

Media and Climate Change Observatory (MECCO)

February 2017 saw climate change coverage decrease across the fifty sources in twenty-seven countries around planet Earth (see Figure 1). Coverage of *political*, *scientific*, *ecological/meteorological*, and *cultural* dimensions of climate change issues dropped 26% globally from the previous month and 23% from the previous February (2016). Compared to January 2017, this decrease was most pronounced in North America with a 55% dip. While the content of coverage in Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom

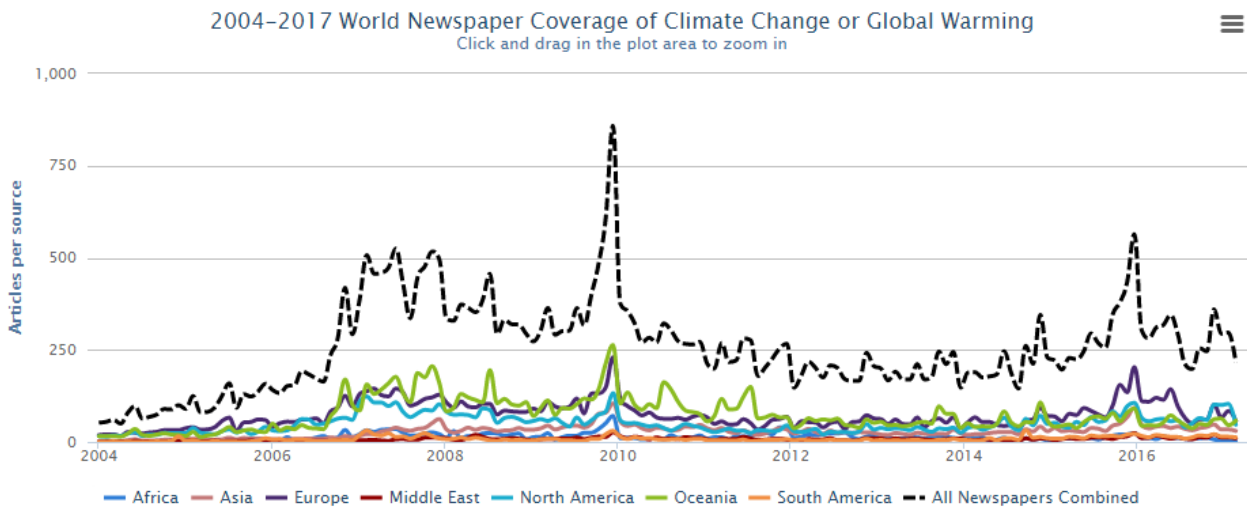
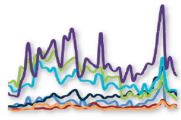


Figure 1: Media coverage of climate change or global warming in fifty sources across twenty-seven countries in seven different regions around the world through February 2017.

(UK), the United States (US) and around the world continued to place a steady focus on movements of the newly anointed Donald J. Trump Administration in the US (see Figure 2), media attention focused more frequently on a range of other political, social and economic threats and issues during the month of February. Trump Administration movements did not contribute to a bump in coverage overall in February; instead, it was more of a ‘Trump Dump’ where media attention that would have focused on other climate-related events and issues instead was placed on Trump-related actions, leaving many other stories untold in this month.

Within dominant *political* themes for the month, cabinet appointments and US Senate confirmation hearings dotted the February climate change coverage landscape. In particular, the mid-February 52-46 Senate confirmation of former Oklahoma Attorney General Scott Pruitt to lead the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) kicked up a number of stories highlighting the controversy behind putting a “seasoned legal opponent of the agency” in charge.¹ Stories also connected to *cultural* themes, covering protests of Pruitt’s nomination from current and former

¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/17/us/politics/scott-pruitt-environmental-protection-agency.html>



Media and Climate Change Observatory (MECCO)

EPA employees, and from scientists at the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) annual meeting leading up to the confirmation hearing.²

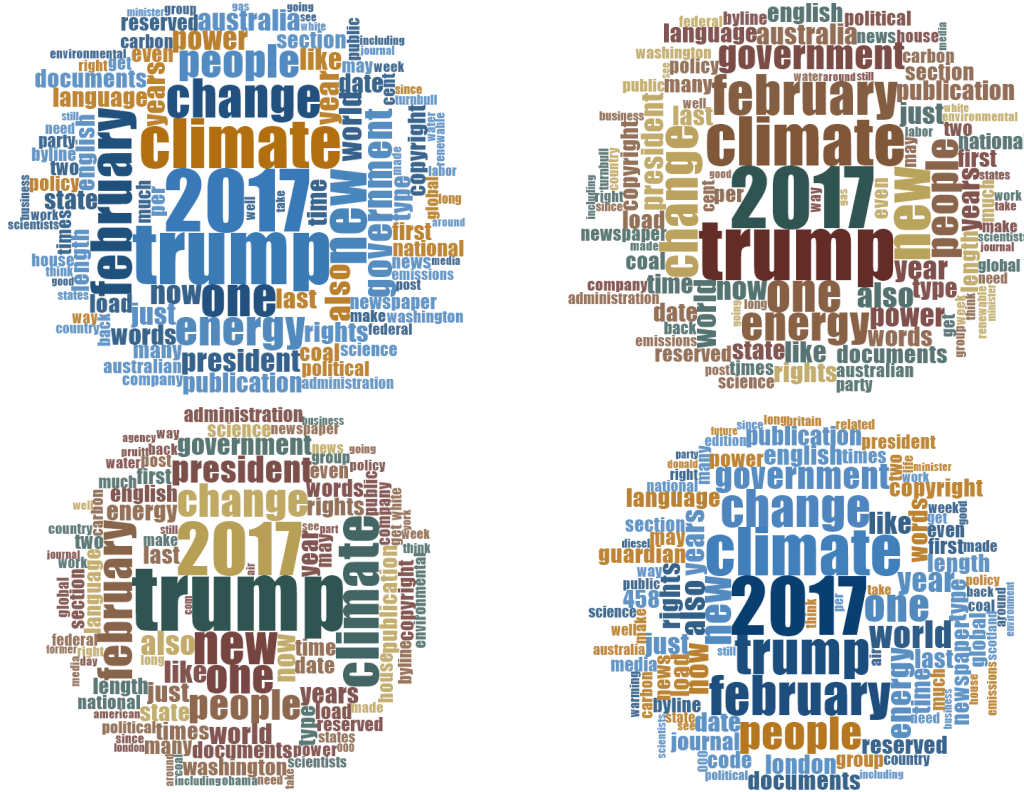
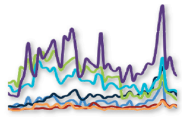


Figure 2: Word clouds showing the frequency of words invoked in media coverage of climate change or global warming in Australia (on top left), New Zealand (on top right), the United States (on bottom left) and in the United Kingdom (UK) (on bottom right) in February 2017. The data are from five Australian sources – the *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *Courier Mail & Sunday Mail*, *The Australian*, *Daily Telegraph & Sunday Telegraph*, and *The Age* – from three New Zealand sources – the *New Zealand Herald*, *Dominion Post*, and *The Press* – from five US sources – *The Washington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, *USA Today*, and the *Los Angeles Times* – and from seven UK sources – the *Daily Mail & Mail on Sunday*, *Guardian & The Observer*, *The Sun*, the *The Daily Telegraph & Sunday Telegraph*, the *Daily Mirror & Sunday Mirror*, *The Scotsman & Scotland on Sunday*, and *The Times & Sunday Times*.

At the *political* and *scientific* interface, stories across India, Thailand and Japan in particular focused on carbon tax and new technologies to save energy. For example, a story from the *Bangkok Post* focused on how a country-wide regulatory shift in new air conditioning technology standards “could reduce the country’s power consumption by 10%”.³ Around the

² <http://www.latimes.com/nation/ct-trump-epa-protest-chicago-20170206-story.html>

³ <http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/general/1206261/new-air-con-coolants-save-on-power-use>



Media and Climate Change Observatory (MECCO)



ISSUE 2, FEBRUARY 2017

world, coverage also focused on US-based Trump Administration plans to weaken federal environmental regulations of many sorts. For instances, Hiroko Tabuchi from *The New York Times* wrote about Republican efforts to dismantle rules that block surface coal mining near US streams⁴ and Oliver Milman from *The Guardian* reported on efforts to target regulations that restrict drilling in US national parks and curb the release of methane.⁵ And Juliet Eilperin and Brady Dennis from *The Washington Post* wrote about Trump administration symbolic and material efforts to move forward on pipeline projects, in particular the Dakota Access Pipeline.⁶

In *ecological/meteorological* news, stories about heatwaves, fire danger, floods and high temperatures popped up throughout the month around the world. Eryk Bagshaw, Megan Levy and Peter Hannam from *The Sydney Morning Herald* reported on a heat wave and extreme fire danger, with temperatures reaching 116°F (47°C) in parts of New South Wales,⁷ while Joseph Serna and Bettina Boxall from the *Los Angeles Times* described “epic rain and snow” in California in the month of February.⁸ Meanwhile, stories from *The Nation* in Pakistan (by Azal Zahir)⁹ and in *The Times of India* (by Harveer Dabas)¹⁰ connected threats to megafauna and flora due to rising temperatures and other climate-related pressures, hooked to high temperatures across Asia in February. And news from warming at the poles garnered media attention as well. For examples, Doyle Rice from *USA Today* covered new data from Antarctica revealing a new record high temperature on the continent,¹¹ and Robin McKie from the *The Observer* reported on high Arctic temperatures and new data from the Boulder-based National Snow and Ice Data Center (NSIDC) showing record low ice extent in the region.¹²

- report prepared by Max Boykoff, Kevin Andrews, Gesa Luedecke, Meaghan Daly and Ami Nacu-Schmidt

⁴ https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/02/business/energy-environment/senate-coal-regulations.html?_r=0

⁵ <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/feb/01/environment-republicans-congress-climate-methane-parks>

⁶ https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/energy-environment/wp/2017/02/07/trump-administration-to-approve-final-permit-for-dakota-access-pipeline/?utm_term=.aa5de6e21a1d

⁷ <http://www.smh.com.au/environment/nsw-heatwave-unprecedented-fire-conditions-are-as-bad-as-it-gets-20170211-guarjl.html>

⁸ <http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-drought-emergency-regulations-20170208-story.html>

⁹ <http://nation.com.pk/columns/27-Feb-2017/winged-sentinels>

¹⁰ <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/home/environment/flora-fauna/migratory-birds-prepare-for-early-return-as-temperatures-soar/articleshow/57352356.cms>

¹¹ <http://www.usatoday.com/story/weather/2017/03/01/antarctica-new-record-high-temperature/98538084/>

¹² <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/feb/12/plan-to-refreeze-arctic-before-ice-goes-for-good-climate-change>