

Shame-faced VW Moves Towards Electric Cars But Are the Germans Ready ?

When the VW scandal broke in October, I suggested in this post [Emissions Cheating : What VW Should Do Next](#), that the company should make amends by doing three things, which in summary were:

1. Clean Up The Air

VW should then change its cars so that 'pollution debt' is paid off in the same time period that it arose in, or sooner

2. Health Reparations

Sit down with health groups and the councils of towns and cities and work with them to finance health programmes. How much should it invest ? At least as much as the profit it made from selling the offending vehicles ...

3. Go Electric: Abandon the Internal Combustion Engine

VW already sells [electric cars](#). Not many yet but it [apparently has plans](#) to offer 20 electric models in China in the "near future", according to VW Board Member Jochem Heizmann ... VW should stop making diesel and petrol cars (and vans) and go all electric, not only in China but everywhere. By 2020 would be a reasonable commitment ...

I don't expect VW noticed or cared what I said but since then Greenpeace has called on VW to go electric with [Halloween ad's demanding that the company market an affordable electric car](#). In November the motoring press was making [similar noises about the electric option](#) to 'stop the bleeding' of VW's reputation. The company has subsequently signalled that it will indeed bring [more electric models to market](#).

But are consumers ready in its home market ? Of course Germany is no longer VW's biggest market but is of huge symbolic importance, and it looks from a November [survey by CDSM](#) (more below) that VW execs have work to do persuading fellow Germans to buy electric.

Representative samples in the UK, Germany, France, Italy and Spain found that only 4.5% of Germans 'strongly agreed' they wanted their next car to be an electric one, against 22.6% in Spain, 22.5% in Italy, 11.1% in France and 8.1% in the UK. By contrast, Germans led the 'strongly disagree' option at 24.2%, almost ten times the proportion of Italians who took this view (2.7%). I will resist the temptation to resort to British stereotyping of German national characteristics but no doubt someone from Germany will be able to [explain this to me](#).

(In [previous surveys](#) we found 64.4% of Indians, 61.8% of Brazilians and 31.5% of Americans agreed "I'd like my next car to be an electric one".

Is Spain The New Green Leader in Europe ?

Spain and Italy emerge from that recent CDSM survey mentioned above, as having publics well ahead of the other countries surveyed (UK, Germany, France) on a number of 'green' measures. These include attitudes to climate change and whether it is caused by fossil fuels

(could that have something to do with the Pope ?), and acceptance of stricter environmental rules and regulations, as well as enthusiasm for electric cars. Read more [here](#).

(By the way, for students of [values](#), all the countries look quite similar in overall values make up, for example when compared with the more Prosperator dominated [developing world](#) and the skews on issues like climate belief are similar to those in Australia and the US).

How To Deal With Terrorism ?

Another question from the same values survey series investigated attitudes to dealing with terrorism. It asked 'which of these options come closest to your opinion ?' (a question also asked in a previous Pew survey):

- A. Using overwhelming military force is the best way to defeat terrorism around the world*
- B. Relying too much on military power and influence creates hatred that leads to more terrorism.*

People could chose on a six point scale. [The responses](#) are interesting (read Pat Dade's analysis). Although there are national differences (between the UK, Germany, France, Spain and Italy), they are very values driven, and the values maps for each country are almost interchangeable. In other words it is not 'national cultures' or even recent experiences that explain people's choices but their values.

The Power of Doing and Why Campaigning Matters

I spoke at a conference hosted by Directory of Social Change last week on 'Why Campaigning Matters'. You can [read my musings here](#). Of more interest to me was a talk by Craig Bennett, the recently appointed head of Friends of the Earth in England, who gave some interesting examples of their new strategy based on 'the power of doing'.

Bennett's thinking steps away from the conventional wisdom that the answer lies ever more 'online', in that he plans to leverage real change where it can be achieved (in his case, anywhere socially or geographically which does not involve having to persuade the [anti-green Westminster government of George Osborne](#)), for example in cities with devolved powers or working with partners in Scotland or Wales. For example, the English Government set itself against a tax on plastic bags but had to give in once the devolved Governments in Wales and Scotland managed to introduce one. Read more about it [at my blog](#).

This doesn't mean Bennett has stopped talking to the Westminster (English/UK) government but it I hear he has made himself such a nuisance that Environment Minister Amber Rudd is refusing to meet any group of NGOs of which he is a part. The result maybe unsurprisingly is

that he then gets one-to-ones with officials, which from FoE's point of view is probably better. "A sure good sign" as one of Rudd's former colleagues said to me.

SMEs Start To Campaign On TTIP

It's not often you see businesses campaigning for something and against it but nearly 2000 German small and medium sized businesses (SMEs) have joined a [campaign](#) to change TTIP, the controversial 'Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership'. The campaign is led by a Bavarian engineering CEO, Martina Römmelt-Fella. More than 2000 small companies have also signed up to a similar campaign in Austria, and another has started in the Netherlands.

This contrasts with the so far unremittingly pro-TTIP position taken by many of the large business bodies dominated by Trans National Corporations, such as [Business Europe](#) and the [American Chamber of Commerce](#).

Even though this is still a case of 'David versus Goliath' it poses political issues for the European Commission and Member States who have taken to claiming that TTIP, far from mostly benefitting large corporations, is actually mainly in the interests of SMEs. Of course in Europe there are a lot more votes from SMEs and their customers than from multinationals. As Brussels blogger Miguel Galdiz [says](#), Commissioner Malstrom has 'rallied' SMEs on TTIP but 'not as she hoped'.

It's an issue I've been doing some work on myself, and one of the best overviews of why SMEs may be adversely affected by TTIP is in the Paris-based Veblen Institute report [A transatlantic agreement but at what cost to SMEs?](#) Read more at my blog [here](#) including links to an interesting Euraktiv article in English.

Divestment Rolls Forward

[The last Campaign Strategy Newsletter](#) proposed that divestment campaigns run by [350](#) and the like were a great strategy ahead of the Paris 'Climate Conference', now well underway. One of its main benefits has been to maintain a sense of momentum. That's continued. For [instance ten Universities](#) in the UK have divested from fossil fuels and on 2 December 350 reported that more than 500 institutions representing over \$3.4 trillion in assets have made divestment commitments, up from \$2.6trillion and 400 commitments just 10 weeks before. It seems though that the Catholic Church is still at the [debating stage](#) of what to actually do about Pope Francis's call for action ... or am I wrong? Perhaps they should consult [Google](#), [which recently announced](#) a doubling of its investment in renewables.

And Finally

If you've got an hour to spend and are interested in drones and or how virtual reality tech can be used (not as expensive as you might think) in campaigns, then it's well worthwhile watching Emily Hunter from Greenpeace's 'Mobilisation Lab' interview a couple of experts

(see [Bearing Witness 2.0](#)). I found 'VR' explained by film maker Molly Swenson of Ryot particularly interesting.

Hunter says it is about 'Integrating Immersive Storytelling into Campaigns' which is true, and it's a technology that can make a huge difference to the impact of video, if you can find an audience show it to. At the moment that's difficult to organise and the most obvious applications are at events where people have the time, commitment and interest to try it.

Innovations may well help overcome that but they may not. This 'finding audiences' and 'making audiences' issue is a major challenge for those who advocate 'storytelling' as a central plank of campaign strategies, not just with VR but with storytelling in general, including 'digital'. Creating compelling experiences for those who you engage may not be too difficult with your followers or even potential donors you can get along to an event but how about audiences that are hostile or disinterested? I've not forgotten my pledge to write something about 'storytelling' and will do so soon. I promise (and thanks to everyone who sent me suggestions earlier this year).

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Books By Chris Rose:

How to Win Campaigns: Communications For Change (edn 2) Earthscan/Taylor and Francis 2010

What Makes People Tick: The Three Hidden Worlds of Settlers, Prospectors, and Pioneers, Troubador (2011) at <http://www.campaignstrategy.org/threeworlds/> post and packaging free in the UK (contact chris@campaignstrategy.co.uk for costs outside the UK), or [UK Amazon](#), [iTunes](#) or from the [publisher](#)

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