

Interactive comment on “Agnotology: learning from mistakes” by R. E. Benestad et al.

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I would like to thank Ole Henrik Ellestad, leader for the organisation that calls itself “klimarealistene” for his comment on our paper. I notice that SC C291 was submitted through Jan-Erik Solheim, however, I will presume it reflects Ellestad’s views as his name is on the letterhead of the comment.

It’s surprising to read that Ellestad thinks our analysis does “not reflect the methodology required to draw the given conclusions”. Already in our abstract, we state that “we show that a number of papers in the scientific literature contain severe methodological flaws”, and on p.455 we state “We attempt to provide a comprehensive review by examining the methods used in an effort to replicate the results of a range of different studies, highlighting the value of replication”. Indeed, the cases presented in the appendix and the R-package replicationDemos provide our methods and analysis.

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So, exactly what methodology does he think would be required to draw conclusions like ours? I think he needs to be more specific. This is also the case regarding the alleged misquotations.

Ellestad should elaborate on why he does not think that our paper is scientifically sound. Has he found errors or mistakes in our analysis? I’d be happy to discuss such, as this would be in the spirit of agnotology: learning from mistakes.

I’d like to refer him back to my response to the comment from Solheim et al., and I maintain that our results are solid, based on the cases that we have analysed.

Ellestad thinks we intend to leave an impression of being concerned and knowledgeable about the principles of agnotology in climatology. However, several of my coauthors and I work as climate scientists at national meteorology services, and we are both concerned and knowledgeable.

We often speak to journalists and lay people, we follow the news, we read scientific papers, we attend scientific conferences, we pursue climate science, and we publish our results in the peer reviewed journals.

Ellestad makes the curious remark about tactic not science and a paradox associated with the “Hockey stick”. He also purports that the work by Mann et al., (1998) is “supported only among a gradually smaller group of scientists” [sic!]. No documentation nor evidence provided – pure handwaving.

Ellestad proceeds to declare that “klimarealistene” is non-political, without defining what he means by that. This is followed by a description of how the organization distributes material on climate research (e.g. from “ClimateGate”), a booklet on “alternative” views about climate change to schools, and points to “severe weaknesses of the AGW theory”.

However, he does not mention the fact that the late politician Sverre Korseth sr. from the far right “progressive party” used to be the leader of this organization, and that

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associates of “klimarealistene” have taught politicians from this party “climate skeptical” soundbites (by the way, we never claimed in our paper that the organisation was political, but perhaps we should?).

Ellestad argues that “klimarealistene” do not give input to research activities (as stated in Case 9; Humlum et al., 2013). However, in the acknowledgement of Humlum et al., (2013), the authors state that they “are finally grateful for informal discussions in Oslo with Drs. O.H. Ellestad [himself], O. Engvold, and P. Brekke. Also Drs. T.V. Segalstad and H. Yndestad has for long time been important sources of information and inspiration.” - all associated with “klimarealistene”.

The irony cannot be ignored here: the very comment of the leader of “klimarealistene”, Ole Henrik Ellestad, was submitted through Jan-Erik Solheim.

In fact, there is evidence suggesting that Ellestad’s assertion is false: an e-mail that went astray and ended up in my mailbox because it mentioned me, where Ellestad provides a remark on the Humlum et al. (2011) and Solheim et al. (2012) papers discussed in the appendix of our paper. It reveals how the papers were viewed as a piece in the strategy of “klimarealistene” (I only disclose some small excerpts here, translated to English):

From: Ole Henrik Ellestad [mailto:ole.henrik.ellestad@hotmail.com] Sent: 30 May 2011 17:50 To: j.e.solheim@astro.uio.no; Kjell Stordahl; Oddbjørn Engvold; Ole Humlum; Subject: Articles

“[I] think this with truncation and using the last part for evaluation, then take the forecast is exemplary in a field that is so full of subjective opinions... With these two [papers] and the two in FFV, klimarealistene are significantly better equipped in the battle by having documented good agreement between observations and mechanism. It takes a lot to dismiss this and I see the argument that they are struggling. [I] reckon that

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Benestad and ... are partly on a level no one would even dare to approach if they had not been backed by the IPCC and the press”.

I will maintain that Ellestad and “klimarealistene” are engaged in a propaganda campaign. On February 3rd 2012, Ellestad wrote a letter to the director at MET Norway in an attempt to gag me, after I had commented on the Humlum et al (2011) paper on the website of a Norwegian newspaper. (A scanned copy is available on-line: https://drive.google.com/?usp=chrome_app#folders/0B5ZHm1tjzEtDWjhWZmxIQzVVSWc)

references:

Humlum, O., Stordahl, K., Solheim, J.-E., 2013. The phase relation between atmospheric carbon dioxide and global temperature. *Glob. Planet. Change* 100, 51–69.

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Mann, M.E., Bradley, R.S., Hughes, M.K., 1998. Global-scale temperature patterns and climate forcing over the past six centuries. *Nature* 392, 779–787.

Solheim, J.-E., Stordahl, K., Humlum, O., 2012. The long sunspot cycle 23 predicts a significant temperature decrease in cycle 24. *J. Atmospheric Sol.-Terr. Phys.* 80, 267–284.

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