What Does it Mean to Declare a Climate Emergency?

Why Narratives Matter in the Movement to Address Climate Change

Dr. Sarah Marie Wiebe

Department of Political Science | Assistant Professor
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East-West Centre, University of Hawai‘i, Mānoa
A key moment for democracy
Our Current Climate Emergency

• **A sense of urgency:** climate change is a public health matter, a moral emergency, a security threat; need to address all systems

• **A long emergency:** rising sea levels, diseases such as cancer, acute poverty and the struggle to meet basic needs

• **Emergency mode:** warlike conditions, shifting resources

• **Global movements, local actions:** over 1,000 municipalities have declared climate emergencies around the world

• **Multilevel action:** these declarations can spark other levels of government to respond
Subvert narratives
Emergency Mode: From Fear to Flow

“No one has been more inspiringly clear-eyed about the climate emergency or what it demands than Margaret Klein Salamon. Here, she is just as clear-eyed, and just as inspiring, laying out the path forward—and how to bring everyone along that path, out of pluralistic ignorance and into mobilization.”

- David Wallace Wells, author The Uninhabitable Earth
Democracy, Narratives and Action

• Framing & reframing: feeling climate change
• Changing public discourse affects how people see and feel the changing climate
• Shift to an emergency frame-of-mind and mode of being
• Beyond incrementalism
• From helplessness to action
Storytelling, Sensing Policy & Dreaming Together

• Moving beyond the dominant narratives:
  o Climate denial
  o Doom and gloom

• How are people *living with* climate change and envisioning alternative futures

• **What does climate emergency feel like?**
  o Situated stories, lived-experiences, multiple values
  o Engaging the senses
Climate Justice as Policy Justice

• Equity and fairness
• Learning from widespread social, political, ecological, economic mobilization
• Listening to the voices of those at the frontlines
• Celebrating radical action and public engagement
• Addressing asymmetrical vulnerabilities
Art, Policy and Action

• The emergence of a climate movement and a structure for engagement
• Leadership, direction and support
• Responsive decision-making means avenues for community decision-making
• Effective communication requires policy listening
• Communication and coordination through crises
Climate Dialogue & Creative Connections

Dr. Sarah Marie Wiebe
Assistant Professor | Department of Political Science, University of Hawai‘i, Mānoa

(e) swiebe@hawaii.edu | (t) 808-369-4295
(w) www.sarahmariewiebe.com @smwiebe

Sensing Policy Workshop | The Art Gallery
Tuesday February 18th 2020 1:30-3:00 with Lala Nuss