

# Ethical questions related to research on petroleum activities

## Example of the UncAP project



Lev Lagorio. *Lofoten Island*, 1895

Anne Blanchard

ASFPG workshop, Hamburg, 12 - 14 October 2011



# UncAP in brief

- \* UncAP = ‘Uncertainty Assessments related to opening new Areas for Petroleum activity’
- \* Funded by the Research Council of Norway
- \* September 2011 - June 2013
- \* Now we turn to the **context, objectives** and **means** of UncAP

# Context: the Lofoten Islands

✧ A vulnerable area





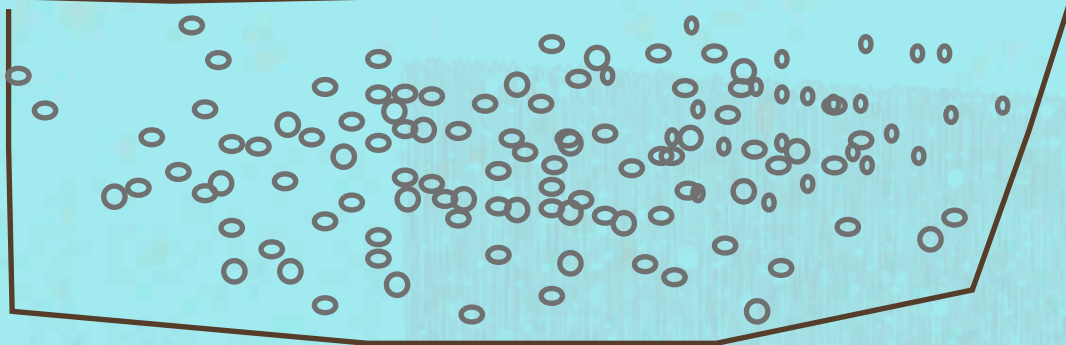
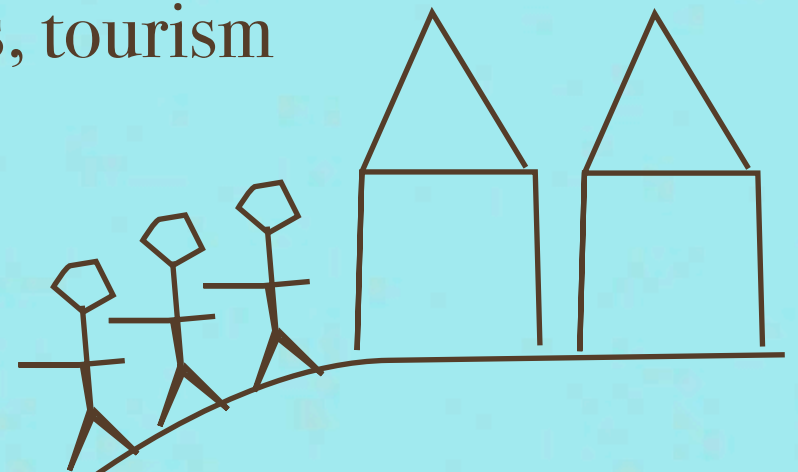
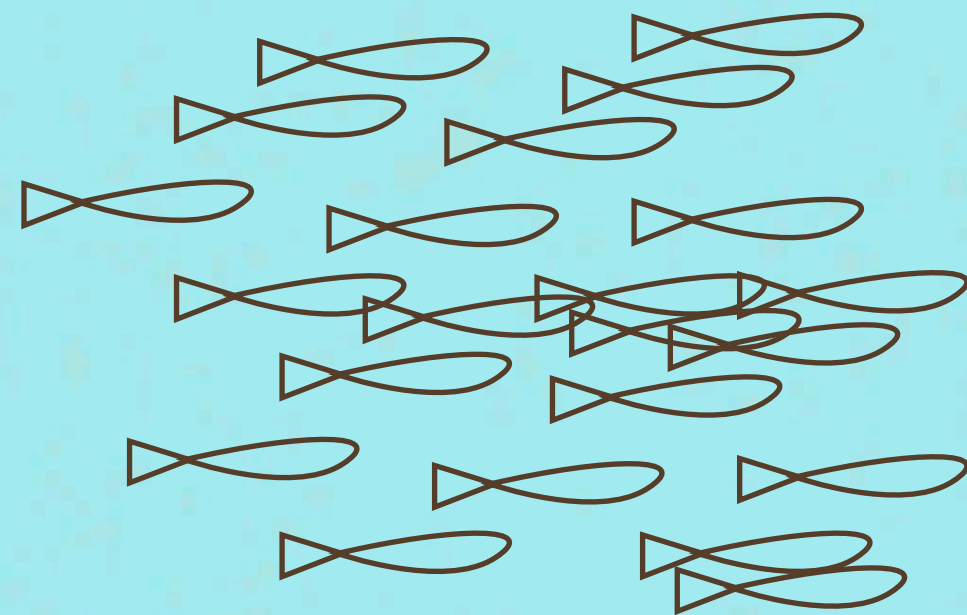
# Context: The Lofoten Islands

Important fish stocks  
(cod, halibut, herring,  
mackerel...)

Coastal populations (traditions, culture),  
fisheries, tourism

World's largest known  
deep-sea coral reef

Strong probability of  
reserves of oil and gas



# Context: The Lofoten Islands

Possibility of increasing  
industrial development and  
providing job opportunities

Risk of  
jeopardising  
ecosystems

Risk of impeding tourism  
and jeopardising fisheries



# Objectives of UncAP

- \* **Clarify the debate on uncertainties** around petroleum activities in the Lofoten
- \* **Derive recommendations** for the concrete application of the **precautionary principle**
- \* “When human activities may lead to morally unacceptable harm that is scientifically plausible but uncertain, actions shall be taken to avoid or diminish that harm” (Kaiser, 2006)
- \* **BUT: Natural scientists and petroleum engineers have different, often conflicting, interpretations of the principle**

# Means of UncAP

- \* Interdisciplinary project
  - \* Natural scientists, STS researchers, petroleum engineers; working towards achieving a broad and precise **classification of sources, types and relevance of uncertainties** surrounding the issue
- \* (Argument) Delphi method
  - \* To extend the classification of uncertainties to a **panel of various experts**, with different backgrounds and perspectives on the issue
  - \* **BUT:** This perspective on uncertainties remains within the domain of science / scientific expertise. *Rob, Emma and Scott's presentation on justification for participation*



# Ethical questions posed by UncAP

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- 1) How do we take into account the **social and human dimensions** of uncertainty?
- 2) How do we deal with our **own opinions, representations and normative stances** on the opening of new areas for petroleum activity in the Lofoten Islands?



# Reflexive dialogue / ‘double loop learning’

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- \* The two ethical questions draw similarities with the **dual loops of ‘social learning’** discussed by Argyris and Schön (1978)
- \* Single loop learning: ‘learning by doing’, scientific method, drawing on experiential or experimental knowledge
- \* Double loop learning: scrutiny of the values, assumptions and policies that led to the actions in the first place
- \* These questions might be dealt with through **reflexive dialogue**

# Reflexive dialogue for broadening our perspectives

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- \* Reflexive dialogue with local actors, in order to take into account the ‘social’ and ‘human’ dimensions of uncertainties:
  - \* Culture
  - \* Traditions
  - \* Norms
  - \* Values
- \* This reflexive dialogue will be implemented through small-scale, rather informal **discussions or interviews with inhabitants of Lofoten** area who are impacted (positively or negatively) by petroleum activities



# Reflexive dialogue for dealing with personal biases

- \* Reflexive dialogue between the UncAP members, in order to:
  - \* Share and discuss our **personal opinions** on the current and contentious issue of petroleum activities and governance of coastal zones
  - \* Make explicit our own **disciplinary representations of uncertainty**, and our personal **sensitivity to risk**
  - \* “While marine scientists are accused of hiding behind the precautionary principle, petroleum engineers are considered to lower risks of petroleum activities”
  - \* This reflexive dialogue will be partly achieved through a **shared literature review on uncertainties** related to petroleum activities in the Lofoten area

# But the project is only beginning

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\* We are thus particularly open to your comments and suggestions!



Zimbleman, *Northern Lights over Arctic Island*



Thank you!



Themistokles von Eckenbrecher, *Lofoten*, 1906



Boberg, *Lofotenlandskap*, 1920



Johnson, *Harbour under the Midnight Sun*, 1937