

## Plenary Presentation

### Connecting in times of division – on the value of good conversations

Noelle Aarts

Radboud University

noelle.aarts@ru.nl

<https://www.ru.nl/personen/aarts-m>

Every day we are hearing and talking about global warming and its consequences. Meanwhile, the phenomenon of climate change is widely recognized. However, opinions are far apart on the causes, consequences and, above all, what should fundamentally change. Despite the sense of urgency, necessary actions are therefore being slowed down or are not getting off the ground at all. As a result, people concerned about the future of our planet become increasingly anxious and even depressed.

Conversation may be a crucial tool for bridging differences between people from different backgrounds. However, both research and experience show that conversations between dissenters about complex problems such as the climate are not always successful: Quite often the differences are magnified rather than resolved. Why is it that we find it so complicated to talk to dissenters? How do these conversations proceed, are there patterns to be found in them, and how can we understand these? In my contribution, based on a variety of empirical studies, I will provide a thorough analysis that leads to a hopeful message for climate research and action.



Noelle Aarts, cultural anthropologist and communication scholar, is Professor of Socio-ecological Interactions at the Institute for Science in Society (ISiS) at Radboud University in Nijmegen, the Netherlands. In research and teaching, she focuses on conversations between people engaged in complex social issues from different backgrounds and interests. She has published on various topics such as conflict and negotiation in socio-ecological transformation contexts (e.g., in living laboratories for biodiversity restoration), dealing with ambivalence in solving complex problems, and networking and self-organization for sustainable land use.