



Deliberation, Rhetoric, and Emotion in the Discourse on Climate Change in the European Parliament

Vebjorn Roald, Linda Sangolt

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Emotions and rationality are often seen as opposites, and as being in conflict. Modern democratic politics emphasizes the primacy of rational decision making without the interference of disturbing emotions. Political theorizing, in the same vein, tends to focus on the ratiocinative rather than the emotive. What is the relationship between emotions and deliberation in political discourse? Are emotions inimical to deliberative democracy? Or is lack of emotional engagement as detrimental to deliberation and decision-making as sheer emotionalizing? How can one systematically measure and appraise the role of emotions in political discussions? This book grapples with such questions through an analysis of three major plenary debates in the European Parliament (EP) concerning climate change policy in the period 1992-2007. Two different quantitative methods are used: the Discourse Quality Index which focuses on variables related to Habermas' ideal of deliberative democracy and an exploratory measure, the Textual Emotional Index. The latter is based on coding the emotional content of statements in which representatives give reasons for why they feel as they do about the issues they debate. The index traces eight emotions or emotional "triggers" in the climate change debates – pity, disappointment, indignation, hope, pride, joy, guilt and fear.

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