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Eurofish.tv – The Greek Commissioner, The Fisherman and the Lobster

The second episode of the animated adventures of the CFP (Common Fisheries Policy) featured in Campaign Strategy Newsletter 73 is now online at <http://bit.ly/tqpTXF> and <http://www.eurofish.tv> . (Episode 1 explained the problem with the CFP <http://bit.ly/q1IJ8p>).

This time The Lobster interviews Maria Damanaki, EU Fisheries Commissioner and Jerry Percy, head of NUTFA (New Under Ten Fishermen’s Association) which is part of an alliance (Ocean 2012) between more sustainable fishers and environmental and social NGOs. Remarkably, they have managed to agree on a common statement <http://bit.ly/nyMKnt> : the 128 signatory organisations are given a roll call at the end of the video. NUTFA is campaigning for fishing quotas to be shared more fairly – although they are in the majority, the small fishermen in Europe get only 4% of the quota.

Viewing suitable for lobsters, fish-heads and anyone interested in seemingly intractable political issues. For recent calls to action see <http://www.fishfight.net/MEPs>

The Advantages of Insulting Your Audience

The thing about campaigning is that there is usually a problem with a group of people who are doing the ‘wrong thing’. Maybe they are not doing something they ought to, or we think they are doing something they shouldn’t. Either way, these folk are “wrong”. And the temptation is to tell them so. All too often we succumb.

If it makes you feel better, go right ahead but it’s not likely to work. When was the last time you decided to change doing something important to you, because someone told you that you were stupid, immoral or unethical ? And instead, that you should be like them, and do what they do ? Being attacked not just for what we do but why we do it, tends to be very unpersuasive.

Being told we are not good, important or worthwhile human beings, does not generally warm the cockles of the heart, and what feels wrong emotionally, we quickly rationalise analytically. This applies whether it is a direct challenge, an admonishment or a conclusion that we draw from what someone says or does, or how we are treated. Quite often the slight given is unintended but none the less felt, for that.

I was once invited to speak at a gathering of directors of charities and campaign groups. They were all members of an umbrella group – a sort of executive skill-share. While I was sitting on the stage waiting my turn, the Chief Executive of that group – which must remain nameless – began the ‘keynote’ speech by talking about the importance of ‘networking’. “I am often asked” he began “how I maintain such an enormous network of influential contacts – so, let me give you a few tips”, or words to that effect.

He continued in this vein for about fifteen minutes, singing his own praises and quoting admirers who had marvelled at the size of his rolodex. I began to be forcibly reminded of David Brent (Ricky Gervais) in the UK TV series "The Office", and found it hard to keep a straight face.

Things got even more uncomfortable when he moved onto the importance of "reputation" and a "good logo". I had earlier puzzled over the organisation's logo which was a complicated multi-coloured triangle with what seemed to be a downhill skier perched on one side of it – but all far too small to make out the detail. "Fellow Chief Execs often ask me", he confided, "whoever designed your logo?". I bet they did. "I'll let you into a secret" he said, "we didn't waste money on designers – we did it ourselves, in fact it's based on an idea my wife and I had!"

By this point most of the audience, who I was trying to look straight at, and who were mostly very respectable middle class English ladies, were showing signs of restlessness, if not downright annoyance. However our host had reserved his coup de grace for the end. Having invited them there as his members, he now announced that he had "a very important engagement to attend" and therefore wished them well but would not be able to stay to listen to any of the other presentations. Fortunately for me, and I suspect everyone else, he then left.

My point is that he had systematically insulted the audience without knowing it.

A similar thing once happened when I took part in a broadcast debate about land use planning, held in a central London BBC theatre. The audience were invited to vote at the start and at the end. The winners were the team who got the greatest 'swing'. Our side was doing quite badly until one of our opponents decided to illustrate how wrong we were about advocating planning controls, by citing various London suburbs as examples of the hideous, tasteless communities created by planning. He named one suburb, then another and another, until, as he warmed to his theme, he began to sound like a speaking-guide to commuter destinations on the London Underground.

As each place was named, you could see people in the audience visibly riling at the slur cast on where they lived, and by implication, on themselves. We won by a landslide, and he (a rich farmer who lived a long way from London) looked rather surprised.

"Surely this is all obvious" you may cry – "start from where your audience is, not from where you are!". Well yes but if it is so obvious, why do advocates and campaigners so frequently fail to do so?

The Wrong Type of Person

A few weeks ago, a NGO which I greatly admire, sent me a link to an online campaign video which featured an issue about good and bad food products, differentiated by the way the product was brought to the store. Produced by a famous animator, the story (that was good – a story) was illustrated by showing a chef and two women in the role of cooks. One was 'plain Jane', with no lipstick, dressed demurely with a buttoned-up front and straight brown hair, while the other was vampish, had a plunging neckline, ample bust, long blonde hair and smoked using a cigarette holder. It was pretty obvious who was 'right' and 'wrong' from the start. The difference was rammed home by the similarity of the 'bad' one to a well known cartoon character.

A mock cooking competition ensued in which, all too predictably, the vampish blond made the wrong decision and was humiliated by being covered in exploding food. The wrong decision had been punished. The problem with the video was that it also punished her because she was the 'wrong type of person'. She was, by implication, vain and self-obsessed, shallow and, as was proven by events, not ethical. In values terms [1] she was an archetypical Prospector, as viewed by a Pioneer, probably a Concerned Ethical.

So anyone viewing that video who identified more with the glamorous cook rather than the plain one, had been told they too were a 'wrong type' of person. Yet they were obviously the intended target for change, otherwise what was the point of the video ?

That campaign 'message' could have been made more effective by showing both people as equally attractive, and then having one of them make a mistake – begin to suffer – and then be redeemed and rewarded. Standard fairy tale and Hollywood stuff. And standard advertising construction, for very good reasons. If you want to persuade someone, then like them, flatter them, praise and reward them for doing what you want, don't just criticise them for their behaviour, and don't criticise them for being who they are, or caricature their behaviour.

So why does this happen ?

Sometimes it is naivety about how communications works but other times it is the result of groupthink and peer pressure. Even campaigners who will agree that we should 'start from where others are', may still revert to doing the opposite when the process of drafting and creating communications is done in-house and amidst people who are all like us, not like the intended audience we are trying to influence. And it may be very popular – with the 'base' – they love it because it plays to their values, their prejudices.

A well-known example about the importance of who-the-messenger-is, centres on Nancy Reagan, the wife of former US President Ronald Reagan. She was a strident advocate of the "Just Say No" campaign promoting abstinence from drugs. The only problem was that the 'message' was intended for people, especially young people, who used drugs, or were considering it. They didn't want to hear anything from Nancy Reagan, especially anything about their private lives. So although it delighted the 'base' for the campaign, it flopped as a 'message' for change.

Being "on message" is irrelevant if your 'message' fails to create the conclusion you want in the minds of the intended recipient.

If you seek to persuade, there are no advantages in insulting your audience – or alienating them.

After Durban: Where Next on Climate Change ?

As others have pointed out, the result of the Durban Conference on climate (COP 17 of the UNFCCC) was a rescue for the climate talks but not for the climate.

Unless something is done, our children's generation, and their children, will pay a very heavy price indeed. The world is committed to 2.0C average rise in temperature or possibly 3 or 4.C: more than

enough to push our ecosystems and climate feedbacks way beyond the levels required to keep natural life support systems intact. We are on a slippery slope to ecological disintegration.

Out Shopping To Forget Our Worries

In other circumstances, the media and political classes of developed countries might have themselves been up in arms over this but they were not. Even as Europe in the shape of the EU did its best to hold the line against countries like India and Canada who tried to avoid even a promise of any sort of action to cut emissions, and the US trod water pending the next Presidential elections, Europe's political cognoscenti were absorbed by hour to hour dramas over the fate of the Euro. The current Zeitgeist is more cutting debt than cutting carbon.

The poor souls who attended the Durban talks to represent the fate of nature, the planet and the climate – the NGOs and so on – were largely deprived of the sort of social and media attention which campaigners need to connect effectively at such events. I suspect their audience 'back home' was pitifully small.

As things fell apart in Durban, I spent a Saturday Christmas shopping in London with my family, while all the time receiving increasingly desperate or despairing tweets from the Durban 'front line', for example from the indomitable @kellyrigg of GCCA (<http://gc-ca.org>). Her messages had about as much salience with the concerns of the multinational shopping community shuffling around Liberty's (@LibertyLondon and @Liberty_Fairy) as a Higgs Boson arriving late from Alpha Centauri [2].

True, the NGOs had a big chance at Copenhagen and largely squandered it but you had to feel sorry for them at Durban. And it is depressing. Our children have been cut adrift by the failure of politics – they are in a boat headed out onto a River Styx of consequences: disappearing species, rising seas, melting ice, runaway climate feedbacks, increasingly erratic and severe weather dislocations; which is going to take generations to play out. And that's the optimistic scenario.

Look on the Bright Side

The tweet from @kellyrigg which sticks in my mind at Durban is not the organised singing and chanting of a protest (inevitable, understandable) but as the debacle slid towards to a conclusion "Someone playing piano downstairs, and a bunch of people singing 'always look on the bright side of life'". (<http://bit.ly/tTNWDe>)

Indeed, so much good is happening that if it weren't for climate change itself, the action being taken on climate change would be great.

Some campaigners are really learning from psychology and creating campaigns that don't make the 'obvious' mistakes: for instance the Sierra Club's impressive <http://beyondcoal.org/>. This has stopped over 150 new coal-fired power plants and has over 200,000 signed up supporters. Working at a local level, it deliberately does not mention 'climate' [3] but positions mercury (from coal), smog, asthma, mountaintop removal and coal ash as the 'problem', versus as solutions, renewable energy, energy efficiency and 'clean energy careers'.

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In the US this is known as 'pragmatic' climate campaigning and follows the political dictum "think differently but act alike", or as the 1940s-1950s radical Saul Alinsky put it, accepting that sometimes the right things are done for the 'wrong' reasons.

Similarly, the Save Kansas campaign was a great little example of mobilising people 'naturally' (ie values based) opposed to climate actions, to take climate-saving actions. It asked for participation in 'saving Kansas' from dependence on foreign oil and energy uncertainty, without mentioning climate (<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/19/science/earth/19fossil.html>) and succeeded.

There are many more examples of campaigns succeeding. Tim Nuthall and colleagues at the European Climate Foundation (<http://www.europeanclimate.org/>) pointed me to a number of successful climate campaigns in the EU (list posted at <http://documents.campaignstrategy.org/uploads/climatecampaigns.pdf>).

Then there are a host of initiatives which get climate-friendly results by not trying to drag people through a Pioneer-thinking rabbit hole of dissecting the problem and self-flagellation about ethics.

For instance <http://www.globalactionplan.org.uk/ecoteams>. GAP's success is measured by the volume of such group actions it fosters, and it works.

Many sectoral 'greening' initiatives operate at this level, eg members of the Legal Sector Alliance <http://www.legalsectoralliance.com/> - law firms committed to reducing their climate impact. Similar but with much greater strategic significance, is the Carbon Disclosure Project <http://cdproject.net>, and Global Cool (www.globalcool.org and www.globalcoolfoundation.org) have proved that it is possible to engage the influential uber-Prospector Now People, whose home territory is more Liberty's than the protest picket line, in carbon-cutting activities such as Swishing (see also <http://swishing.com/>)

A huge swathe of companies including blue chips like PWC have adopted impressive internal targets for change, in their case closely monitoring environmental impacts and reporting a 19% reduction in overall climate impact within a few years www.pwc.co.uk/corporatesustainability. Since 2001 the UK's Carbon Trust [4] says that since its launch in 2001 it has helped organisations cut over 38 MtCO₂ making around £3.7 billion of direct cost savings, and so on.

1010 (www.1010uk.org) has a much larger list of accomplishments than its profile suggests. For example the Football Club Tottenham Hotspur cut its carbon emissions 14%, Crawley Council 11% and the London Science Museum 17%, all in a year. These are large organisations but not as big as the English Government which managed nearly 14% from its estate in a year and the Government of Wales which achieved over 11%. The point being, that this proves that it is possible to make rapid and sizeable cuts in carbon emissions – and not just possible but real: these have happened.

Last week there was a burst of activity all over England as the solar industry rushed to complete installations before the government cut the 'Feed in Tariff' to solar pv. Back in February 2010 I wrote [5] of the same scheme:

I do not know how much response DECC expect to get but I suspect it will be very large. Let's hope they are not planning for the response to be small, repeating the mistake of DEFRA on recycling.

As Green MEP Carolyn Lucas has pointed out, the scheme (which relies on a government subsidy) was cut because it was 'too successful' [6].

Yet most of the savings in carbon and money made in the 1010 cuts do not rely on subsidy – they are simply good housekeeping. Many of them simply make a self-funded profit. If you follow these matters you probably know all this.

What then for campaigning post-Durban ?

I won't repeat what's been in these Newsletters before but the one obvious action seems to me to be to mobilise business.

Despite all the progress being made in the mainstream, it is still largely left to the representatives of the marginal, the innovative and the marginalised to make the case for climate action. The media are used to this, so that's how they like it. A green building will be portrayed as an experimental hippyish shed. Someone who cares about climate change will be a 'protestor', and of course protest groups duly oblige (as at Durban). Climate solutions are depicted as exercises in wishful thinking advocated by socially isolated hair-shirt party-poopers. This simply plays into and reinforces the framing of the status quo.

Yet the reality is that there is a huge army of engineers, technical consultants, designers, architects, builders, property developers, estate managers, administrators, systems analysts, even financiers and entrepreneurs who are doing the business of converting from a high carbon past to a low carbon future. Hardly any of them appear anywhere in the politics of climate change, and most politicians are unaware that they even exist. That needs to change.

[1] see Chris Rose: What Makes People Tick: The Three Hidden Worlds of Settlers, Prospectors and Pioneers available at <http://www.campaignstrategy.org/threeworlds/> and <http://amzn.to/w14n0f> Kindle and <http://amzn.to/rNfM6Q> Paperback, and survey online at www.cultdyn.co.uk

[2] somewhat over four light-years from earth

[3] see for background

http://thebreakthrough.org/blog/2011/07/climate_pragmatism_innovation.shtml and <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xITs5XXC5-0>

[4] (<http://www.carbontrust.co.uk/about-carbon-trust/what-we-do/our-achievements/Pages/our-achievements.aspx>)

[5] Climate Change Campaigns: Keep Calm But Don't Carry On

http://www.campaignstrategy.org/climate_campaigns_keep_calm.pdf

[6] <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2011/nov/04/solar-successful-tariffs-cut#start-of-comments>

Stuff In Brief

Size of Wales

Here's a neat idea. In the UK at least, the 'size of Wales' is often taken as a handy measure for comparing the size of fast vanishing rainforest under threat to something the 'population can understand'. International comparisons have frequently involved Switzerland, and in your part of the world there are probably other examples. Anyway, these campaigners have taken this analogy and used it to create their own brand and a logic for a community of support. Clever stuff and cheap.

Visit <http://www.sizeofwales.org.uk/> - for some reason I really like this

Good Book

I'm reading Daniel Kahneman's 'Thinking Fast and Slow' (<http://amzn.to/ruSMBE>). He's the father of 'heuristics' – along with his colleague Amos Tversky, now passed away. You'll find a huge number of reviews online. Not a quick read though. Doesn't seem to mention users of his work such as Robert Cialdini, whose more accessible book 'Influence' is a must-read too <http://amzn.to/5eXl2z>. And see <http://wiki.lesswrong.com/wiki/Bias> if you can't be bothered to read either.

Values Link

A useful report from the world of Local Government at <http://bit.ly/fQvpt3> - Changing Behaviours: Opening a new conversation with the citizen by Nigel Keohane - published 2011 by NLGN.

What's Real ?

Expect an emerging stream of debate about authenticity in 2012.

See some extraordinary stuff about photoshop, thanks to ethically-minded software developers – published in, of all places, the Daily Mail. <http://bit.ly/sDQuht> The researchers propose that any 'tweaked' images should 'come with a health warning' about manipulation. Bearing in mind that portraits of the rich and famous have been unrealistically flattering since at least the Middle Ages if not before: this will run and run.

CE's will love it. Similar thinking applies to wanting to control advertisements. For example <http://www.pirc.info/projects/advertising/> - and see also the slightly more worldly but still very nice Mr Ed Gillespie at <http://bit.ly/vB9CsM>.

For the same logic used by the forces of darkness (an obvious attempt to smear David Attenborough's belated foray into climate campaigning/ journalism politics/ through his polar TV series) – review the synthetic outrage over the 'revelation' that the BBC inserted footage of a zoo polar bear birth into its natural history eco-epic Frozen Planet <http://bit.ly/vddPOm>. (In 1974 Oxford Scientific Films made a broadcast documentary 'The Making of a Natural History Film' which explained exactly how they used 'artificial' natural environments to get close up shots – many 'behind the scenes' films have followed since).

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The fact remains that the BBC would do well to use some sort of on screen icon eg a coloured dot to indicate real wild footage in such movies, as opposed to studio footage, even though people have for years been shown how these films are made.

Visual Language

Nice bike rack (cars) at Visual language bike rack

http://www.treehugger.com/bikes/cheeky-bicycle-rack-in-london-shows-exactly-how-much-room-a-car-takes-up.html?campaign=daily_nl and great clean up (?) brooms pic at <http://bit.ly/tqAEcY>.

Want To Help ?

If you like this free Newsletter you can help me by buying my books:

How To Win: Communications for Change (ed 2) pub 2010 Earthscan by Chris Rose

<http://www.earthscan.co.uk/tabid/102418/Default.aspx>

and

What Makes People Tick: The Three Hidden Worlds of Settlers, Prospectors and Pioneers available at

<http://www.campaignstrategy.org/threeworlds/> and <http://amzn.to/w14n0f> Kindle and

<http://amzn.to/rNfM6Q> Paperback, and survey online at www.cultdyn.co.uk

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