that the term has become an important discursive resource for stakeholders in debates on environmental harm.

Anje Müller Gjesdal is Associate professor in French at Østfold University College. Her research interests include corpus-assisted discourse studies, and she is currently co-editing an edited volume about public debates on nature and the environment in Norway and France.

Synnøve Økland Jahnsen is a Senior Research at Fafo Institute for Labour and Social Research. She has a PhD in sociology and her research interests include policing methods and organised crime.