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# Climate Change Discourses and Citizen Participation: A Case Study of the Discursive Construction of Citizenship in Two Public Events

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*Citizen participation is a recurrent and democratically important issue in the ongoing debate about climate change. However, different meanings are ascribed to citizen participation in different contexts, ranging from top-down involvement to bottom-up engagement, thus creating tension between conflicting ideals. Focusing on public engagement and its construal in different situational contexts, we explore how citizens are discursively included or excluded from participation, as various climate change discourses unfold in two forums where local needs and global concerns interact. Furthermore, we address some opportunities and barriers regarding citizen participation in climate change issues.*

*Keywords: Climate Change; Discourse; Public Engagement; Ecological Modernization; Civic Environmentalism; Green Governmentality*

## Introduction

In the ongoing debate about climate change issues, the topic of citizen participation is often raised, but the practical application of citizen participation is often limited (Mostert, 2005). We know that the legal framework is in place through what has become known as The Aarhus Convention, but this does not guarantee that the

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principle of citizen participation is being followed. The convention was adopted on June 25, 1998 at a United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) meeting in the Danish city Aarhus and went into force on October 30, 2001. The Aarhus Convention gives the public right of access to environmental information held by public authorities, right to public participation (PP) in environmental decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters, which entails a right to challenge public decisions that have not respected the two rights mentioned above.<sup>1</sup> Against this background, the objective of the article is to discuss opportunities for and barriers to citizen participation in climate change mitigation initiatives, and we argue that there is a need for clearer communication about the role of citizens in calls for action against climate change. We have approached our objective by analyzing data from two different communicative events that took place in public spaces in 2009, paying particular attention to agent roles assigned to citizens in discourses of climate change identifiable in our data.

The first set of data is from an international conference that took place in Aarhus in March 2009 with the title *Beyond Kyoto*. The second is from what has become known as Energy Town Frederikshavn—a project that addresses the climate issue at a local level in a marginalized area of northern Denmark. Through analysis of discourse examples from these two sites of engagement (Scollon & Scollon, 2004) we argue that although citizens seem to be assigned an important role at all levels of the climate change debate, their role as active participants in a democratic process is less clear. Thus, our data indicate that while citizens occupy marginalized actor positions in the global site of engagement we have studied, they seem to be (top-down) positioned as active citizens at the local level, however without any clear identification of actions to be taken.

### **Citizen Participation in Environmental Issues**

In this section we present a short overview of crucial aspects of citizen participation presented in literature on citizen participation in environmental issues. Citizen participation may also be referred to as PP, public engagement (PE) or participatory democracy, all of which are used synonymously in this article. Delgado, Kjølberg, and Wickson (2010) draw attention to the conceptual complexity that characterizes the field by discussing five topics of tension concerning PP/PE in theory and practice.<sup>2</sup> The first tension identified is “the existence of competing rationales for PP/PE and the tension arising in practice from a lack of transparency around the rationale motivating a given PP/PE event” (Delgado et al., 2010, p. 7). The three rationales in question are first, instrumental, that is, which aims to achieve a specific goal like, for instance, legitimacy or public trust; second, substantive, with the conviction that PP/PE will lead to better decisions emerging through the process of participation; and third, normative, which considers PP/PE “the right thing to do,” often from a democratic point of view (Delgado et al., 2010, p. 6). A second tension is identified in differing views of *who* is a relevant participant in PP/PE initiatives, that is, what kind of knowledge or expertise is required for the persons involved. A third tension

consists in the pros and cons of self-organizing citizen groups versus invited forms of PP/PE with more or less explicit implications of who is relevant and how participation should be performed. Fourthly, the question of *when* citizens should be involved in a process of technological or social change is controversial, ranging from upstream over midstream to downstream engagement. An important critique is that invited forms of PP/PE, for example, initiated by political authorities that predefine the topics of dialog, carry the risk of manipulation in order to achieve certain goals and of reducing the emergence of uninvited engagement (Delgado et al., 2010). The fifth topic of tension emerges in the conflict between, on the one hand, the need for PP/PE approaches to be context sensitive and practiced with a great deal of reflexivity in the concrete situation and, on the other hand, the increasing need for PP/PE models to be transferable, comparable, and measurable. More specifically, a study of PP/PE practices in the case of nanotechnology shows that certain choices in one topic of tension have limiting consequences for the choices in other topics and therefore can lead to undesirable compromises. Examples of such entanglements may be seen in upstream engagement practices favoring invited forms of engagement with participants representing a particular group of stakeholders, thus possibly excluding alternative types of knowledge and visions of the good life (Delgado et al., 2010).

Another recent contribution in the field of citizen participation is Whitmarsh, O'Neill, and Lorenzoni (2011) providing exhaustive insights into both theoretical reflections and empirical experience on PE with climate change. Interdisciplinary approaches combined with, for example, British, American and Australian case studies lead to the conclusion that PE can and should be manifested in multiple forms and that awareness, information, and understanding are not enough to change people's habits of mind and practice; rather dialogic, two-way forms of (positive) communication and collaboration seem to stimulate change. Furthermore, Whitmarsh et al. (2011) present a conceptual framework for engaging and evaluating PE with climate change encompassing dimensions of knowledge, emotion, and behavior.

Mostert (2005) draws attention to the fact that there is not consensus about the meaning of PP and its purpose. Mostert (2005) argues that the understanding and practice/application of PP depends on ideological views of the role of government, citizens, and organized interests and distinguishes six concepts, or degrees of PP ranging from PP as a means to promote civic society, subsidiarity, and direct democracy, via instrumental PP to PP as social learning where stakeholders and government participate on an equal footing. These different concepts underline the potential magnitude of complexities and challenges, and thus the need for clear and precise communication of expectations from the involved actors.

### **The Role of Citizen Participation in Climate Change Discourses**

Scholars within different academic fields have analyzed, characterized, and grouped recent discourses on climate change. These fields include social and political sciences (Dryzek, 2005; Hulme, 2009; Giddens, 2009), environmental and natural sciences (Holm, Petersen, Læssøe, Remmen, & Hansen, 2007; Jamison, 2001; Pettenger, 2007)

as well as media and communication studies (Carvalho, 2005, 2007; Cox, 2009; Nielsen, 2008. Thorough reviews of these scholars (see Bäckstrand & Lövbrand, 2007; Lassen et al., manuscript in preparation) suggest that three discourses are especially prominent: A discourse of *ecological modernization*, a discourse of *green governmentality*, and a discourse of *civic environmentalism*. The three discourses differ not least in the way citizen participation is understood and given prominence. Among these, the discourse of *ecological modernization*, which seems to be dominant in approaches to climate change mitigation accentuates the need for some kind of top-down institutional or political intervention, while at the same time leaving room for regulation by the markets, and less so for bottom-up citizen participation (Hajer, 2005). In the discourse of *green governmentality*, recognizable in what Dryzek (2005) refers to as “leave it to the experts,” the emphasis is on the role played by “authorities and disciplinary mechanisms” (Bäckstrand & Lövbrand, 2007, p. 126) in achieving sustainable growth. In some ways the green governmentality discourse overlaps with the discourse of ecological modernization in that climate change issues are monitored as top-down processes. Thus, there is consensus between the discourse of ecological modernization and the discourse of green governmentality that there is a need for regulation and control, be it by governments, science, business or markets; however, these discourses leave limited room for citizen participation. A third discourse frequently seen in the literature is what Bäckstrand and Lövbrand (2007) have referred to as a discourse of *civic environmentalism*. This discourse challenges and contests the two dominant discourses referred to previously. Like the other two discourses, civic environmentalism has different variants and labels, such as Deep Ecologists (Giddens, 2009; Næss, 1989), Green radicalism and looming tragedy (Dryzek, 2005), Critical Ecology (Jamison, 2010) and green consumerism (Cox, 2009), but it shares with these other labels the idea that citizens should play an important role in changing social practices. It is noticeable that while PE does not seem to play a role in the discourses of ecological modernization or green governmentality, it occupies a very central position in discourses of civic environmentalism, where issues such as environmental justice, community activity, and citizen participation are foregrounded.

### Analytical Framework

In our investigation of discursive constructions of citizen participation in discourses of climate change, we assume that discourses both enable and constrain citizen participation. By *discourses* here we mean “specific ensembles of ideas, concepts and categorization that are produced, reproduced and transformed in a particular set of practices” (Hajer, 1995, p. 45). To explore our assumption, we perform a detailed study of actor identity and agency, using linguistic and visual analysis. Taking inspiration from systemic functional linguistics (Butt, Fahey, Feez, Spinks, & Yallop, 2000; Halliday, 1994; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004) and critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2003), we identify actors and the semantic processes these actors occur in. In this process, we analyse diathesis (active and passive) and Grammatical

Metaphor, commonly known as nominalization.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, we look at speech functions, grammatical mood, and modality in order to explore how citizens are called upon to act and to what extent citizens are included as actors with some element of (moral) obligation. For the analysis of the visual elements, we draw on the social semiotic approach put forward by Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) and van Leeuwen (2005).

The two sets of data have been selected for analysis because they offer a *window of opportunity* (Scollon & Scollon, 2004) into climate change discourses as they circulate globally and locally. The first set of data consists of the “The Seven Aarhus Statements” which represent a vast selection of international actors, including scholars, scientists, civil society organizations, the corporate sector, and not least policy-makers and governments, and they may therefore be seen as representative of dominant voices contributing to “the grand narrative” of climate change (see also Carvalho & Burgess, 2005). The second set of data, two written documents and an introductory speech from the Energy Town Frederikshavn, brings us close to a local forum where the distance between actors is shorter and interaction is perhaps, therefore, more concrete. Our selection of data from the two communicative events has been motivated by a wish to show some of the complexity involved in studying a global issue and its local implications. Because of its international character, the Beyond Kyoto conference reaches into a global space, however with potentially strong implications for a local community like Frederikshavn. Similarly, although the Energy Town Frederikshavn project is primarily of a local nature, it is motivated by a global issue and may have an impact beyond the local community. Our interest in the local energy town project should thus be understood against a background of climate change affecting the whole world.

### **Citizen Participation in Climate Change Discourses at a Global Scale**

During 2009 a multitude of climate change activities and conferences were organized around the world, prior to the United Nations Summit meeting, COP15 in Copenhagen. One such pre-conference, *Beyond Kyoto: Addressing the Challenges of Climate Change*, was organized by Aarhus University, in co-operation with several other Danish universities, public authorities, enterprises, and civil society groups. In his opening speech, the Rector of Aarhus University presented the conference as a “synergetic environment and a platform for discussions between important stakeholders from the private sector as well as the public sector.”<sup>4</sup> In the spirit of the Aarhus Convention (see above) the participants represented civil society as well as private and public-sector institutions. The conference, with more than 1,000 participants, was organized around seven themes:<sup>5</sup> Climate Policy: the role of Law and Economics; Biodiversity and Ecosystems; Agriculture and Climate Change; Nanotechnology solutions for the future; Citizens and Society; The Arctic and Integrated Energy Solutions. In all of the seven theme fora, participants were encouraged to think beyond Kyoto in terms of creating innovative solutions founded on sustainable development. At the end of the conference, a conclusive document

with seven statements for climate change was produced.<sup>6</sup> The document did not have legislative status; rather it inspired to constitute what Carvalho and Burgess (2005) have referred to as a “critical discourse moment”—a moment that moves the process further and potentially paves the way toward future binding agreements.

The overriding problem in the seven *Beyond Kyoto* statements, henceforth referred to as position statements, is that the climate is changing with potentially devastating consequences for biodiversity and ecosystems around the world. However, rather than presenting climate change as a problem in explicit terms, the position statements offer solutions which all seem to promise that climate change can be mitigated. Essentially, three approaches to ensuring a sustainable energy future are salient in the texts. These are articulated through what we referred to in the section entitled “The Role of Citizen Participation in Climate Change Discourses” above as discourses of *ecological modernization*, *green governmentality*, and *civic environmentalism*, all suggesting solutions to climate change problems. The position statements are illustrative of discourses promising to solve climate change problems being contested (Fairclough, 2003) by discourses giving prominence to risk and threat as illustrated in one position statement on biodiversity and ecosystems: “It is scientifically clear that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, climate change and human land-use constitute major threats to biodiversity” (“Beyond Kyoto, Theme 2”, 2009). Looming tragedy is given prominence and calls for protection of nature, biodiversity, and fragile ecosystems. In this approach the very survival of nature—and not just standards of living—is at stake. In the statements analysed, one response to looming tragedy consists in promoting new green technologies, thus creating a situation where green growth will enable us to retain comfortable lives, while meeting CO<sub>2</sub> neutrality requirements. In other words ecological modernization is called for, and green governmentality with its focus on stronger legal frameworks seems to supplement measures to counteract the destruction of nature.

A comparison of the discursive construction of citizen agency in the seven position statements shows that in spite of limited variation in generic structure, there is noticeable stylistic variation in terms of differences in the complexity of clause patterns. Despite such variation, the texts seem to share the feature of impersonality resulting from many examples of passive diathesis and further accentuated by the many Grammatical Metaphors characteristic of the language of science (Halliday & Martin, 1993). Grammatical Metaphor is particularly frequent in clauses with relational processes (representations of “being” or “having”) because the information is conveyed through a nominal group rather than through a material process as shown in example 1: “The involvement of civil society is crucial in both negotiating and implementing international treaties and protocols on climate issues” (“Beyond Kyoto, Theme 1”, 2009). In example 1, “the involvement” constitutes a Grammatical Metaphor. In essence, the process “to involve” is given nominal status with the effect that the agent is elided. If unpacked, the clause might read: “We must involve civil society” where modal responsibility is given to the actor “we”; however, the agent might be even more specific if the clause was rendered as “X must involve civil society,” where X might represent “project leaders” or “Mayors.” A further problem

illustrated by the example is the vagueness and impersonality of the text. A concept such as “civil society” incorporates citizenry without being specific about who the citizens are. It thus does not address any particular group of citizens, which might present a barrier to PE. We may thus say that the combination of processes in the passive voice, Grammatical Metaphors and semantic imprecision tends to make the texts vague, impersonal, and unclear because we are not told in more specific terms who should initiate action and who should act. In other words, the identities of the agents are blurred.

One might expect the speech function of command, realized through the imperative mood, to constitute a more direct way of addressing a receiver, for example, citizens. Although most of the statements do not use imperatives, two of the texts deviate from this pattern in the sense that they have a high frequency of imperatives as illustrated in example 2: “Change the global public dialogue about climate change” (“Beyond Kyoto, Theme 5”, 2009). In the context of the position statement genre, the command serves as a recommendation on how to solve the climate change problem; however, it is not clear who is called upon to instigate the change as the identity of the addressee is not revealed. This further adds to the imprecision caused by passive voice processes and Grammatical Metaphors, features that seem to be strikingly similar among the seven texts.

#### *How is Citizen Participation Constructed?*

In our exploration of PP, let us now look at how citizens are constructed in the seven position statements, along with other actors. In no particular order, a vast number of potential actors are positioned as responsible for action, for example, policy makers, legislators and politicians at all levels, scientists, business entrepreneurs and farmers, international donors, investors, the media and among these also members of civil society. Many of these are not mentioned explicitly but inferred from context, as illustrated through example 3: “Far greater efforts are needed to ensure the involvement of the private sector and civil society in climate solutions” (“Beyond Kyoto, Theme 1”, 2009). The example, drawing on a green governmentality discourse through the implicit reference to a need for governmental action (*efforts to ensure the involvement*), does not explicitly mention who should be held responsible for making “far greater efforts,” but due to our knowledge about political processes, we may infer that the actor called upon to act might be governments and other political authorities because they have the power to involve the private sector and civil society. In this case citizens would be so-called invited participants, reminding us of the importance of Delgado et al.’s (2010) tensions,<sup>7</sup> here exemplified through a normative rationale of democracy.

While there seems to be an overwhelming amount of implicit agency in the texts pointing to numerous potential actors, there are only very few examples of citizens being mentioned, which may seem a paradox in the light of the Aarhus Convention. Citizens are neither addressed nor implicitly called upon to act, and in most of the texts there are very few examples of citizens referred to as potential actors. As might



be expected, the text most concerned with citizen involvement is a text produced by the thematic group on citizens and society, where the Aarhus Convention is mentioned specifically. Although citizens are not addressed explicitly, the issue of citizen empowerment is raised, as shown in example 4, which is one of the rare examples where civic environmentalism is encouraged: “The agreement to be adopted at CoP-15 should include the commitments of the Aarhus convention as well as incentives to support participation and empowerment of the citizens” (“Beyond Kyoto, Theme 5”, 2009). The citizens are called upon to act, but in a very indirect way by referring to “incentives to support participation and empowerment of the citizens,” and it is unclear who should offer these “incentives” if the principle were to be adopted. Similar observations may be made from example 5 taken from the same text: “Involve the general public in the discussion of climate solutions and reconsider the role of education systems” (“Beyond Kyoto, Theme 5”, 2009). Citizens are referred to as the general public and an imperative is used to encourage action, however without a specific addressee.

In other parts of the texts, citizen participation is constructed as a cognitive rather than a material process. For instance, in example 6 the importance of making international regulations accessible to the general public implicitly reflects the Aarhus Convention’s demands for accessibility: “[...] international regulations should be formulated in a way which can be accepted and understood by citizens” (“Beyond Kyoto, Theme 1”, 2009). However, citizens are not directly part of this process; rather, policy-makers are indirectly blamed for excluding the general public from access to information about environmental matters. In the context, the discourse is an example of green governmentality stimulating environment-friendly reform through good governance.

Finally, in example 7 a discourse advocating civic environmentalism, refers to, but does not address, citizens from the Arctic region: “Ensure a sustainable development of the Arctic region in collaboration with the local population” (“Beyond Kyoto, Theme 6”, 2009). Here the imperative mood seems to be used to address government officials and administrators in the arctic region, encouraging them to go into dialog with local citizens about protecting nature. However, the initiative is to be taken by administrators, not by people in the Arctic region, who are constructed as a circumstance to action needed. We thus see the interplay of a civic environmentalism discourse with the discourse of green governmentality, without these discourses genuinely addressing let alone involving the citizens.

In addition to the imperative mood, a number of other linguistic features are used for expressing deontic modality. For instance, modal verbs are frequently used like in example 8: “The architecture of public funds should be designed to promote further private investments [...]” (“Beyond Kyoto, Theme 1”, 2009). Or less frequently with “must” as shown in example 9: “We must increase agricultural productivity and use less water and land” (“Beyond Kyoto, Theme 3”, 2009). In the latter example, “must” expresses a kind of moral obligation to act, in order to make sure there is enough food for everybody in the future. Obligation is also frequently realized as relational clauses, such as it “is essential, it is necessary, it is important or it is crucial that . . .”

(“Beyond Kyoto, Themes 1, 2, 4, and 7”, 2009). As illustrated in example 10: “The development of agricultural practices with a high resilience to climatic variability and better use and management of water is essential” (“Beyond Kyoto, Theme 3”, 2009). Again, in this example a moral obligation is placed on whoever is responsible for developing agricultural practices, however without explicitly mentioning an actor. The examples have shown the speech function of obligation to be a salient feature in all the texts analysed; however there seems to be no precise identification of actor responsibility and actor identity in any of the discourses operating in the seven position statements, whether ecological modernization, green governmentality, or civic environmentalism.

### **Citizen Participation in Climate Change Discourses on a Local Scale**

On a local scale, several municipalities in Denmark have taken action on preventing climate change and developing renewable energy sources. Among the front-runners is the municipality of Frederikshavn in northern Denmark, which has set the goal of 100% reliance on renewable energy sources in 2015 for the largest part of the municipality with a total of 25,000 inhabitants. The decision to become an Energy Town had been approved unanimously by the city council in 2007 in Frederikshavn, and in 2008 an organization was set up including a steering board, a secretariat, and five working groups. The working groups deal with local energy supply, municipal institutions such as schools and kindergartens, local businesses, research and educations, and local citizens. In what follows we will analyse a part of the initial communication in the working group concerning local citizens.

The first meeting in the group took place in 2009 on January 27. To attract citizens, a press release was sent out and a letter of invitation published on the website of the Energy Town. Information about the meeting was also diffused through local media and the secretariat used word-of-mouth toward people who had formerly participated in citizen driven activities. About 50 people turned up at the meeting, where the project director gave a short introduction to the Energy Town, followed by group work aimed at generating ideas for the Energy Town. In our analysis we will focus on the invitation letter, the press release, and the introductory speech by the director of the Energy Town.

#### *How is Citizen Participation Constructed?*

The *invitation letter* is divided into two parts, an image to the left, and a written text to the right. The image (see Appendix 1, exhibit 1) shows a youngish woman and a somewhat older man lying on their backs on a green grass-like layer. The man wears a blue shirt whereas the woman wears a white, silk-like shirt, and light grey trousers. Both have their sleeves rolled up. The man and woman are holding hands, and the image thereby constitutes what Kress/van Leeuwen have termed a bidirectional narrative process (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996); narrative in the sense that the participants are represented as acting or “*doing* something to or for each other” (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 56). The scene is not romantic, though; since their

second arm is stretched out the same way, the man and woman rather seem to form part of a larger group of people lying on the grass. Another indication of the absence of romance is that they do not look at each other, but have their heads turned away from each other and glance in different directions, while smiling, thereby expressing a reaction to something outside the image frame. All in all, the image offers an experience of community and of having a relaxed and good time. It also conveys a sense of being unconventional (lying on the grass holding hands in a group), but without going to extremes (the casual, but conventional clothing). Furthermore, the saturated colors and distinctive forms of the image imply clarity and orderliness. The energetic facial expressions and the rolled-up sleeves may connote a readiness for beginning to work. Finally, the image is decontextualized (Machin & van Leeuwen, 2007) in the sense that very little information is given about time, place, and circumstances; apart from the two persons, their clothing, and the grass, no other objects are visible. It is up to the reader to apply the general sense of relaxedness, energy and community to specific situations. This image may be seen as a visual construction of the invited citizens, for example, middle-aged, moderately unconventional, positive and orderly citizens prepared for making an effort and open for change.

The written text of the invitation letter is divided into two fields.<sup>8</sup> The smaller upper part with headline and a lead sentence sticks out from the lower part and forms a link between the image and the rest of the written text. The headline reads "The Energy Town Frederikshavn is looking for activists," which, in order for the text to be multimodal and cohesive, seems to imply that the persons at the image represent such "activists." Apart from being set in larger types than the rest of the text, the headline is written in bright green color, forming a visual rhyme with the grass on the image. Typographically, the headline is written in a typewriter-like font with wide serifs, and the word "activist" is singled out by the use of bold and capital letters. The typewriter font carries intertextual connotations to pamphlets used by activist groups, and thereby emphasizes the lexical meaning of the word "activists." This underscores a paradox in the invitation letter. Commonly, the notion of "activists" refers to people engaged in grass root movements, which are "uninvited" and operate outside established systems of power and often in opposition to these. As such, "activist" can be a key notion for a subject position within a discourse of civic environmentalism. In the invitation letter, however, the Energy Town as a municipal organization makes a call for activists. The Energy Town thereby appropriates the term "activists" within a frame of institutionally initiated and supported "activism," which seems to indicate a discourse of green governmentality. The citizen reader of the text is thus called upon to act as an activist, but in a new, modified sense of the word.

In the introductory paragraph of the lower text field, the reader is addressed directly and individually through the personal and possessive pronouns ("you," "your"). The semantic processes are mainly material ("put," "give," "make happen") with "you" as actor in imperative or declarative clauses. The citizens are thus clearly called upon to act. At the same time, the kind of action they are called upon to do is

rather vague (“put your fingerprint on,” “give some of your own energy,” “make something happen”). The paragraph foregrounds the opportunity for making a personal impact on the Energy Town, not the content or character of that impact. It is a call for doing and giving, not for a specified form of activity. The beneficiary of the giving is “the town,” which may be seen as an appeal to local patriotism. This also contributes to modifying the conventional meaning of the notion activist; in the first sentence of the introductory paragraph, it is textually implied that to put one’s fingerprint on the Energy Town will lead to an identity as an activist.

The last part of the text sketches out the program of the first meeting. In this part, “we” is the most frequent subject, all in material processes (“create,” “make,” “contribute to”) where “we” may refer to the participants at the meeting or include other citizens in Frederikshavn as well. The text offers a bit more information about the character of the activist activities; to create “green growth” and make the Energy Town “attractive” are implied in the program questions as two purposes to be pursued. The former is a clear example of the discourse of ecological modernization, due to the notion of green growth, and is furthermore the only place in the invitation letter where the purpose of the Energy Town is mentioned. In contrast to the introductory paragraph, however, the Energy Town is represented in the program list as a given entity. The questions “What is the Energy Town?” (first item) and “how do we make the Energy Town attractive?” (last item) both presuppose that the Energy Town is a given entity which can be described or made attractive. While the introductory paragraph represents the Energy Town as something to be influenced by the participating citizens, the program list represents it as an entity to be promoted by the citizens. In that sense, two very different “activist” identities are made available.

The *press release* consists of only written text, except the green Energy Town logo, and entails many of same discursive elements as the invitation letter. But there are also several additions: firstly, the addressee is more explicit in that “citizens of Frederikshavn” are invited to participate. The text states that “no particular qualifications” are needed to become an “Energy Town activist,” and in a self-quotation from the project director two possible citizen motivations for energy saving are touched upon: to “do a noble deed” or “because it is often good for the bottom line.” In that sense, the press release is careful about not excluding some citizens from participating.

Secondly, and in line with this openness, the form and extent of participation is described as “completely of one’s own accord.” The vague activities of “giving some of one’s energy” and “making things happen” are also present in the press release, but unlike in the invitation letter a number of more specific activities are listed, for instance to “raise the profile of the Energy Town, participate in meetings, diffuse the knowledge [of the Energy Town] to others or perhaps to start energy reducing projects.” These specifications are offered with low deontic modality (“can be,” “could be”), avoiding explicit obligations. At the same time though, “citizen support and participation” is described as a “prerequisite” for realizing the Energy Town goal of a 100% renewable energy supply by 2015. The importance of citizen participation

is thus emphasized without raising moral demands on the citizens. This may be viewed as an example of green governmentality where citizens are invited and motivated, but not commanded or ‘moralized’ to take part in a municipal project. Thirdly, the citizens or activists appear in a broader range of semantic processes. Apart from the role as actor in material processes, which is still the most frequent, the citizens or activists also appear as beneficiaries in material processes (“will be offered classes”), as sensor in mental processes (“want to save energy”), sayer in verbal processes (“are allowed a voice”), and in Grammatical Metaphors (“citizen support and participation”).

Finally, more background information about the organization of the Energy Town is given. It is mentioned that “the roadmap for transformation to renewal energy has been approved by the board and the city council,” and that “many of the renewable energy installations are going to be realised.” Here, the Energy Town is represented as a well-defined project to be implemented. Similar to the invitation letter, a tension can be observed throughout the press release between citizen participation as implementation of a roadmap, in line with a discourse of green governmentality, and as bringing about ideas and activities which may take a less predictable path, more in line with a discourse of civic environmentalism.

We finish the analysis of the Energy Town with a short view of the project director’s *introductory speech* at the first meeting in the “activist” group. In referring to the potential participants in the project, the director primarily uses the term “citizens” or addresses the audience directly (“you”), but the notion “activists” is used as well. The project director defines it as “people who are active for a good cause,” thereby leaving out semantic elements about independence from and opposition to established systems.

The speech identifies challenges to which the Energy Town can be seen as an answer and points to further advantages of the Energy Town. The director emphasizes that “the whole municipality must benefit from the process in the form of new interesting jobs and development in general.” He quotes and aligns with a statement by the then prime minister Fogh Rasmussen that it is very important to “become independent of fossil fuels and at the same time create a new Danish business adventure with lots of new jobs based on local energy production.” Finally, an economic argument for the private households is put forward: “The only thing we can be sure of, is that if we do not shift to renewable energy, it will in any case be more expensive.” The importance of the project is thus legitimized by reference to local (and national) business opportunities and job creation as well as to energy independence. The focus on job creation is well in line with the discourse of ecological modernization. Again, concerns about environmental problems, global climate change, or obligations toward “distant others” are not voiced. The kind of citizen participation called for in the speech can be illustrated by the following quote:

It is extremely important that you are here today. Because, we may well set the overall outline for what it takes for us to shift to 100% renewable energy. We know we need to build some big plants, and we know we need to expand our wind power production [. . .] and we need to extend with a new large biogas plant. These are the

kinds of installations that are needed. But we can't do it unless the citizens in Frederikshavn back up the project 100%. We need to kind of create a change of attitude, we need a lot of feedback from the citizens [...].<sup>9</sup>

The quote stresses emphatically the importance of citizen participation and the need for citizens to participate if the Energy Town is to succeed (“extremely important that you are here today,” “we can't do it unless the citizens in Frederikshavn back up the project 100%”). Similar to the press release, citizen participation is constructed as a prerequisite for the success of the Energy Town. At the same time, the speaker expresses certainty about what to do, using high deontic modality (“we need to build some big plants,” “we need to expand our wind power production”). Moreover, the main actor in material processes is not the citizens, but the exclusive “we” referring to the Energy Town representatives. Thus, the citizens are not invited to define the Energy Town, at least when it comes to “the overall outlines.” Instead the citizens at the meeting are invited to engage in a “dialog” and to help “lift” the project. This seems to aim at bringing about a change of attitude among the citizens of Frederikshavn, so that they will “back up the project 100%.” Likewise, “feedback” from the citizens and the Energy Town is evaluated as “extremely important.” The participating citizens, the “activists,” are thus called upon to help implement the Energy Town by functioning as mediators between the Energy Town and the other citizens in Frederikshavn. This instrumental role for the participating citizens seems to reflect the top-down orientation of the discourse of green governmentality.

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

The purpose of this article has been to investigate how and to what extent citizen participation is constructed in selected cases representing two different communicative events. Concerning the reflection of the three hegemonic discourses identified in our literature review, our analyses indicated that these discourses were drawn upon in both sets of data, however in varying degrees. In the seven position statements from the Kyoto conference the business sector was strongly represented among stakeholders participating in the conference, and in that sense most of the conclusive documents were framed within discourses of ecological modernization while at the same time addressing elements of risk and threat caused by new technologies. Along with ecological modernization discourses, and with purposes that do not seem to conflict with ideas of green growth, green governmentality discourses seemed to be used to enable a double aim of growth and climate change mitigation—a “positive-sum-game” suggested by Tirkkonen (as cited in Vihersalo, 2008). As far as addressing the objective of the Aarhus Convention in terms of citizen engagement, the majority of statements barely considered citizens' access to information about science. Although one statement, entitled *Citizens and Society*, assigned roles to citizens, this was very much suggested as top-down approaches to citizen involvement, and discourses of civic environmentalism, therefore, seemed to play a very limited role in the seven position statements.

In the texts from the Energy Town, the discourses of civic environmentalism, green governmentality, and ecological modernization could all be observed, although in very different ways. The discourse of civic environmentalism was drawn upon by the notion “activist,” but appropriated and reframed within a discourse of green governmentality, realized through assumed purposes and goals for the project. However, there was also a tension between assuming a roadmap for the Energy Town and inviting citizens to participate through self-orchestrated activities. The discourse of ecological modernization played an important role in the material, since it was drawn upon for legitimizing the project. More specifically, the discourse of ecological modernization was “localized,” in that green technology was presented as a growth opportunity for local jobs and businesses. Whereas considerations for (globally) distant others were not present in the material, considerations for others in the local community were central.

When it comes to citizen participation, we also observed differences in the two sets of data. The various ways of constructing actor responsibility in the seven position statements from the Kyoto conference were characterized by vagueness and implicitness, even when the imperative mood was used. This may have been a result of the conference being a staged event based on routine social practices and guidelines as to how the statements should be produced. In line with these guidelines, the conclusive documents were formed as statements of intention rather than recipes for action. None of the statements contained any voices refuting the existence of climate change. All the statements strongly advocated action and also pointed out a vast number of actors to be held responsible for taking action, but the identity of the actors responsible for taking action was far from clear. It may be argued, of course, that the position statements were simply written up in accordance with characteristic genre features. However, we suggest that alternative approaches that specifically address and aim at changing social practices might be possible. One such alternative approach would be to point out more specifically who is responsible for taking action in the local community.

In contrast to the seven position statements from the Beyond Kyoto conference, the addressee of the Energy Town texts was more clearly defined. Citizens of Frederikshavn were invited to participate, without any restrictions concerning skills or experience. Moreover, different citizen motivations were explicitly referred to and included. On the other hand, and again in contrast to the seven position statements, the kind of action that citizens were called upon to do, was either vague or had to be inferred from the description of the Energy Town. The focus was on citizens being active and participating, rather than on particular actions or activities. The citizens were thus called upon to take responsibility for their local community, but without being constructed as morally obliged to act. Instead, it was implied that they might profit personally from the Energy Town, either by cutting their energy expenses or by realizing their personal potential by participating in the project. The call for local generosity thus went together with an opportunity for personal savings and for self-realization.

As for the topics of tensions concerning PP, remarkable similarities can be observed between the two sets of data. Both seem to reflect a lack of awareness and decisiveness

as regards the choices to be made in order to navigate in the complex landscape of PP. We have observed vagueness in our data when it comes to the five tensions: rationales, relevant participants, invited vs. self-organizing forms, when to involve, and context sensitivity. Dealing with these tensions more explicitly would be an opportunity for improving the practical application of citizen participation, for example, a clear identification and interpellation of the persons responsible for taking action (Beyond Kyoto Statements) and a clear identification of the types of action needed (Energy Town Frederikshavn). In order to increase citizen participation in climate change solutions, there seems to be a need for more explicit and specific communication to actors about actions on both a global and a local level.

## Notes

- [1] UNECE's website: <http://www.unece.org/env/pp/> (retrieved on 30 June 2010).
- [2] In the study of such complexity, Delgado et al. (2010) refer to Collines and Evans (2007), Jasanoff (2003), Macnaghten, Kearnes, and Wynne (2005), Nowotny, Scott, and Gibbons (2001), Pidgeon and Rogers-Hayden (2007), Wilsdon (2005), Wynne (2006, 2007).
- [3] For a detailed discussion of Grammatical Metaphor, see Simon-Vandenberg, Taverniers, and Ravelli (2003).
- [4] Program for the Beyond Kyoto conference, p. 3.
- [5] The seven position statements are referred to as themes 1–7 as in-text citation.
- [6] The seven statements are available from this link: [http://www.klima.au.dk/uploads/media/7\\_Aarhus\\_statements\\_on\\_climate\\_change\\_09.03.18.pdf](http://www.klima.au.dk/uploads/media/7_Aarhus_statements_on_climate_change_09.03.18.pdf) (retrieved on 1 July 2010).
- [7] Delgado's tensions (2010) were explained in the introduction.
- [8] An English translation of the text can be found in the Appendix 1, exhibit 2.
- [9] The original Danish text is available from the authors.

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## Appendix 1.

Exhibit 1. Invitation letter, image.

Exhibit 2. English translation of the invitation letter (dated 2009) from the Energy Town Frederikshavn (original Danish text available from authors).

*Headline:*

The Energy Town Frederikshavn is looking for activists.

*Sub-line:*

We will start Tuesday the 27th of January at 7 p.m. in the Musical House, Frederikshavn.

*Introductory paragraph:*

Put your fingerprint on the way which the Energy Town should be now and in the future and become one of the Energy Town's new activists.

As energy Town ACTIVIST you give some of your energy to the town and make something happen—alone or with others—with the help of the Energy Town.

*Programme:*

19.00 What is the Energy Town Frederikshavn? Introduction by Mikael Kau, director of the Energy Town Frederikshavn.

19.20 Film about the Energy Town.

19.25 How do we create “green” growth in the municipality? Presentation by Kaj Christensen, chairman of the Frederikshavn “Erhvervsrådet.”

19.40–21.00 How do we make the Energy Town attractive? How can each of us contribute to the project? Energy Town ACTIVIST Jens Ole Amstrup will get the good ideas going with questions and workshops.