

A hackathon-like workshop to inspire dialogue and find solutions to improve climate services in Norway

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We have been working with climate services and municipalities for several years. Meetings and workshops often end up being discussions about the problems and misunderstandings inherent in the climate-service projects. We wanted to run a workshop that took a step back, put the problems on the table, and discussed how climate services can progress. We needed to design a workshop where the participants were put front and centre and were given time to understand each other and have a constructive dialogue.

Klimathon was a workshop with participants from local and county municipalities, climate research, the private sector, insurance, and other NGOs. The participants collaborated to find practical and strategic solutions for the problems they encounter in relation to climate adaptation at the local level. What made Klimathon different from other workshops was how we designed it. We borrowed ideas from the popular ‘hackathon’ concept to design the dialogue that the workshop required. The main element was that the participants would work intensively towards a goal in interdisciplinary or intersectoral groups over a period of 7-8 hours. We compiled the groups so that each had a representative from local authorities, counties, natural and social science, and other interest groups or consultants. Each group followed a pre-designed list of tasks. We focused initially on building and planning regulations, but the groups ended up discussing a variety of related topics. The final goal was to design solutions for how to improve decision-making in local climate adaptation. In the final session of the workshop, the groups presented their solutions to the other participants.

The proposed solutions covered a huge variety of ideas. However, some common themes arose. Climate-service projects and local climate adaptation need to be much better anchored in the political system in Norway with greater political ownership in the processes. We need to build stronger networks where practitioners and researchers can continue the dialogue and learn from each other. In this way, capacity building was a key theme across all sectors involved in climate adaptation.

The hackathon-like method that we used in Klimathon allowed us to elicit the limitations within current climate-service approaches that would be impossible to do in traditional workshop approaches. Mixing participants with a wide variety of backgrounds reflected reality but also allowed participants to better exchange experiences and understand different perspectives. By giving the groups enough time, they came up with solutions that we can all build upon in future climate-service projects and initiatives.