

Changing Climate Campaigns: Time To Retire The Apocalypse

A Campaign Strategy Paper

Chris Rose, www.campaignstrategy.org, July 2012

"However beautiful the strategy, you should occasionally look at the results".

Winston Churchill

This is a story of campaigns that need to change.

Try this little test. Have you heard something like any of these statements before?

1. Without concerted international government action to cut carbon, the world will be plunged into dangerous, possibly irreversible climate change.
2. Unless we all radically change the way we live, we cannot hope to stop climate change.
3. Most people still do not believe in climate change.
4. Most people are still essentially unresponsive to climate change.
5. International government talks at Copenhagen failed in 2010, and the Rio Earth Summit 2 in 2012 was a fiasco.
6. A massive energy revolution is underway: the campaign for a switch to renewable energy is being won.

My guess is that the first five are more familiar than number six. Yet number six is true, it just doesn't fit with the rest, and some of the others are not true.

If you will indulge me a little more, there are two questions I'd like to ask for your help with because I think they are worth asking, should you have an opportunity to get them included in a poll or survey:

(a) I have noticed that the climate seems to be changing;

(b) I don't like the way the climate is changing: air pollution should be controlled to limit climate change.

I've mentioned those now just in case you don't read any further but my reasons for thinking they are important to ask are explained later.

Going back to the list of statements, the first four are widely held tenets of faith amongst climate campaigners and commentators. They make up two dominant frames that I call *AA* and *UP: Apocalypse Avoidance*, and *Unresponsive Public*. The fifth is conventional wisdom, promulgated by writers such as George Monbiot who blogs for *The Guardian* in the UK, and is a source of widespread gloom and disorientation amongst campaigners. Put them together and you have cause, effect and explanation for concluding that it's 'game over for saving the climate'. Except of course for the anomalous number six, which cannot be true.

Time to Retire AA

Apocalypse Avoidance or *AA* is an old war horse of a campaign frame which should now be put out to grass. *AA* was first created by NGOs and campaigning scientists in the early alarm-calling days of 'the climate issue' back at the end of the 1980s. I was one of them myself.

It quickly gained traction with the media and formed the dominant way calls for action on 'climate change' were portrayed, challenged and debated. The task was to get global political action in order to avert the apocalypse.

Although it is redundant, *AA* is sustained by the conservatism of the media and that of an army of climate campaigners and advocates. Every now and again it gets trotted out to supply framing sound bites in the theatre of international environmental negotiations.

AA served us well in the initial phases of stimulating government response to scientific findings but I'd suggest it is now thoroughly obsolete and doing much more harm than good.

It is particularly pernicious when coupled to its sister frame, the '*UP*' or the '*Unresponsive Public*'. This holds that we humans are like the frog that boils to death in gradually warming water; because we are like this we will not respond even as apocalypse bears down upon us. Using this frame, any sign of positive change can be neutralised by calling up an example of a politician, friend or business who is not responding, or a poll which seems to show just that. Campaigners dwelling in Gloom World use such 'confirmation

bias' all the time, selecting only the evidence that supports the frame of the *Unresponsive Public*.

Cognitive Dissonance

Just as police officers develop a dangerously warped view of humanity if they don't get out much and mix with non-criminals, campaigners always run the risk of becoming gloom-mongers, because they focus on one problem and then the next. Many are also predisposed to a life of struggle to do good. Whereas many people shy away from anything that looks impossible and do not want to join a hopeless cause or fight overwhelming odds, campaigners tend to like campaigning and to enjoy 'the challenge'. It makes for poor strategy though, to imagine that you can persuade many of the public to join you by projecting this worldview as an offer or ask.

The *AA + UP* problem was brought home to me a few years ago when I was looking at climate strategies for a client and spent some weeks searching out examples of successfully cutting carbon.

Taking the easy route of googling "carbon cutting" + "success", I noticed a strange thing. I found myself in a world of positive change, with happy positive sounding people and an enormous wealth of examples; not pilots or prototype projects but mainstream change, from the scale of the individual right up to the scale of big businesses and countries, of carbon cutting often way beyond the rates agreed by governments.

Yet if you googled "climate campaigning" it was as if the spectre of climate change itself had darkened the landscape. The language was of despair. The stories were of frustration, fears, failure and broken promises; the actors spoke of an embattled minority struggling against huge vested interests, against indifferent publics, people reluctant to change, and of time running out.

These two communities are connected but only just. The first is the mainstream of change, implementing the response to the climate problem in society: in business, in the public sector, in daily life. These people are changers but mostly not 'campaigners'. The second is climate campaign world and it's increasingly out of touch.

One thing that drives them apart is cognitive dissonance on behalf of the campaigners. Cognitive dissonance describes the mental discomfort we feel when we are asked to hold two conflicting thoughts at once. We can resolve that by changing our behaviour, or by rationalising the link between what we do and what we believe, to make the dilemma go

away. So it was that when I mentioned to some very senior climate campaigners that they seemed to be winning on carbon and energy, they quickly steered the conversation back to the battle in the gloom. Winning did not fit with the primacy of mobilising to avoid apocalypse; so by use of numerous examples of failures, omissions and evidence that other aspects of the problem were worsening, the evidence that successful carbon cutting was happening got filtered out. In so doing they maintained their worldview, left their strategies unaltered, and conserved the frame they used to communicate, and their next date with the problematic international political negotiations.

In my view it's not good that this happens. For one thing, it means campaigners are adopting sub-optimal strategies for change: they could get more results, so they are not making best use of the scarce resources of NGOs and others. For another, although the solution-implementing world is mainstream and now much bigger than the campaign groups and the 'climate community' centred on the international political process, it's the latter that dominates media framing, and hence influences public perceptions and political views of 'what is possible'. That in turn slows change as it underplays success and overstates difficulties: it magnifies pessimism.

We Must Have Failed?

Conventional wisdom seems to have it that the chances of effective climate action have all but disappeared down the political toilet. Copenhagen 'failed' in 2010, and in June, 'Rio 2' also 'failed', only with less fanfare.

'Rio Summit? More like the absolute nadir' declared an angry Fred Pearce in *New Scientist* magazine last month [1]. In *The Guardian*, George Monbiot waxed darkly that it was *'the greatest failure of collective leadership since the first world war. The Earth's living systems are collapsing, and the leaders of some of the most powerful nations – the United States, the UK, Germany, Russia – could not even be bothered to turn up and discuss it ...'*

It is perhaps unfair to pick only on them, and Rio was not just about 'climate', but Pearce and Monbiot capture the mood of many advocates focused on the international political process. Both men have lately embraced nuclear power out of despair at what can be achieved by other means. Monbiot has declared he is now going to focus 'nearer home' on 'rewilding' schemes. Both writers temper their gloom with some glimmers of optimism but only glimmers. Pearce points out that there some signs that global resource consumption has peaked. Monbiot cites three reasons for not giving up on political action: to 'draw out the losses over as long a period as possible', to 'preserve what we can' and to act locally because we may 'have no influence over decisions made elsewhere'. Not exactly inspirational stuff.

Pessimistic thoughts are contagious and impede effective campaigning.

"Anyone else having trouble functioning after reading @GeorgeMonbiot

<http://www.monbiot.com/2012/06/25/end?>" tweeted campaigner Tzeporah Berman [@Tzeporah](#) on 27 June, after reading his *Guardian* blog.

When the 'balloon went up' on climate change back in 1988 the international political system reacted by establishing a way to render scientific advice into political decisions via the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) and the UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change). Their agenda was taken up in other high level for a such as the first, and now second 'Rio Earth Summits'.

These became seen as the gladiatorial arenas in which the climate protagonists would fight to decide the future of the planet. It suited campaign groups as it provided a convenient focus, it pleased scientists because it recognized their role, and for Environment Ministers it provided welcome time in the limelight. It also provided a logical story about power and accountability and responsibility, and about the role of rational analysis, so it fertilised the growth of a huge climate-policy analysis business in institutes and universities.

Most of all it simplified a complex story for the media. The regular Prepcoms and COPs and Summits provided moments of drama that reconfirmed AA. Would apocalypse be averted or not? Was this the last chance?

Conventional climate advocacy has ever since focussed on the global climate processes, with the media acting as public interlocutors and judges. The central idea was that, as climate change demanded a global response, it required global political agreement. This solidified into an oft-repeated article of faith that public demand for action must be transmitted up through this structure like a lightning rod in order to electrify the global body politic. It became a doctrine: only this route could deliver salvation. Alternative voices suggesting that maybe other routes could be more effective, were too quiet and too few to make much impact, and those routes were much harder to report on or convert into fund-raising appeals and online actions.

So once it stalled, a sense of failure is ran back down the structure and flowed over those below. Viewed through the frame of political-action-to-Avoid-Apocalypse, it can indeed seem to those in the 'climate campaign community' as if "we have failed". As only this process could deliver, we must have failed to persuade people over the science, over the reality of climate change, over the case for renewables, and over the need for change. I

believe all that is wrong. It confines attention in the wrong place and on the wrong indicators.

Winning The Arguments

You wouldn't think so from the tone some campaigners adopt but they won the first battle: people and governments are convinced climate change is real. There are clear majorities in countries from the UK to Argentina to the US and China who believe in climate change.

In a recent poll conducted for Greenpeace in mainland China [2] we asked people how they felt about the statement "Climate change - I don't believe in it". Only 2% said they 'strongly agreed'. 8.8% 'slightly agreed'. 12.4% said 'neither', while 27.3% said they 'slightly disagreed' and 49.6%, by far the largest segment, said they 'strongly disagreed'.

So how can this be if you've not 'won the argument'? Well maybe it's just because the Chinese Government tells them it is real. True, the Chinese Government does say so but isn't that also a sign of success? It's also unlikely to be just the influence of the Chinese government because we've found an almost identical result in the US, while in Argentina, the population is even more in agreement that climate change is real.

What about changing energy systems? In China we found that when asked whether they supported China "reducing coal burning and increasing clean renewable energy such as wind power or solar power as the main source of electricity", 56.8% 'strongly agreed', 31% 'slightly agreed', 9.4% said 'neither', and only 1.9% 'slightly disagreed' and 0.7% 'strongly disagreed'. Polls by Pew and others found a similar weight of opinion in the US and elsewhere.

Not only have the climate advocates won their first battle - to convince people that the science was right and climate change is real - they have also won the argument that we should switch our energy to renewables. Yet as a campaigns consultant I am still informed by some campaigners that the task is to 'convince people' about renewable energy.

A Victory Nobody Owns

Counter to intuition, nobody seems to want to own the success of the renewables energy revolution. In 2005, Greenpeace started calling explicitly for an 'Energy Revolution'. Of course they were not the only or the first such advocates but they are a convenient example. By 2008 the International Energy Agency was saying the same thing, and now in 2012 the UN and others do so too. If it's not true already, then very soon that rhetoric may itself be counter-productive because an energy revolution is already being won. By calling

for an energy revolution to begin, we can inadvertently suggest it's not happening. Campaigners shouldn't conflate not having finished with not having started.

Technologies that were costly or simply ideas on the drawing board back in the early 1990s are now mainstream. The idea that the world is not responding to the imperatives created by the realisation of climate change is simply wrong, just as much as it's wrong to believe that 'people don't believe' in climate change or in the virtues of renewables.

The *Renewables Global Status Report* for 2011 [3] notes that:

'Renewable sources supplied 16.7% of global final energy consumption. 118 countries implemented RE targets with more than half in developing countries. Investment in renewables increased 17% to a record \$257 billion, despite a widening sovereign debt crisis in Europe and rapidly falling prices for renewable power equipment. Photovoltaic module prices dropped by 50% and onshore wind turbines by close to 10% bringing to price of the leading renewable power technologies closer to grid parity with fossil fuels such as coal and gas.'

UNEP also reported that renewables investment in India grew at 62 percent rising to \$12 billion in 2011. [4]

It does not take an economic guru to see that something significant is going to happen as renewable energy becomes cheaper than fossil fuels [5], even if overall levels of investment fall with a reduction in economic growth.

What was maverick thinking in the 1990s and isolated practice even in the first decade of this century is becoming mainstream. The realities are changing and campaigns need to change too. Yet, if you retain the *AA* frame and its sister *UP*, all this evidence will, as George Lakoff explains, be unconsciously filtered out.

When I mentioned the Chinese poll results reported above to one campaigner, the response was to ignore that and point out that only one hybrid Prius had been sold in China the year before. The fact that Chinese production of solar (pv) panels had grown so much, making costs fall to a level that put European and US governments under pressure to introduce tariffs, and both wind and solar are cheaper than fossil fuels in many applications was apparently irrelevant. The thought was not "so what can we do to change the sales of electric vehicles in China?" or "how can the cheapness of pv be used to change politics?" but "not enough is happening" which gets elided into "we are not succeeding", with China preserved as a piece of the evidence.

In fact, although only around 9000 electric vehicles and plug-in hybrids were sold in China in 2011, some 18,000 full electric and 269,000 hybrids were sold in the United States, and

7500 EVs and 450,000 hybrids in Japan [6]. Someone is buying these vehicles. It is behaviour change.

Many governments have acted upon the scientific evidence. The UK has adopted a target of an 80% carbon cut by 2050. It plans a £14bn retrofit of existing buildings to cut their carbon emissions, starting this year. Germany reduced its energy consumption by 5.3% in 2011, through increases in energy efficiency in buildings, homes and industry, while having also closed eight nuclear plants following Fukushima, managing to remain a net energy exporter and achieving economic growth of 3% [7]. A heroic feat of myopia is required to dismiss Germany as a small scale and unimportant example but it can be done if you try hard enough.

As I was drafting this piece I opened up an email from the redoubtable *Grist Magazine* to discover a piece by David Roberts which noted that [8]:

'Installed wind and solar have doubled in the U.S. since Obama took office. Costs for solar are plunging like crazy and onshore wind power may be competitive with fossil fuels without subsidies by 2016. The National Renewable Energy Laboratory says the U.S. could get 80 percent of its power from renewables by 2050. Given that "official" projections of renewable energy growth have been consistently below the mark, it's not unreasonable to think we may be underestimating future growth.'

Not The Only Route

The IPCC and the UNFCCC are not finished but they did their first job. They sorted the science and the initial policies. With a few bumps and lurches. Now it's time for campaigners to spend more time outside the circus and to recognize that, somehow, rather significant change seems to be taking place in other places and by other means.

The Climate Convention was never 'about' energy or fossil fuels: there was no negotiation of 'energy economies' or a protocol on carbon in the ground (much as I would have liked that) or a global political directive on electricity systems or car design, yet change there has been in both those areas and many more.

Campaigners and commentators who look only at the stalled international talks and conclude failure are like the proverbial man found standing forlornly in a pool of light under a street lamp. Asked what he is doing, he explains that he has lost a coin. Asked if he lost it there, he replies "no but I am looking here because this is where the light is". The reality is that the proof of success lies mostly elsewhere.

What Should Climate Strategy Be Now?

The energy revolution is going to be won but it will not arrive fully formed in time to stop dangerous climate change. Just how dangerous is essentially not the point. We need to complete the change as fast as possible, to secure a climate that is as safe as possible.

All big change campaigns tend to be driven sometimes by evidence of need and urgency (a problem driven phase) and sometimes by evidence of feasibility (a solution driven phase). In something as complex as the response to 'climate change', change is on many tracks and the two things intertwine but we need to re-ignite international climate politics, while making much more effective use of success. A big problem-driven opportunity to do the former is presented by climate change itself, of which more below. Doing the latter, which makes climate action seem much more attractive to politicians, requires harnessing optimism. That in turn means dumping the frames of *AA* and *UP*.

Fortunately, although it's not made much inroad into high level climate advocacy, modern psychology offers some organising tools for how this can be done.

How To Save The Climate Without Really Thinking About It

A previous Campaign Strategy Newsletter ([79](#)) called for a psychological makeover of the way climate negotiations, policies and campaigns are constructed, making use of the work of researchers such as Nobel Prize winner Daniel Kahneman [9].

Kahneman identifies two ways in which we make decisions: System 1, which is easy, intuitive, automatic (ie unconscious) and 'emotional'; and System 2 which is analytical, conscious thinking, and much harder.

Our brain automatically suggests answers using System 1 and for most, some say 95% of the time, we take them up and act on them. To make much use of System 2, we have to be trained to do it: scientists for example, try to use it all the time but it doesn't come naturally. When faced with a difficult decision, it's easier to use System 1 to decide it than System 2, so that's what we tend to do. Kahneman calls it 'substitution', in which an easy question is substituted for a hard one.

"Are scientists right about climate change?" is a classic example, and "will the climate change?" is another. To answer it with system 2 requires a huge analytical effort, which is what the IPCC was invented for. Consequently we answer it with the easier one, such as "what do my friends think?", or "who's saying it, and are they people I trust?" or a host of other shorthand 'heuristics'.

Because the easy intuitive automatic System 1 is hugely dominant, a persuasion shotgun compared to the pea-shooter of System 2, it is a massive advantage if you can deploy System 1. Responding to fast food ads is done with System 1, calculating a balanced diet requires System 2. We don't really 'think about' the fast foods, we just want them and rationalise the decision afterwards.

Almost all public politics is driven by System 1. People vote for politicians they like. Make them look taller or more attractive and more people vote for them. Voters will deny it but the effect can be measured. Advertising and marketing also works this way. Reframe an ask so it resonates with unconscious values and people who disagreed with it will now agree with it: they will do what they previously said 'made no sense'.

The initial phase of climate advocacy had to involve a lot of System 2 because it arose from scientific analysis. That meant that only a few organisations could easily engage with it. An extreme example is the insurance industry and, within that, the rarefied re-insurance industry. Here actuarial logic prevails and everything is tested analytically. Little surprise that this was the first significant industry to react to scientific warnings that climate change was real, was underway, and was going to be horribly damaging.

It's true that much of the impetus behind the big changes now sweeping industry and societies - from bio fuels to supergrids, renewables and 'sustainable' building standards - arise from places where Kahneman's analytical System 2 does indeed operate. All government involves interplay between decisions made analytically and those made intuitively or through the unconscious interaction of frames and values in public discussion. Classically, scientific advisers, planners and officials do the analytical stuff, because they are charged with actually trying to get things right for the long term: policy that "works".

Large corporations who want to stay in business, for example, are forced to think long term and also take analysis seriously. Many of them have concluded that it is better to get ahead of the curve and plan for a low carbon near term and a zero carbon future. The way they are now selling low carbon products and lifestyles, though, will be based mainly on System 1.

Much less use has been made of System 1 to drive climate politics. One of the reasons is that many important positions in the 'climate movement' have been occupied by scientists who have insisted on trying to use the analytical System 2 to sell their conclusions to a

wider public. By-and-large they have proved catastrophically bad at public communications.

In most democracies the centre ground is dangerous for politicians. Tell "people" what they don't want to hear, based mainly on analysis and, however sound that might have been, you are immediately exposed to emotional attack where there is little hope of countering with 'facts' and 'figures'. It applies whether you look at pensions and debt or climate change and lifestyles. Politicians have lacked a platform to go out and popularise the response to climate change, and those who have tried to sell the analysis have often got their fingers burnt.

Likewise, for over twenty years it was accepted practice amongst most climate campaigners that any attempt to attribute any one weather event to the onset of climate change was doomed. This in turn meant that climate change had to remain a 'not-yet' apocalypse, offering hundreds of possible ways for System 1 to suggest we should ignore it. That has now changed because climate change is upon us.

It's Here

Plenty of analysis is available to show that our weather is getting more extreme and less predictable. As *New Scientist* put it this month [10]:

"From killer heat waves to destructive floods, the effects of global warming are becoming ever more obvious - and we ain't seen nothing yet. Our weather is not only becoming more extreme as a result of global warming, it is becoming even more extreme than climate scientists predicted."

New Scientist bemoans the lack of adaptation of infrastructure and planning by governments - '*Shanghai ... will become another New Orleans*' - but campaigning needs to adapt too. Scientists suggest the kinks in the Northern Hemisphere jet stream, which have channelled months of monsoon weather into Europe and cold into Rome and Tripoli, are caused by global warming differentially heating the air above the Arctic and so drawing the northern peaks of high pressure northwards [11].

Analytically, in System 2 conversations, the case is being made that current real weather extremes are being driven by climate change. Much more important, people have noticed, using System 1. A US poll found 82% reported personal experience of extreme weather. Anecdotal reports abound of people noticing that the weather is behaving badly, and strangely, and in Northern Hemisphere countries, TV weather forecasters explain that it is down to the global jet stream, a bridging explanation between climate, change and our everyday experience.

While a hot topic in climate analysis, the arrival of the changed climate has not yet started to create a major political conversation. That's why I propose seeding it with some expressions of public opinion, such as the two questions:

(a) I have noticed that the climate seems to be changing;

(b) I don't like the way the climate is changing: air pollution should be controlled to limit climate change.

Politicians in government will already be hearing from their scientific advisers that climate change is happening. What they do about it will depend very much on what public demand there is. Modern politicians strive to stay in line with public opinion and, for that to happen, there has to be some expression of that opinion.

We don't need to ask people to understand the climate analysis. They don't need to think about that, though they can if they want. We only need to ask if they'd like something done about the trend to extreme, wilder, unseasonal weather. The sort of weather that has been cancelling sporting events and country shows, deluging garden parties, ruining crops, killing people and destroying homes and businesses in floods and fires, and costing all of us money. This is something to get as angry and demanding about as you like.

Another thing to get angry about is pessimism. Yes, mobilise opposition to new oil, coal or gas development but attack pessimism too. The need for rapid rebuttal of climate scepticism is rapidly diminishing but rapid rebuttal of pessimism about positive change would be a good idea.

Harnessing Optimism

At present I'm doing some work for a remarkable housing provider called Gentoo Group (www.gentoo-group.com). Gentoo grew out of the Sunderland Housing Group in NE England and works mostly in one of the more socially deprived areas of the UK. Gentoo is a leader in its sector in terms of cutting carbon and sustainability. It's a member of the organisation 1010 and, with a turnover of around £140m and 1,600 staff distributed across depots, projects, housing offices, construction sites, has already achieved a 42% cut in carbon from its core operations.

Gentoo has the only UK-owned PV-manufacturing facility in the country, and the largest [Passivhaus](#) development (28 homes) but its most impressive achievements are in

engaging large numbers of tenants in adding solar pv to their homes and in carefully monitored retrofits which make their homes much more energy efficient.

So far so good but the striking thing is that Gentoo does not look like a niche 'green' company and it isn't. It's not dominated by the Pioneer values group much discussed in previous Newsletters and which overwhelmingly make up the campaign organisations, in staff and supporters. It looks like a Prospector company: it has a bright graphic brand which is positive and optimistic, more like a coffee shop than a housing provider. It's smart and optimistic and can-do, and intends to become a 'One Planet' with a zero carbon office. It talks about becoming 'Planet Smart'.

Working with CDSM, we've measured the values of Gentoo staff: two thirds of them are Prospectors. These are the people who have 'Outer Directed' values, seeking esteem and self esteem and looking for success. They are target-oriented and optimistic that things can be made bigger and better. Some campaigners argue that we should not even try to engage Prospectors on their own terms because it is 'better' if people do the right thing for Inner-Directed reasons, such as ethics. They even speculate that something done to bring self esteem, or because others approve of it as the 'right thing', will be reversed if 'fashion changes'. Instead, they say we should be changing the people, to get them to have the 'right values'. This often goes hand in hand with believing in *AA* and *UP* and spending a lot of time discussing just how bad things are.

That's not happening in Gentoo, or organisations like it. They are getting on and actually changing things for the better. Personally I don't see them or their tenants ripping out their solar pv panels or removing their loft insulation in future, or cutting out their new double glazing because it was part of being green and that is no longer the latest fashionable trend. Gentoo has an agenda to help its clients improve their lives. It calls it the 'Art of Living' and being lower carbon is just one element of that.

I've been around housing estates where Gentoo has put hundreds of solar pv units on homes and retrofitted many more. Home occupiers - many are Prospectors, many are Settlers - rate their improved houses highly: they are cheaper to run, warmer, quieter, safer. Just 'better'. It feels right. It's running on System 1. The changes are helping save the planet but for most that's a nice-to-have, not the main benefit. Some campaigners don't want to accept that but I think going door-to-door trying to convert people into ethical eco-warriors would not have produced the same result.

Gentoo is also selling new homes that are very low carbon. They look like normal houses. They are helping people get onto the property ladder with an innovative finance scheme

called Genie. At one point on the tour I went on, we stopped at a place where you could look down over the suburbs of Sunderland - a city built on traditional industries of steel, shipbuilding and coal - and see the Nissan factory surrounded by wind turbines, where the LEAF electric car is made. It's the future happening now, and the same thing is happening all around the world.

Change starts with the Pioneers but the change to a renewably powered future is already being turbo-boosted by the Prospectors, from Nissan workers in Gentoo homes in Sunderland, to Chinese solar entrepreneurs, and it is already on its way to becoming the new 'normal', accepted by Settlers. That is mainstreaming.

Doing The Right Thing

Climate campaigns must adapt and move on from the days of sounding the alarm, to driving change. That means accepting that to build majorities and change which creates new realities - such as cheaper solutions through scaling up, and new possibilities from new infrastructure - it is strategic to work with people doing the right thing, whatever their reasons. A couple of days ago I visited a local farm to photograph a large tracking solar array and interview the farmer, who described it as "a terrific piece of kit" that will "make us lots of money". He also showed me his fields of Miscanthus (Elephant Grass) biomass crop which he said, 'end to end' and including transport to a power station, was carbon negative. Then just before I left he told me, in passing, that global warming was a myth. Let him think that. He's doing something good, and I would lay money that in a few years he'll have found his own reasons to change his mind.

Companies like Marks and Spencer, Gentoo and the London based Price Waterhouse Coopers, which cut its absolute carbon 19% in four years, talk about 'sustainability' as being simply 'good business'. Marks and Spencer involves its customers in Plan A with projects such as reselling used clothes with Oxfam, and explains Plan A as simply 'doing the right thing'.

In the international surveys I mentioned earlier, we found in one country after another that it is actually the Prospectors, and in particular the Now People 'Values Mode', who are the most optimistic embracers of the need for positive change, alongside the Transcender Pioneers. Their way of making change is not to argue about it but to get on with it.

Politics really is the art of the possible. Spreading optimism about what is possible is something that campaign groups ought to be doing, not by saying it but by showing it and making that count. For example, they can help expose decision makers to the benefits and the beneficiaries, and find ways to congratulate people for doing the right thing. They can

encourage competition between countries, cities, communities and companies to convert to renewable energy for all the possible values reasons. Like pessimism, optimism is contagious.

Conclusion

Climate campaigning must change its dominant paradigm if it is to succeed and remain relevant. It has to seize the opportunity of climate change arriving in a way noticeable to the 'man on the street' and convert that into a demand for renewed political action for a safer climate. Cutting debt replaced cutting carbon as the number one political priority some years ago but public opinion is a volatile thing: now it would not take a great deal of campaigning to make mad, bad and dangerous weather a political issue.

Campaigners need to work with those doing the right thing and encourage that, not criticise it for being imperfectly motivated. Campaigns should be designed using the tools of modern psychology such as Kahneman's work.

At the same time campaigns must drop the frames of *Apocalypse Avoidance*, which is out of date as well as unattractive, and the *Unresponsive Public*, which is positively damaging, and should declare that the energy revolution is being won. Get people to join a winning team.

Campaigners are no longer the main implementers of change but they have a huge effect on the narrative: they should attack pessimism where it arises and work systematically to capture, transmit and reward the optimism of positive change. That way continuing with the 'bad stuff' of further oil or coal developments will look less and less necessary, and more and more politically unpalatable, so opposing it will become easier.

Contact: chris@campaignstrategy.co.uk

[1] Rio Summit? More like the absolute nadir, Fred Pearce, *New Scientist*, 2871, 27 June 2012

[2] Thanks to Catherine Fitzpatrick and Greenpeace for permission to use this data

[3] <http://www.ren21.net/default.aspx?tabid=5434>

[4] <http://www.mnn.com/earth-matters/energy/blogs/new-world-record-for-renewable-energy>

[5] McKinseys have estimated that solar could become as cheap as coal by 2020 http://www.mckinsey.com/Client_Service/Sustainability/Latest_thinking/Solar_powers_next_shining

[6] China's electric vehicle goal stuck in slow lane, *The Australian*, 18 July 2012

[7] <http://tinyurl.com/bn3m8bw>

[8]<http://grist.org/climate-policy/u-s-leads-the-world-in-cutting-co2-emissions-so-why-arent-we-talking-about-it/>

[9] *Thinking Fast and Slow*, by, Daniel Kahneman (Allen Lane, 2011)

[10] As freak weather becomes the norm, we need to adapt, *New Scientist* 2872 9 July 2012

[11] How global warming is driving our weather wild, Stephen Battersby, *New Scientist* 2872, 9 July 2012