

4th ISOS PhD Retreat:

# Prepared for Social Responsibility? Understanding and Formulating Strategies for Responsible Use of Contemporary Science

A Report by ISOS PhD Students Mirjam S. Glessmer and Jonathan V. Durgadoo



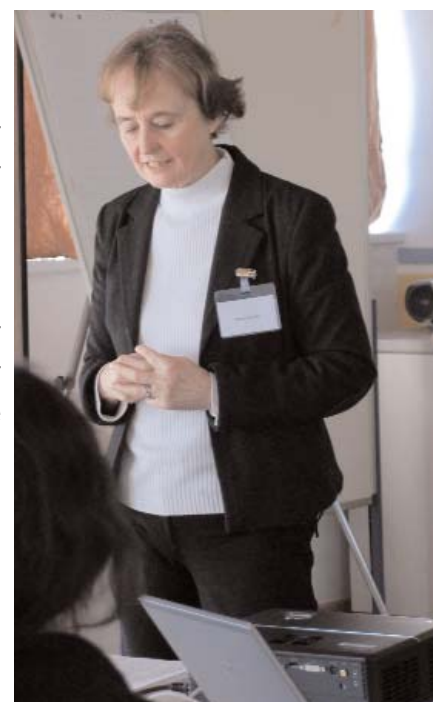
*Prof. Dr. Andreas Oschlies*

Have you ever had the feeling that an argument is completely flawed, but couldn't really pinpoint the exact reason why? A lot of us PhD students have felt that way. However, this has changed. While using gut-feeling feels like a powerful tool to assess arguments, we are now equipped with a systematic approach to tackle arguments.

For two days this March, 32 PhD students from the ISOS, the graduate school Human Development in Landscapes and the social sciences met for their annual retreat at the Jugenddorf Falkenstein, discussing the pertinent subject of social responsibility of scientists. The retreat was lead and taught by Associate Professor Tom Børsen and Nicolas König of Aalborg University Copenhagen. Everybody's attention was captivated the minute they introduced the subject.

In addition, we had the opportunity to meet two academics who act as role models for many of us. Prof Karin Lochte, director of the Alfred-Wegener-Institute for Polar Research, joined us on the first day and presented her personal experiences with dilemmas in a science and policy context. On the second day, Prof. Andreas Oschlies of IFM-GEOMAR told us about what he considered as a role model at the start of his scientific career and how this idealized picture changed over time. Their insights gave us a perspective of what issues we are likely to face in science, and examples of how to deal with them appropriately.

During these two days, we learnt how to (de)construct arguments, check their validity and evaluate the premises they contain. In small groups, we practiced breaking down statements into ethical categories using various



*Prof. Dr. Karin Lochte*



*ISOS PhD students preparing the presentation of their group work.*

texts - e.g. Björn Lomborg's "We should change tack on climate after Copenhagen" and climate sceptic S. Fred Singer's "Nature, Not Human Activity Rules the Climate".

We also learnt structured methods to deal with dilemmas and the so-called 'wicked problems'. We discussed in small groups, and came up with possible solutions for several dilemmas that either we feel we are in already, or that we think might face us at some point in our careers. While we certainly are not

looking forward to be confronted with such dilemmas, we know they are inevitable. At least, we now feel more confident that we might be able to cope with them in an ethical way. So all we need to learn now (and we are hoping to do that soon! Any ISOS decision maker listening? ;-)) is how to approach and confront people putting forward flawed arguments.



*'I found the topics discussed very useful and they stimulated a lot of discussion outside the retreat. I'm very happy to have attended this retreat and found thinking about these topics very useful. I would highly recommend continuing some form of ISOS activity on this topic.'*

*'I found it very useful to learn instruments that help to analyse the argumental strategies of different stakeholders.'*

*'Nice retreat, you managed to get really good teachers for your courses'*

*'Excellent course, very thought-provoking, thanks!'*