

Campaign Strategy Newsletter 81, July 2012

The Need To Change Climate Campaigning

Changing Climate Campaigns: Time To Retire The Apocalypse

In a new Campaign Strategy report posted at <http://documents.campaignstrategy.org/uploads/Changing%20Climate%20Campaigns.pdf> 'Changing Climate Campaigns: Time To Retire The Apocalypse' I argue for a fundamental psychological and political reconfiguration of the dominant framing of climate campaigns and advocacy.

The 'old warhorse' framing of *AA*, or action to *Avoid the Apocalypse*, that has been the default model of climate campaigns for over two decades and its sister *UP* - or the *Unresponsive Public* - are redundant and need to be retired. They are no longer compelling and do not match the new reality.

Climate change is upon us and people have noticed, without having to resort to analysis of the scientific evidence, even though that supports the perception. This is a major new opportunity because it engages with Daniel Kahneman's 'System 1' thinking (the easy, intuitive, automatic system) which is perhaps an order of magnitude more powerful than the effortful, analytical 'System 2'. Campaigners should grasp this opportunity and demonstrate and focus public dissatisfaction with a dangerously extreme and wild new climate, to reinvigorate the stalled international politics of climate. Put simply, show that people have noticed the climate is changing for the worse, and show that they want more action to make the climate safer.

The current pessimism and gloom of commentators and campaigners, who saw the route of global agreement through international politics as the only hope of global salvation, spreads unwarranted pessimism and is counter productive. It delays the necessary public outcry over the actual impact of climate change because it stymies campaigns and locks media commentary into the obsolete frames of *AA* and *UP*, which together suggest 'the game is up'. It also distracts campaigners from the other task they must embrace, which is to own and explore the upside of the new reality, namely that an energy revolution is not just necessary but already taking place, underway, and being won.

Campaigns should no longer spread pessimism but optimism. In fact campaigners should actively attack pessimism about what can be achieved to reduce and eliminate the causes of climate change, because in reality the public is far from uncaring and unresponsive. Renewable energy is going to replace fossil fuels, and it is taking place by the mainstreaming of change, not at the climate talks but in businesses, corporations, cities, communities and households. The change-carriers are not campaigners but members of mainstream society. It's not a question of starting the energy revolution but of how soon it can be concluded, and campaigners need to put their shoulders to that wheel.

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Fishy Tale

Here's one for case-study enthusiasts. (Moral: don't accidentally consolidate opposition).

Back in September 2010, I wrote in [Campaign Strategy Newsletter 64](#) about the unfortunate tendency of British public bodies to indulge in DAD, or Decide-Announce-Defend. All too often it's followed by another A: Decide-Announce-Defend-Abandon.

I suggested that Share-Consult-Decide as a better model or, as Lindsay Colborne had suggested, Engage-Deliberate-Decide, and proposed that often an organisation has to '[change] the balance of forces by making new alliances, or making instrumental changes to social or commercial processes ... before implementation is possible'. As a 'for instance' I noted that 'the UK Government is trying to implement EU regulations designed to protect marine biodiversity and has accordingly launched 'consultations' [1] but without first achieving some sort of political settlement with at least a critical mass of fishing interests, these may well fail'.

What I did not say was that I knew that some officials intended to plunge straight in DAD, in which scientific evidence would be used to announce that all sorts of activities would be curtailed in order to create a network of new marine reserves and protected areas, while another group officials was considering an idea to be more strategic, and first create an alliance with part of the fishing industry. To declare an interest, I knew this because it was us that had suggested it.

We'd also suggested to the agency Natural England, and to the conservation NGOs who were even more active in promoting the scientific case for conservation, that this would fail unless they also generated public support, in other words social and cultural demand, for such protected areas. We researched what people knew about the undersea (not much) and whether it existed for them as a place (it didn't) and therefore whether protecting it as a place made sense (not really). We showed the values differences at play and how you could communicate in such a way that it would create a popular constituency for undersea conservation.

That research was reported in [Campaign Strategy Newsletter No 43](#) September 2008 in the article 'Wetter But Not Better' and forms a case study in the second edition of my book *How to Win Campaigns: Communications for Change* (or in this case, how not to win campaigns).

Sadly, for various reasons, public constituency-building work was started but then dropped, and a straightforward 'selling job' of scientific research was begun without the creation of any

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alliance with the more sustainable sector of the fishing industry. It looked problematic from the start and so it has proved.

In my neck of the woods, on England's North Sea Coast, it was known as Net Gain <http://www.netgainmcs.org/>. Similar initiatives took place around the country, in which well meaning marine biologists explained to fishermen why they should give up fishing grounds. They certainly succeeded in stimulating the attention of fishing interests. The result was the creation of a completely new alliance, wholly opposed to marine protected areas: the 'MPA Fishing Coalition' [2].

The wide reach of the proposals meant that they also have even managed to enrage quite land-locked local opinion, such as the normally quiescent Blakeney Parish Council, here in North Norfolk [3]. For those outside the UK but familiar with the politics of the US, Blakeney lies in an area socially rather similar to Martha's Vineyard or The Hamptons, although it looks more like Chesapeake Bay. It's the sort of place where you might bump into Hollywood movie stars doing a spot of birdwatching, High Court judges out sailing or TV News Editors walking the dog, as easily as you might run into a local bait digger with no love for officialdom.

These people could have been their natural supporters but now they will be implacable, well connected and resourceful opponents. Little wonder then, that on the very day I write this, the first signs of DADA have emerged. A Natural England Press release creates a bit of wiggle room for the Minister who must decide what to do. The DAD consultation will press ahead, but now:

"Following the consultation, it is anticipated that the Minister will select:

- Sites that are backed by robust evidence, to designate in summer 2013
- Sites where further evidence is required, to designate at a later stage
- Sites that are not considered suitable to progress"

I wonder which ones will be in the last category?

One good thing that has come out of the parallel and inter-connected reform process for the Common Fisheries Policy (see *Newsletters 72, 73 and 76*) which involves many of the same actors and issues, is that some of the conservation NGOs have belatedly overcome their internal lobby of purists and made an alliance with the small fishermen. These guys do much less damage than the big boys (in some cases none at all), create most of the social benefits, and are getting mercilessly squeezed out by government policy. For example Greenpeace's new alliance with NUTFA [5], which comes complete with sea-shanty opportunity. Better late than never.

[1] <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/marine/protected/mcs/index.htm>

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- [3] http://www.nffo.org.uk/news/new_industry_body.html
- [3] http://www.blakeneyparishcouncil.co.uk/?page_id=293
- [4] http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/about_us/news/2012/190712.aspx
- [5] <http://www.greenpeace.org.uk/oceans/beafishermansfriend>
<http://www.bluemarinefoundation.com/home/news-index/news-detail.aspx?newsStory=Greenpeace-urges-reform-to-reward-sustainable-fishing-methods>

Other Stuff

- The remarkable Hans Rosling on CNN <http://tiny.cc/5y06ew> shows the social condition drivers that underly changes in the proportion of values in societies
- For a nature engagement app with lots of potential - have a look at <http://www.pooter.it>
- My book *How to Win Campaigns Edn 2* is now available in Kindle (a bit late) at <http://amzn.to/MWWorI>
- A story of 'start from where the audience is', by bike: <http://thetyee.ca/Opinion/2012/07/13/Let-The-Children-Pedal/>
- Ed Gillespie and Soli Townsend at Futerra, have a go at eco bodice-ripper writing, or I think that's what it is? *50 Shades of Green* - www.futerra.co.uk/blog

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Books By Chris Rose: *How to Win Campaigns: Communications for Change*, (edn 2) Earthscan 2010, from <http://amzn.to/JDWpi7> *What Makes People Tick: The Three Hidden Worlds of Settlers, Prospectors, and Pioneers*, Troubador (2011) from <http://bit.ly/nuNWK8>