

A Comparative Study of Climate Change in National Media: North & South Perspectives

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Diffusing the climate message and forging climate policy

- Climate change – most likely the greatest challenge to humanity:
 - Dramatic implications (laws of nature are unnegotiable (Mc Gibbon))
 - Collective effects (affects us all)
 - Differentially in the first round (some countries are more dramatically struck (Maldives...))
 - Collectively in the second (migration, conflict, disorders, wars..)



Is there ground for common action?

- Can we join forces to fight the common foe?
- Is there a common understanding?
- Is there a will to mobilise?



Media Research Project

- Collaboration between 3 research teams in Ghana, Norway and China
- Wider multi-disciplinary international group of scholars and researchers, CERES²¹
- CERES²¹ (Creative Responses to Sustainability) study of problems over creative adaptation to climate change
- Norwegian Research Council funding

Research Approach

Purpose: to explore the framing of climate change in national media in

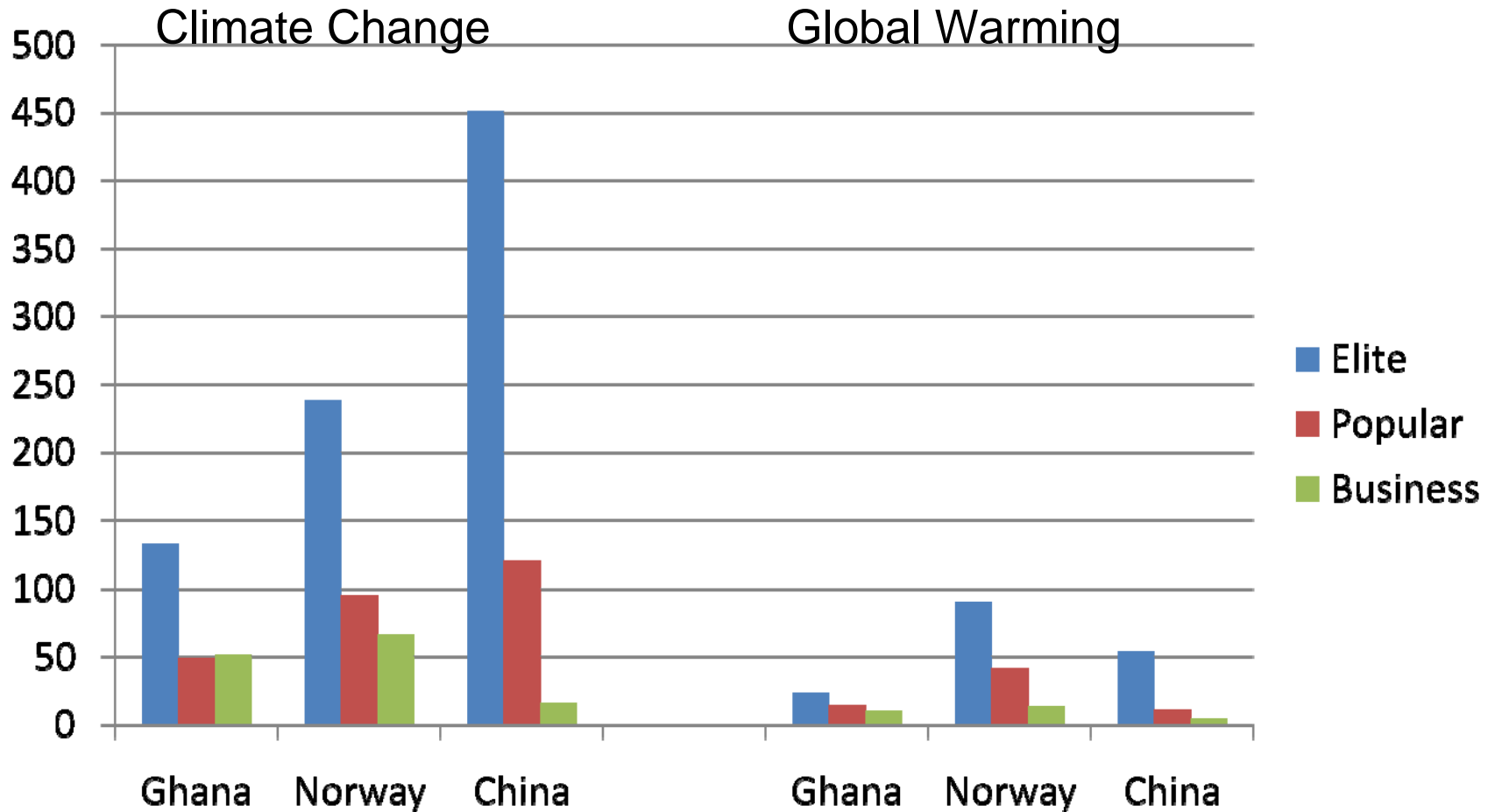
- 1. Ghana** - the poorer South (University of Ghana School of Communication Studies)
- 2. Norway** - the more affluent North (Norwegian School of Management, Oslo)
- 3. China** - the rapidly growing East (Sun Yat-Sen University School of Government, Guangzhou)

Research Methodology

- Three leading newspapers per country monitored
- An elite paper, a popular paper and a specialist business paper
- Monitoring over 6 months January/June 2008
- Keyword search on Climate Change and Global Warming
- Sample of 100 articles randomly selected for closer study
- Interviews with journalists/editors

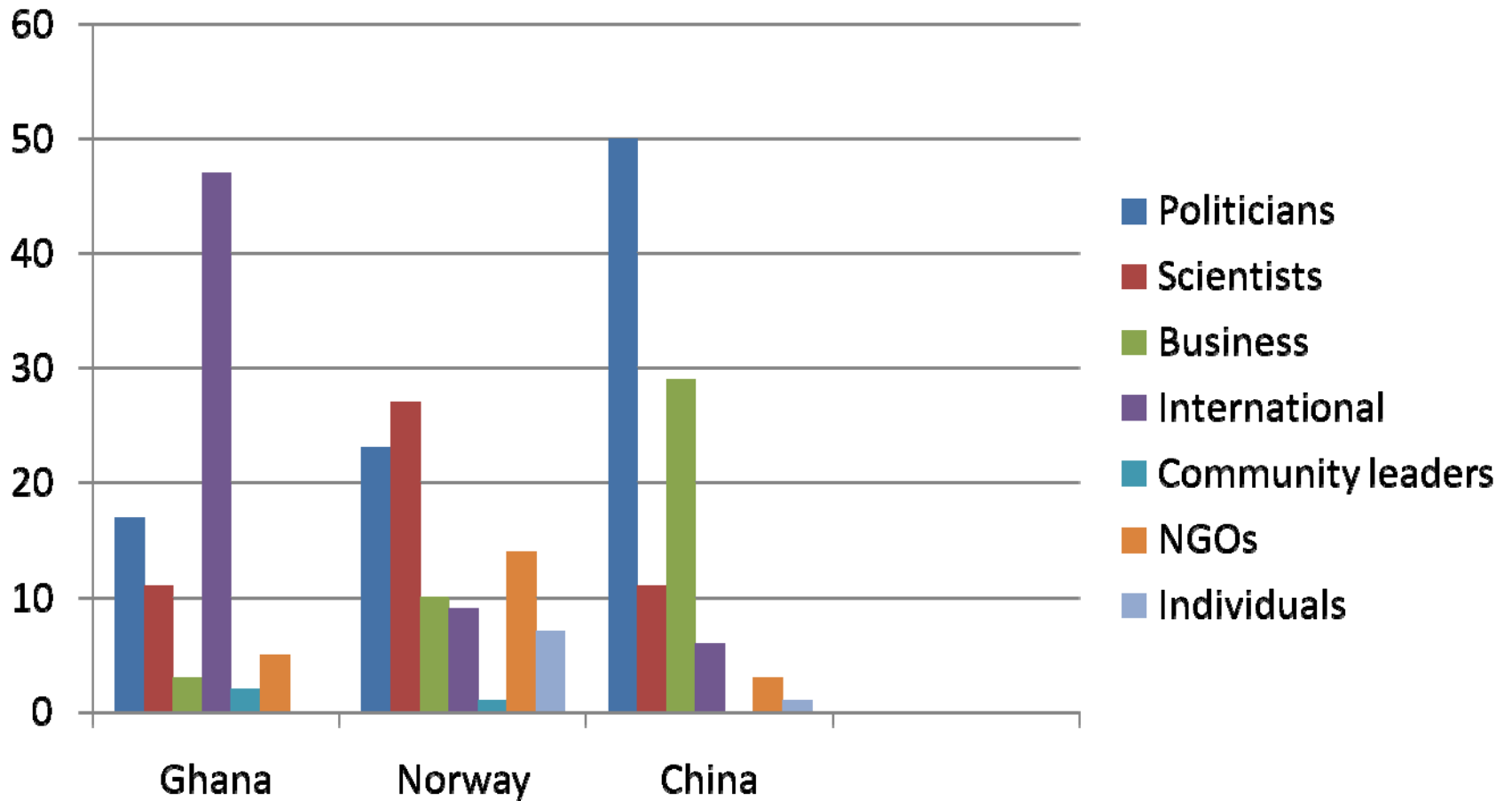
Content Analysis of Newspapers

(word counts)



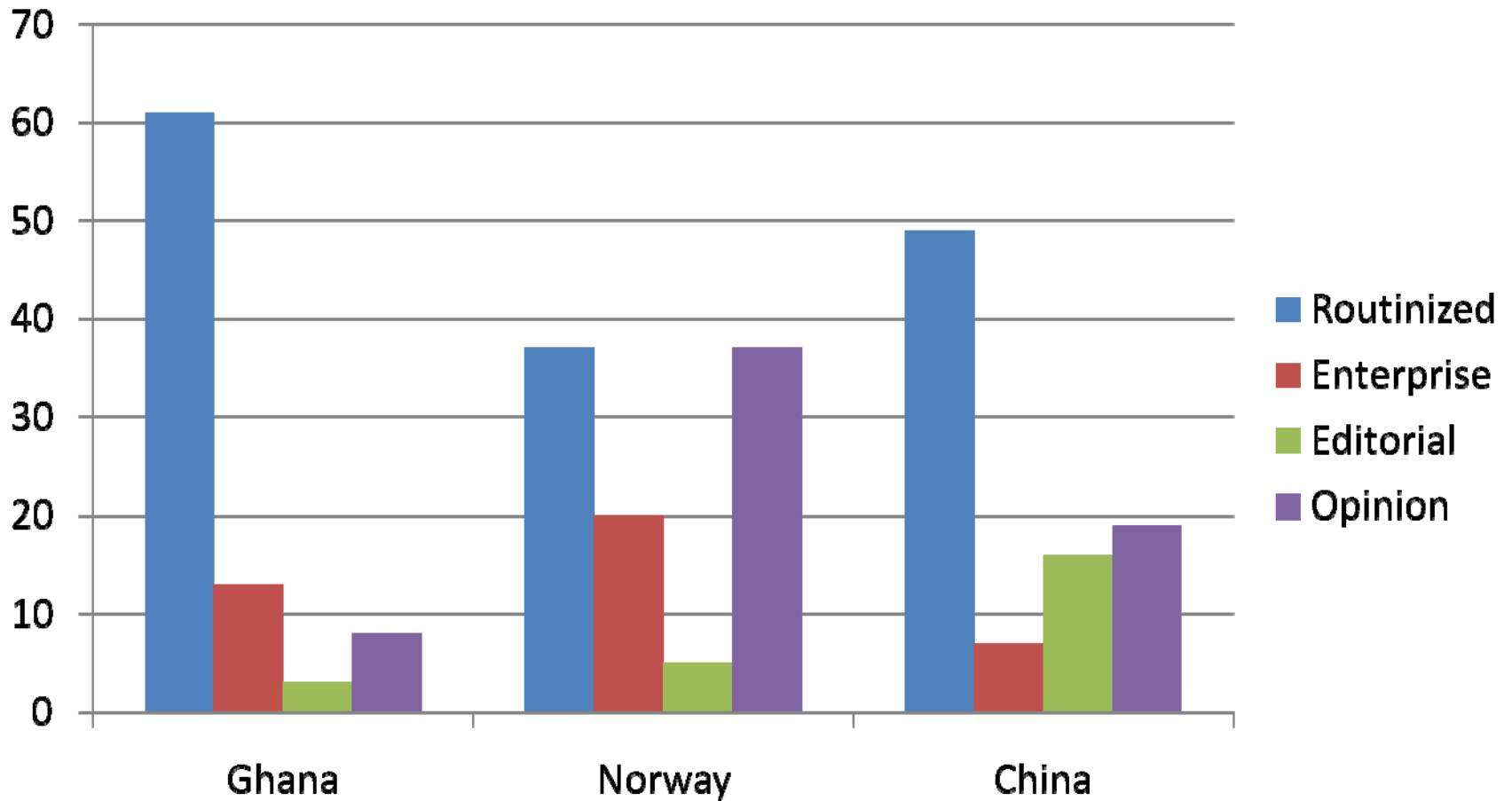
Sources of Stories

(numbers of articles)



Story Types

(numbers of articles)



Story Treatment

Prominence

- **Ghana** - stories tucked away inside except for “Accra Hosts Big Confab on Climate Change” front page lead
- **China** - story positioning related to governmental protocol, otherwise no favourable treatment
- **Norway** – more vigorous debate often gives stories prominent treatment **but** the only country to give significant space to contrarian views

“No big stories
come out of
that [climate
change]”

Ghanaian editor interviewed in
November 2008

Conclusions of Study

1. **Climate crisis treated nowhere as more than an important secondary or tertiary level concern**
2. **Coverage studied suggests countries face up to crisis by different forms of escapism:**
 - **Ghana** escapes into victim role – the problem is for the industrialised countries to solve
 - **Norway** is partly in denial but where action is deemed necessary prefers to intervene abroad to protect lifestyle
 - **China** escapes by staging rapid growth to be modified only after the West has done its job

Further Information



www.ceres21.org