Warm Words II:

How the climate story is evolving

and the lessons we can learn for encouraging public action

energy saving trust®

Contents

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Preface

This research was funded by the Energy Saving Trust and is published in conjunction with the Institute for Public Policy Research (ippr). The basis of both organisations' interest in this work is the belief that preventing dangerous climate change cannot be achieved effectively without real changes in behaviour, and that this entails the active engagement of the public. Effective communications can play an important part in achieving widespread behaviour change, whether this is consumer or organisational behaviour.

The research reported here was designed to help optimise communications and activities aimed at encouraging climate-friendly behaviour by mapping the public discourse within which these must operate – the public discourse of climate change. It has application and implications for all those engaged in action and communication in this field.

Prior work on climate change discourse

Research carried out by Linguistic Landscapes early in 2006, commissioned by ippr with sponsorship by the Energy Saving Trust, was published as the report *Warm Words: How are we telling the climate story and can we tell it better?* (available to download at www.ippr.org). This work identified a number of 'linguistic repertoires' – loosely coherent lines of talking and thinking about climate change (see 'The research approach', below). Such repertoires are influential because they offer a range of resources from which people – consumers, journalists, politicians and others – can construct their own arguments about climate change and which, crucially, lead to different 'logical' conclusions about the need for behaviour change. Each of the repertoires identified in *Warm Words* was visible to some degree in media discourse at the time, while some – notably the 'alarmism' and the 'small actions' repertoires – were clearly dominant. In that report we also took a view on how the task of behaviour change might be framed in the light of this discursive context.

The need to update

A year on, the Energy Saving Trust and ippr wished to update this work. Much has happened in the past year, including the publication both of the Stern Review on the economics of climate change in October 2006, and the pessimistic conclusions of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in January 2007. Beyond these key events, climate change and global warming have rarely been far from the front pages of mainstream and other media in the UK. Furthermore, a key feature of the climate change discourse identified in the original work was its instability. Change in the nature and dominance of different strands of the discourse was therefore likely to have taken place, with new ways of thinking and talking emerging – even as little as 12 months on.

Addressing the local issue

The Energy Saving Trust and ippr also wished to extend the work to look specifically at the climate change discourse at the local level. The Energy Saving Trust is engaged in national campaigns and advertising, but also in local activities with local authorities and community organisations, and support to consumers through its national network of advice centres. The scope of the current work was thus extended to include communications or other examples of discourse originating at a local or grassroots level. This meant we could look at the relationship between climate change discourse at the national level, and as it appeared in local media, community groups and local authorities.

Objectives of the study

The overall objectives of the project were:

1. To map the public discourse of climate change in the UK, especially highlighting what has changed since the work we conducted in 2006. This meant careful mapping of the dominant frames and discourses evidenced in popular print, television, radio and online national media coverage of climate change (for example, newspaper articles/columns, government publicity, influential blogs, material from non-governmental organisations [NGOs]).

2. To look at what characterises climate change discourse at the local level – how local press, local authorities and groups engaged in climate-related activities on the ground construct and talk about the issues and their own actions.

3. To compare these sources and discourses, and suggest implications for national and local communications and activities for all those seeking to change public behaviour on climate change.

The research approach

As in the first part of the 'Warm Words' project in 2006, we used a combination of methods and frameworks derived from discourse analysis and semiotics.

Discourse analysis (DA) is a desk-based analysis method developed within the social sciences which we

have adapted for our communications work. It incorporates the idea that language is not a transparent medium through which we talk about a fixed external reality, but instead is engaged in forming that reality; using language is never neutral but always active. DA methods in academic research are hugely varied, ranging from macro-scale cultural or historical analyses to micro-level dissection of how everyday conversations work. For our purposes, we select tools and concepts from across this range as appropriate to an individual project. DA methods are essentially qualitative and so do not involve numerical analysis: they are a combination of art and science, interpretative while evidence-based and systematic.

Semiotic analysis is a related research approach, another desk-based method with roots in academia. Again, through systematic analysis and informed interpretation, this approach allows us to understand cultural meanings, cultural change and the way these are encoded and decoded in communications of all kinds.

The combined DA and semiotic approach in this case enabled us to map structural patterns in communications and in other discussions of climate change and to assess their implications for connecting with mass audiences.

The 2007 part of the 'Warm Words' review covered a wide range of data, including:

- More than 760 national and local newspaper and magazine articles.
- 47 TV and radio programmes and clips.
- More than 155 web pages.
- 117 TV, radio, print and web advertisements.
- 5 popular science books on climate change and energy efficiency.
- 90 pieces of promotional material from NGOs, retail brands, local campaign organisations, renewable energy providers and the like.
- 6 field visits to, for example, a public meeting on climate change and to a day-long energy efficiency event.
- 17 interviews – with local authority officers, activists, campaigners and local-level energy advisers.

We drew our 'local' material primarily from eight UK localities – Lewisham (South London), Manchester, Guildford (Surrey), Bridgend (South Wales), Cambridge, Falkirk (central Scotland), Derry City and South Northamptonshire. These were selected to give us a range of material from areas with different socio-demographic profiles and different levels of environmental engagement (according to Energy Saving Trust research). We have collected further local material from other areas to develop hypotheses as the project progressed.

The research was carried out between March and July 2007.

What are 'linguistic repertoires'?

In this report we have again used the idea of the 'linguistic repertoire': an analytic framework we have adapted from discourse analysis in the academic field (for example, Potter and Weatherell 1987). Linguistic repertoires are routinely used systems of language for describing and evaluating actions, events and people. A repertoire might include a distinctive lexicon, a set of grammatical or stylistic features, particular images, metaphors, idioms, stories and categories. Think, for example, of the familiar, predictable way in which police officers give public statements on television news. Typical terms such as 'offenders', 'victims' and 'the occupants of the premises' are set into a distinctive structuring of speech that might sound odd in any other context. Repertoires are a mix of content (such as 'typical' topics or lines of argument) and form (characteristic use of grammatical features like tense and voice and specific choice of lexicon).

Significantly, though, repertoires are not merely registers but are distinctive versions of 'common sense': different ways of making sense of the world. They are also known as 'interpretative repertoires' because they are frameworks for inference and for making judgements like *what things mean; what is right and what is wrong; what is acceptable and not acceptable; and what flows logically from what.* The range of repertoires available in our culture offers all of us a palette of sense-making devices: ways of talking and ways of thinking that can be put together in specific situations to make our case, explain our own actions, predict what might happen next, and so on.

It is important to note that repertoires do not 'exist' in some concrete way 'out there'. Our task has not been to search them out or count them. Repertoire-based analysis is systematic (based on close analysis of large amounts of data) but is also interpretative. We offer our 'map' of the climate change discourse not as a definitive truth, but as a tool for thinking – creating some order from, and sense of, the cacophony of voices in the climate change arena.

Executive summary

A year is a long time in climate change communications. In August 2006, the Institute for Public Policy Research (ippr) published a research report: *Warm Words: How are we telling the climate story and can we tell it better?* Detailed analysis of news and popular media, websites and more, had identified a state of tension, contradiction and chaos in the way climate change was being talked and written about in the public domain.

This report is an update of that work and again is based on close analysis of media and other public language, this time between March and July 2007.

Both the 2006 work and this latest project use forensic analysis of public discourse, and both employ the idea of 'repertoires' – routinely-used systems of language for describing and evaluating actions, events and people. Repertoires are not fixed entities, but do represent discernible patterns among the cacophony of voices in the wider discourse. More importantly for the public, and indeed for all of us, they provide sense-making devices: ways of talking and ways of thinking that can be drawn on in specific situations to make our case, explain our own actions, predict what might happen next and so on. In the uncertain and contrary field of climate change in 2006 it was clear that many such repertoires were in circulation, but also that there were some major players.

The discourse at that time was dominated by 'alarmism' – climate change constructed as awesome, terrible, immense and totally beyond human control. Alongside this, the other dominant repertoire was one of domestic and mundane 'small actions' – the 'turn off your lights and do your bit' line of argument. The research highlighted the huge and at times comic disparity of scale between these two – but also their prevalence alongside each other in many climate change communications. We drew implications and recommendations for the development of communications in a way that would avoid this problem, some of which have been implemented by organisations working in the field.

But, as we said, a year is a long time. Major events have occurred since the publication of *Warm Words,* including the Government's *Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change*, the draft Climate Change Bill, and the latest findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), all of which have clearly changed the cultural and political landscape of climate change in the UK.

The research reported here was commissioned both to update the 2006 work and to extend it into the area of local discourse, to inform communications and other activities of organisations seeking to change public behaviours in relation to climate change.

2007: Towards a consensus

It is clear that there is an emerging consensus on climate change – at least in the official public arena. The existence of climate change, and human implication in it, seems to constitute a new common sense, now almost taken for granted. This manifests itself in a number of ways in the discourse: climate change is often now referred to as a given, with little or no explanation; it is sometimes used to stand in for other things (a metaphor for inevitability, for example); specialised language is creeping into lay discourse; and climate change has acquired its own meta-discourse – discussion about the nature of the discussion.

With this shift towards consensus seems to have come a moderation in language – note this is a moderation of tone and rhetoric, not a moderation of content. This report treats the cluster of 'consensus' repertoires as dominant, alongside a number of increasingly marginalised sceptical repertoires.

Within the consensus, there is still some evidence of 'alarmism' (the voice of doom; cinematic and hyperbolic), but this has now largely given way to 'alarm' – especially 'sober alarm' (seriousness without the hyperbole). We have filed the other 'consensus' repertoires under 'resolve' – different forms of acceptance (however reluctant) that something needs to be done. We found that one of these – 'reluctant belief' – has to some extent replaced widespread scepticism. The 'small actions' repertoire remains dominant in national campaign communications, but we saw some evidence in the national media that it may be becoming more differentiated and sophisticated – and perhaps more compelling.

Beyond the emergent consensus

Beyond the consensus, outlying sceptical repertoires are still discernible, as is an emergent repertoire we called 'free rider'. Nonetheless, straight opposition or public disbelief no longer seems widely acceptable in the public sphere, and these positions are increasingly marginalised. However, they will still present a challenge to consensus and any concerted action that might follow from it.

Another challenge comes from two weak spots in the consensus. First, there is the problem of

suppression of debate, clearly visible in the discourse we analysed. While there is consensus on some key issues (that climate change exists, that humankind is at least partly responsible and that we need to act), it has yet to develop in others (what the exact effects will be, and what exactly should be done). In these cases, the dismissal out of hand of alternatives to the mainstream environmental position arguably amounts to the suppression of debate, and is likely to undermine and destabilise the wider consensus. Mainstream consensus can and should accommodate debate where appropriate, or risk wholesale rejection as undemocratic, statist and, ironically, unscientific.

The second threat to the emergent consensus is the problem of 'greenwash'; the potential gap between agreeing in public with the consensus, and not attempting to do anything about it (whether or not one actually believes in private). This concern, too, was visible in the discourse, in addition to being indicated by the Energy Saving Trust's own research, and by other reported findings.

Local communications and actions

On one level, climate change discourse used at a local level is a more parochial and everyday – even mundane – version of the national. It is the natural home of the 'small actions' repertoire – but this suffers even more in a local setting from a lack of energy, and an uncompelling element of domesticity. However, we found some local communications that stood out as energetic and compelling, and also bypassed some of the problems we identified at the national level, such as the mismatch of scale between the global issue of climate change and possible responses to it. Essentially, local communications stand a better chance of *reifying* the problem of climate change, and the potential solutions to it – making them real, concrete and/or imaginable.

The local communications that stood out took a linguistic approach quite distinct from both national communications, and from the less compelling local examples that were simply local imitations of the national. The most significant difference was in their means of addressing the individual. He or she was constructed as a (powerful) member of a real, physically located community; the action (s)he could take was framed as collective or communal; the voice used was playful, metaphorical, and moreover, collaborative – peer-to-peer – as opposed to top-down or authoritative.

We identified in last year's report that if climate-friendly behaviour is to be encouraged then new ways of engaging the public will have to be found. The findings this year suggest that a concerted effort – both at the national and local level – to address the individual as a member of his or her community could close the gap between the 'official' consensus on climate change, and the public's motivation to act on it.

Where next for climate communications?

In the concluding section of this report, we revisit and develop the recommendations for climate change communications that we made last year in *Warm Words* in light of the changing discourse and what we learned in this latest work from local climate change activities. We conclude that a major challenge for communicators today will be to capitalise on the apparent consensus, and use it to bring about real and positive behaviour change among individuals and organisations before it fractures or fades.

There is still a role for 'ordinary heroism', the creative approach suggested last year, but the discourse has shifted and we need to develop additional strategies to suit the evolving communications climate. It remains a challenge to make climate-friendly behaviour desirable, not dutiful, in ways that are meaningful to the population at large. For this reason we advocate making use of the full spectrum of communications approaches, including those more commonly used by the private sector.

Our specific recommendations are:

1. Seize the consensus, before greenwash erodes its potential

The new consensus on man-made climate change, at least in the media, represents a huge step forward for organisations wishing to encourage the public to reduce their energy consumption. But this is potentially a crucial and delicate moment. Organisations now need to recognise certain distinctions and subtleties in the climate change debate, helping people separate questions over which there is now scientific consensus and growing acceptance in the public sphere (that climate change is happening, and that we are at least partly responsible for it) from other questions over which there is still vigorous and legitimate debate (how bad the effects might be, and what we should do about it). Without this differentiation, the embryonic consensus itself may be threatened.

2. Make it easier for people to understand what they can do

Climate change is a complex and abstract issue, encompassing many different concepts, objects and possible actions: 'CO_2'; 'carbon'; 'ozone'; flying; driving, leaving the TV on standby…and more. It is complex, but all these concepts and actions are presented to a general audience in a complicated and unfathomable interrelationship. The abstraction and intricacy of the climate change discourse can become reasons to ignore it. There is a clear need to divide up or organise possible actions so that they are more easily digestible.

3. Harness opportunities offered by real, located 'communities'

Patterns of social engagement have changed beyond recognition with electronic connectivity. However, our desire for real-life connectedness and belonging also remains strong. It is clear that people who share a physical location *can* come together and think of themselves as a community, albeit a socially disparate one. This can partly be achieved *through* the virtual. Our data included examples of physically defined communities mobilising at least partly through online connection and activity. The idea of the located community therefore offers climate change communicators some distinct benefits. By harnessing the latent power of locality, interested organisations could begin to close the gap between the official consensus on climate change and the public's willingness to do something about it.

The 'unit' of the physical locality allows a degree of reification – making real and concrete – of the otherwise abstract and unknowable connection between action and effect in the area of climate change. Furthermore, addressing people as members of a located community positions them as having more power to act: they are big fish in a small pond, not powerless members of an unmanageably large group. And communications are more effective using the informal, peer-to-peer tone of contemporary public discourse, as opposed to the inflexible voice of authority.

4. Use all possible routes to engagement

Returning to a key theme from last year's report, we challenge climate change communicators to work right across the spectrum of routes to engagement. Organisations do need to encourage rational public engagement with the climate change issue, but they also need to attract people to the issue, making it appealing, interesting and meaningful to the individual. When people are drawn emotionally to an action they are far more likely to sustain it than if they act through simple civic duty or obedience.

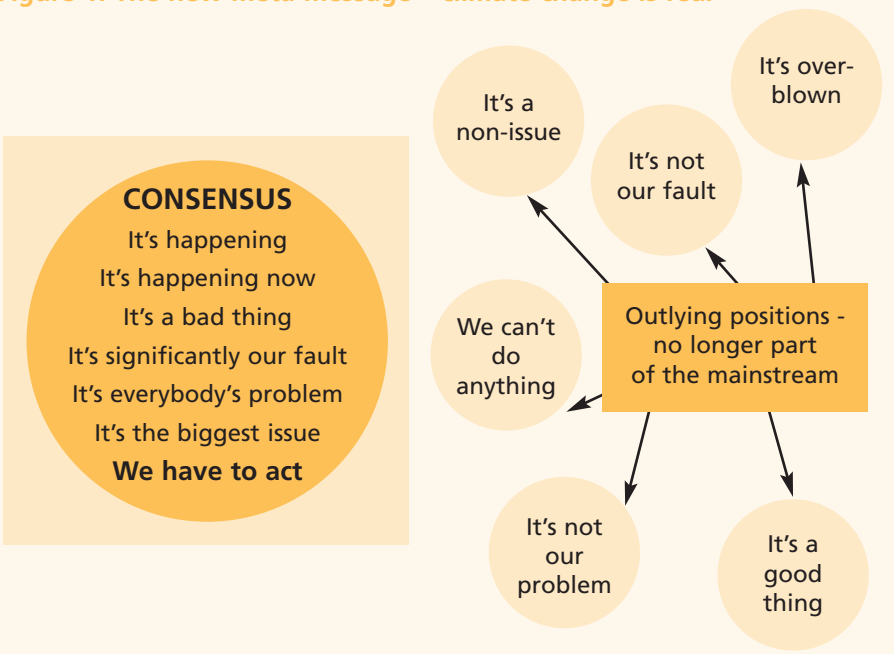
Much can be learned from certain local communications that use the rich, imaginative and playful language of popular culture, media and everyday discourse rather than the discourses of politics, campaigning and the public sector. A new, more positive and energetic lexicon of climate change emerges in these communications, and the difference this makes is profound.

Efforts to curb emissions will never be successful without radical policy measures at the national and international level. But neither will they succeed without a shared popular culture of environmental responsibility in the UK. Organisations now have the opportunity to integrate environmental awareness and commitment into the way people actually think, feel and live in the UK in the 21st century.

1. Climate change: towards a new consensus

A year is a long time in climate change communications. In *Warm Words*, our first report on the subject published in August 2006, we characterised the discourse of climate change in the UK as 'confusing, contradictory and chaotic'. It would be hard to make quite the same claim today. In the ongoing analysis of any public discourse, be it political, commercial or cultural, shifts of meaning and emphasis are invariably detectable over time. Language is always in a state of flux. The remarkable thing about the language of climate change, however, is how rapid its evolution has been.

Figure 1: The new meta-message – climate change is real



This will come as no surprise to anyone who has opened a newspaper recently. Last year's report emerged from an unprecedented volume of media coverage and communications on climate change, and this is even more the case for this year's report - to the extent, as we will show, that the subject's domination of the news agenda has become newsworthy itself.

What becomes especially clear is a new level of consensus on the reality of anthropogenic – man-made – climate change. Whether this is predominantly a cause or effect of the increase in coverage is open to debate. What is not is the breadth of the consensus. Last year the discourse was riven by opposing positions. This year, sceptical voices persist, and a degree of controversy attaches both to the precise effects of climate change and possible responses to it, but the overwhelming assumption is made that climate change is happening, we are at least partially responsible, and that something radical has to be done about it. We see this in everything from leader articles in the right-wing press to television comedy programmes. The prevailing message for the lay public is stark: climate change is real and we have to act.

As we have suggested, it would be difficult – if not misleading – to attribute this shift to any one cause in particular. Certainly the publication of the *Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change, the Fourth Assessment* report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), and the release of Al Gore's film *An Inconvenient Truth* have helped at once to publicise the issue and dismantle the arguments of those seeking to dismiss it. But for the purpose of this analysis, we are less concerned with where ideas come from than how they are perpetuated, contested and developed in and through language, tracking the development and significance of an idea from its recurrence in what people say, and the way in which it is said.

And what recurs right across the discourse is an acceptance that man-made climate change is real. It is crucial to note at this point that our study was essentially confined to media accounts of the subject. Public opinion, however much it is influenced by the media, is a different matter, and it only takes a glance at web forums like bbc.co.uk's Have Your Say to see that a high level of scepticism still exists. This is borne out by recent research by the Energy Saving Trust and Ipsos Mori: we will examine later why a gap might have opened up between the 'official' consensus on climate change, and the private opinions of the largely silent majority.

Nonetheless, for the time being, we are concerned with what the papers, TV, internet and radio say – and here the shift to consensus is much more readily detectable. Some of this might be called vindicated certainty – the implicit claim to

recognition by certain voices that they were right all along about climate change, and it is only now that the mainstream has caught up. 'In less than a year,' says Charlie Kronick, climate campaign manager at Greenpeace, 'the perception [of decentralised energy] has gone from fruitcake territory to mainstream policy' (Allen 2007). Even a journal like *Petroleum Economist* betrays symptoms of this 'I told you so' approach:

'Last month, the...IPCC confirmed what most people have believed for years and what countless reports had already said: that human activity is causing global warming.' (Nicholls 2007)

Elsewhere we found evidence of a new, cautious acceptance of man-made climate change, even if it was lent against the speaker's will. We called this 'reluctant belief', and found it present in so many constructions of the issue that we felt it deserved treatment as a repertoire in its own right. As such we will leave its further definition for the 'consensus repertoires' section of this report, but for now it is worth noting the hedging, tentative language ('no longer seems tenable', 'evidence is starting to be') of these excerpts from *The Times* and the *London Review of Books* respectively:

'I am not a natural environmentalist. I am no longer even a sceptical environmentalist. I have become a reluctant environmentalist because it no longer seems tenable either to dismiss the existence of global warming or to deny the contribution that humans have made to it.' (Sieghart 2007)

'I don't think I can be the only person who finds in myself a strong degree of psychological resistance to the whole subject of climate change...but...the evidence for it is starting to be manifest in everyday life.' (Lanchester 2007)

Perhaps the strongest evidence for a widespread consensus position on climate change is how frequently it is now referred to without comment. In constructions like 'In these days of climate change, we're all being urged to go green' (Daily Mail 2007) the incontestability of the rationale for going green is taken as read. In some instances anthropogenic climate change has become not only undeniable but a figure of speech for undeniability:

'Global warming continues. The magnolias are blooming obscenely early...And the long, hot summer of pointless film sequels is underway.' (Bradshaw 2007)

'The decline of classical music is as indisputable as global warming.' (Christiansen 2007)

That man-made climate change exists is now the commonsensical position, at least in the public discourse. Terms like 'carbon footprint', 'carbon neutral', 'offsetting' and 'emissions' are no longer part of an expert, rarefied discourse, but the stuff of tabloid editorials and consumer advertising. Translation to the vernacular is no longer necessary. An offsetting company like Future Forests now feels confident enough in the language of climate change and carbon trading to change its name to the Carbon Neutral Company.

Departures from the consensus, while still common, and still capable of a disproportionate effect on the discourse, are now more clearly readable as just that – departures – as opposed to alternative positions given equal weight in the discourse. A telling sign of its new marginality is the comic force the dismissal of climate concerns has now gained. It is the unacceptable thing to say, a means of provoking a laugh by rejecting the orthodox position, and in so doing painting yourself as a pantomime villain:

Krishnan Guru-Murthy: 'There was a report this week saying the Arctic will be gone in 13 years.'

Jeremy Clarkson: 'Oh that's just crap.' [Big laugh]

Guru-Murthy: 'I think mainly because of you.'
(*Have I Got News For You*, BBC1, 13 April 2007)

It is a measure of the maturity of the discourse – and the expectation in accounts of climate change that the audience will be familiar with its terms – that it has begun to refer to itself. Not only has climate change come to dominate the news agenda, but in constructions like 'Climate change has become the topic *du jour*' (Nicholls 2007), news value attaches to the domination itself, often, in a further twist of self-reflexivity, using the language of climate change to do so. The following comes from Al Gore, quoted in *New Statesman* on the subject of American attitudes to global warming. Not only has there been a sudden surge of interest in the subject, but it shares that suddenness with the abrupt transitions of the climate system:

'It can appear to move at a glacier's pace and then, after crossing a tipping point, it can suddenly move rapidly into a completely new pattern.' (Kolbert 2006)

A similar process is at work in an article in *The Observer Magazine* about the significance of the polar bear in climate change

communications. Again, the focus is less on the actual plight or otherwise of what *The Observer* described as 'the new poster boys of global warming' than on the battle to invest them with meaning. Contrary to several of the media reports it cites, the *Observer* piece argues that to suggest that the bears are 'howling against' the 'injustice' of climate change is to indulge in a righteous anthropomorphism at the expense of the facts.

What is interesting here is that the piece is an explicit commentary on the *signifiers* of climate change, not climate change itself. It demonstrates a shift in emphasis from establishing first principles (persuading *Observer* readers that man-made climate change is something to worry about) to examining media representation of something that readers are now assumed to accept as beyond reasonable doubt.

In sum, there are three areas over which there is emerging consensus in public discourse. One, climate change is happening; two, it is our fault (at least partly); and three, we have to do something about it. There are nonetheless other matters over which consensus has not yet been reached – how bad climate change might be, and what exactly we should do about it. We will revisit this point in our discussion of vulnerabilities in the emergent consensus.

2. Consensus and its effect on the discourse

An effect of the widespread media consensus on anthropogenic climate change has been a new moderation in the language used to describe it. It is striking that the 'stark warning' (Adam and Traynor 2007) contained in the IPCC's Fourth Assessment has mostly been conveyed without recourse to the 'inflated and extreme' alarmist lexicon we identified in the first *Warm Words*.

It is crucial to note that by 'moderation' we do not mean to suggest that the implications of the prevailing scientific opinion following the IPCC report are any less grave than was the case a year ago. If anything, the discourse makes them out to be more so. The bleak conclusions of the Fourth Assessment are only lent weight by the IPCC's historical sobriety of tone. In other words, it is exactly the IPCC's distaste for alarmism that makes its latest findings so alarming.

The moderation under consideration, then, is not a moderation of content but of rhetoric: not what is said, but the way it is said. It is arguable that the wide media consensus on man-made climate change has removed the need for 'loud talk' – the sort of urgent, quasi-religious doom-mongering that was all the more urgent and quasi-religious for its detachment from the science. Now the case has been made the message need no longer be shouted from the rooftops.

So this new moderation might be defined as consensus-in-use. Its effects are detectable across all the linguistic repertoires we identified last year. (See 'The research approach', p4, for an explanation of what we mean by 'repertoires'.)

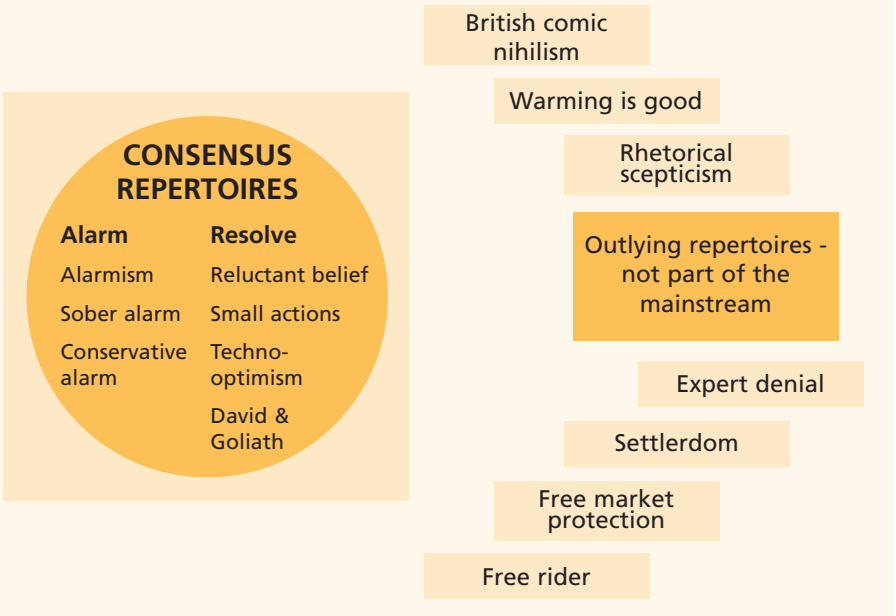
For one, 'alarm' has become differentiated. It now embraces 'alarmism', or what remains of it, plus new repertoires that have emerged in the wake of the new moderation: 'sober alarm' and 'conservative alarm'. Note we are distinguishing 'alarmism' – 'the often unwarranted exciting of fears or warning of danger' – from 'alarm' – 'fear resulting from the perception of imminent danger' (Merriam-Webster).

The repertoire we named 'small actions' in 2006 has perhaps unsurprisingly been bolstered, proceeding as it always has from an essentially moderate construction of the problem (it is serious, but we can do something about it without too much personal sacrifice).

The sceptical repertoires from 2006 ('rhetorical scepticism', 'free market protection', and so on) have been significantly marginalised, although we will go on to discuss how certain weaknesses in the consensus have left it susceptible to otherwise discredited opposing positions.

Lastly, some new repertoires have emerged. It is inevitable that with a growing consensus on anthropogenic climate change, the way people express their acceptance or rejection of the climate change arguments should develop over time. As ever, each repertoire is interpretatively derived, and the dividing lines between them are open to debate, but two new patterns were sufficiently distinct to warrant their inclusion in the list of repertoires: 'reluctant belief', as discussed above, and 'free rider'.

Figure 2: The new language landscape



3. Consensus repertoires: how the new consensus is expressed

The emergent consensus comprises two key strands of thought and language: *alarm* and *resolve*. Within each of these there are sub-strands, and these form our key consensus repertoires. Outside of the consensus there are some important (and some less important) *sceptical* ways of thinking and talking, and these are described in a later section.

Alarm

The three repertoires outlined here – 'alarmism', 'sober alarm' and 'conservative alarm' – have in common an acceptance of the existence and seriousness of climate change, but differ in the way they construct this acceptance, and the appropriate response to it.

Alarmism: 'we should be scared stiff'

The 'alarmism' repertoire has largely been depleted by the new moderation at the heart of the discourse. In its place, as we will show, has come a new 'sober alarm', no less bleak in its implications, but shorn of the unsupported, inflated rhetoric that characterised the alarmist constructions we analysed last year ('Freak weather sweeps world, just like in disaster film').

That is not to say the doom-laden language of catastrophe, chaos and destruction is not still widely in evidence. To the extent that humanity has *not* woken up to the threat of climate change, there still exists a need – or so alarmist constructions would have it – to alert us to the unimaginable, and only linguistic shock tactics will do.

Inertia and epochal slowness are structural both to the science and the language of climate change. We are used to the idea that climate systems change over the long term – the very long term. Alarmist constructions, however, undermine this assumption with the language of acceleration and increase. 'Everything,' says James Lovelock, 'is happening very quickly' (Jeffries 2007); climate change, warns the *New Statesman*, will possibly be 'abrupt' and 'catastrophic' (McDermott 2007).

The quasi-religious foretelling of 'apocalypse' is still common, as is the borrowing of cinematic codes to lend a thrilling – and, as before, ultimately distancing – note to certain treatments that might otherwise be dry rehearsals of the science. For example, on the publication of Mark Lynas's *Six Degrees*, the cover of the *Sunday Times Magazine* featured a photorealistic graphic of the UK reduced to a desert archipelago. Inside, a further graphic, illustrating the likely effects of the eponymous six-degree rise in global temperatures, promised 'apocalyptic storms, flash floods, hydrogen sulphide gas and methane fireballs racing across the globe with the power of atomic bombs'. 'Only fungi,' it concluded, 'survive' (Girling 2007). It is hard to follow that with the recommendation to change to low-energy light bulbs.

And this of course points to the problem we identified in *Warm Words* last year: alarmist constructions largely exclude the possibility of human agency. As Neal Lawson puts it in *The Guardian*:

'The threat of global warming creates a psychosis of despair because, it seems, nothing can be done.' (Lawson 2007)

Alarmism: 'we should be scared stiff'

Life on Earth ends with apocalyptic storms, flash floods, hydrogen sulphide gas and methane fireballs racing across the globe with the power of atomic bombs; only fungi survive

The Sunday Times

If we don't [cut our CO_2 production] the climate is set to warm by between two and three degrees in the next 50 years, with all the accompanying apocalyptic hurricanes and floods

ES Magazine

Not only is the world turning and fearfully, but everything is happening very quickly

James Lovelock

The imminent demise of the Qori Kalis glacier offers the starkest evidence yet of the effects of climate change

The Times

A study by the world's leading experts says global warming will happen faster and be more devastating than previously thought

The Observer

New Statesman

Scientists are increasingly concerned at the possibility of abrupt, catastrophic climate change

Note: see pages 43-49 for full references

Implicit in the alarmist position is a counsel of despair. If fungi alone are in with a chance, what is the point of turning down your thermostat, let alone expecting radical initiatives of government? Furthermore, extreme and sensationalist constructions leave the entire green agenda open to the familiar charge that it is informed by an insidious anti-materialism:

'Like a religion, environmentalism is suffused with hatred for the material world.' (Lindzen 2007)

Lindzen's accusation may not square with the moderation of the green mainstream. But it is grist to the sceptic's mill when James Lovelock speaks in terms of a 'plague of people' (Girling 2007), or a contestant on BBC1's reality show *Castaway* judges global warming a 'good thing' because it will bring about 'the end of the world' (Methven 2007).

It is perhaps from a sensitivity to the charge of misanthropy, or self-righteous Luddism, then, that we see an apologetic note creeping in to certain alarmist constructions. In a speech to Congress in March 2007 Al Gore was careful to acknowledge that his talk of 'a true planetary emergency' sounded 'shrill', and was 'a challenge to the moral imagination' (Gore 2007). Similarly, in June 2007 *The Independent* ran one of its poster-style front pages warning of 'imminent peril' and 'environmental cataclysm', calling for 'nothing short of a planetary rescue.' But what followed sought to substantiate the claim in explicitly less inflated terms:

'These are not the words of eco-warriors but the considered opinion of a group of eminent scientists writing in a peer-reviewed scientific journal.' (O'Connor 2007)

As was the case last year, alarmist constructions were evident across the ideological spectrum. We found examples of it in *The Times, The Daily Telegraph, The Daily Express, The Daily Mail, The Star, The Guardian, The Independent, The Financial Times, New Statesman* and *Vanity Fair*. Purely alarmist accounts were far less common, however: an article might have brief recourse to the repertoire before reverting to 'sober alarm' (see below). Furthermore, we noted last year that the right-wing press often embraced the 'alarmism' repertoire, only to undermine it with sceptical accounts in its comments pages. This is now strikingly less apparent, partly as (with a few notable exceptions) a new grudging acceptance of man-made climate change is increasingly extended by right-wing commentators (see 'reluctant belief').

Sober alarm: 'it's serious but let's keep our cool'

As we have argued, an effect of the media consensus has been the lessening of inflated rhetoric in favour of a more concrete, evidence-based construction of climate change. This we might call 'sober alarm'. In place of the shock tactics of the 'alarmism' repertoire, 'sober alarm' deals in the language of seriousness, numbers, likelihood and proof: 'all sides agree [climate change] is readily observable worldwide' (Evans 2007), 'starkest proof yet' (Henderson 2007), 'A warming world will place hundreds of millions of extra people at greater risk of food and water shortages' (Adam and Traynor 2007).

Clearly this is alarming stuff. It is important to reiterate, however, that the language and logic of 'sober alarm' construct no less stark a future than alarmism – they just frame it in less inflated terms. Our prospects as inhabitants of the planet may be 'bleak', but however slim our chances, in contrast to alarmist constructions, the language of tempered reflection that characterises 'sober alarm' leaves crucial room for human agency:

Sober alarm: 'it's serious but let's keep our cool'

Note: see pages 43-49 for full references

'The world has the technology and can afford to tackle the effects of climate change – provided it begins immediately.' (Clover and Berger 2007)

In 2006 we suggested that by sensationalising the issue, alarmist constructions have an inflationary and thus ultimately trivialising effect. 'Sober alarm', in contrast, seeks to reinvest the language of climate change with meaning.

The repertoire is evident in the IPCC report, of course, and in its paraphrasing, explanation and interpretation in media accounts across the ideological spectrum. It is also seen in explicit calls for moderation in the language used to report climate change, particularly in what might be termed 'responsible blogs' like realclimate.org and climatedenial.org.

Conservative alarm: 'not *England!*'

'Conservative alarm' is a marginal repertoire – but, like the 'British comic nihilism' we identified last year, potentially significant from a communications point of view for its very British, middle-class framing of climate change. We found evidence of it in the right-wing press (*The Telegraph*) and magazines like *Country Life*.

The quotation from *Country Life* above was the caption for a dream – or mild nightmare – landscape wherein the typical chocolate-box Cotswold idyll was hemmed in by olive groves and palm trees. 'Conservative alarm' is global alarm brought within the purview of the English countryside-lover. Like 'reluctant belief', it is drawn upon by accounts forced by the consensus to accept the reality of anthropogenic climate change. In other words, it is what might have been 'British comic nihilism' – a blithely unconcerned dismissal of the dangers of climate change – had it been able any longer to summon the smile.

That is not to say it does not accommodate a quiet playfulness in its sober concern. Unlike the true localism that we will examine towards the end of this report, 'conservative alarm' often exploits the absurdity of considering global catastrophe and cod and chips in the same breath in a genial, whimsical tone: 'this is what the village *could* look like'.

Conservative alarm: 'not *England*'

Will the midge-covered hills [of the west of Scotland] sprout holiday villas like the Greek islands? I hope not but I suspect they will

The Telegraph

...if global warming continues we will be flooded and our heritage and livelihoods will have disappeared forever

telegraph.co.uk

The warmer temperatures could also mean that daffodils, Christmas trees and cod and chips become a thing of the past

The Energy Saving Trust

This is what the Cotswold village of Naunton could look like as climate change takes hold

Country Life

Note: see pages 43-49 for full references

Resolve

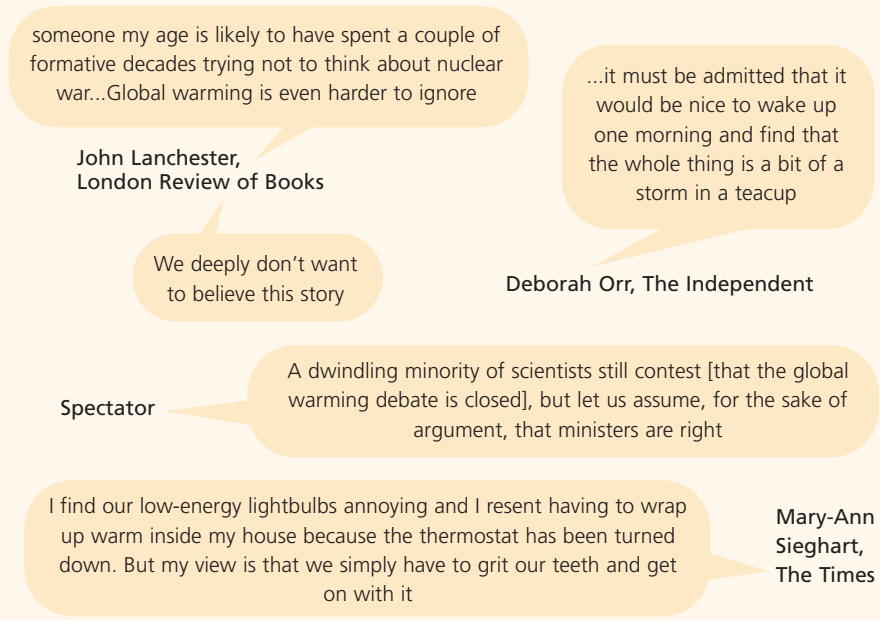
The 'resolve' part of the emergent consensus divides into four repertoires. In contrast to the 'alarm' repertoires, they are concerned less with the gravity of the problem than the necessity of doing something about it. In other words, they share the resolve to act, but differ in what they suggest should be done.

'Reluctant belief' is a new repertoire – a pragmatic, if weary, acceptance that the climate change argument must hold water, and that something needs to be done.

The green movement is often subject to attack on ideological grounds. Right-wing commentators have accused environmentalists of 'pseudo-religious madness' (Booker 2007) and a 'Trotskyist' indifference to the poor (Daley 2007). As we have noted, the idea that the green agenda is powered by a barely concealed contempt for humanity and its achievements since the Industrial Revolution is lent weight by some of the more misanthropic comments of the campaigning Left.

Reluctant belief: 'we will believe it if we have to'

Reluctant belief: 'we will believe it if we have to'



Note: see pages 43-49 for full references

'Reluctant belief' seeks to restore a humane, rational moderation to the acceptance of man-made climate change. 'Rhetorical scepticism' (see page 23) rejects the green agenda partly on the basis that its 'invasive restrictions' (Daley 2007) fit a statist, authoritarian model of political control so perfectly that the science must be cooked. 'Reluctant belief', on the other hand, advances a new pragmatics, sharing the sceptics' distaste for 'boring', 'annoying' energy-saving measures while acknowledging that '95 per cent of the world's climate scientists can't be wrong' (Sieghart 2007). It might well be nice to wake up 'and find that the whole thing is a bit of a storm in a teacup' (Orr 2007), but 'reluctant belief' wearily, resentfully admits that this is not going to happen, and that it is time – unfortunately – to change.

Reluctant belief might otherwise be called 'grudging libertarian credence' but the repertoire is detectable right across the ideological spectrum. We found examples of it in *The Times, The Daily Telegraph, The Independent, The Observer,* and in the arguments of a right-wing panel member on Radio 4's *Question Time*. The repertoire is characterised by the hedging, non-dogmatic language of caution ('let us assume', 'it no longer seems tenable') and confessed lack of expertise.

Small actions: 'I must do my bit for the planet'

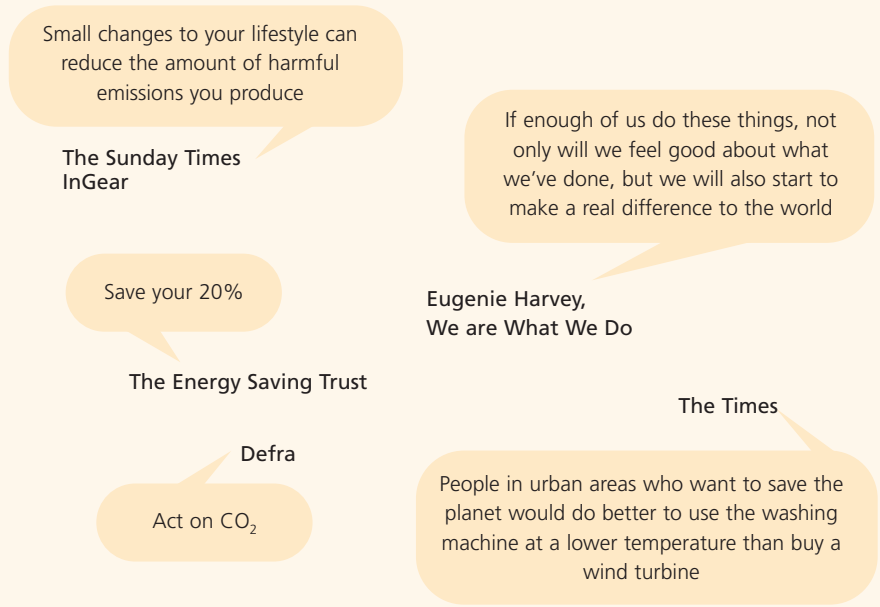
'Small actions' is still the dominant repertoire in campaign communications. Its logic argues that many small actions will have a cumulatively significant effect. As was the case last year, the repertoire abounds in lists: energy-saving tips and initiatives that despite their seeming insignificance treated separately, add up to effective action against climate change – or so the repertoire has it.

An increasingly common visual counterpart to the 'small actions' repertoire is the 'doll's house' graphic, usually consisting of a two-up, two-down with its fourth wall removed and the rooms labelled according to the energy-saving measures that can be taken in them (installing a 'hippo' in the downstairs loo, lagging the attic and so on.) This helps to anchor the repertoire in the real: in contrast to the sublime abstractions of 'alarmism', or the polemics of 'rhetorical scepticism', 'small actions' deals in the object world, and what people can do about climate change irrespective of the ideological wranglings that adhere to it. The highly reified, material nature of the 'small actions' repertoire is both its major advantage and a significant drawback, as we will go on to discuss.

As ever, the repertoire is characterised by the language of ease, convenience, and agency ('Saving energy the easy way' [Ariel print advertisement]; 'we will...start to make a real difference to the world' [Ley 2007]) and by the conflation of ethics and self-interest. Reducing emissions is rarely framed solely in terms of its benefits to the environment; to be a good citizen of the planet is almost always to be kind to your wallet too:

'If our energy-saving condensing boiler couldn't save you up to 40 per cent on your heating bills we'd drop it...Doing the right thing.' (British Gas print advertisement)

Small actions: 'I must do my bit for the planet'



Note: see pages 43-49 for full references

The 'small actions' repertoire is still limited in its ability to compel, however. In bringing the potentially unimaginable problem of climate change down to human scale, its rootedness in the world of things is simultaneously what bogs it down in the mundane, the domestic, the dull:

'...conveying the message to get a more efficient cooker or fridge is a boring one.' (Patton 2007)

In *Warm Words* we called this the 'wallpaper' problem, and it still applies. Furthermore, juxtaposed with alarmist constructions ('Small steps can save the planet' [Saini 2007]) 'small actions' can seem absurdly out of scale, and even if some communications succeed in managing this incongruity, others betray an anxiety about it. For instance, a TV advertisement promoting recycling schemes in Newcastle borrows playfully from the codes of clearance-sale advertising to jazz up its message, but succeeds only in drawing the viewer's attention to its mundanity:

'It's huge! The biggest yet! A fantastic opportunity not to be missed!' (Newcastle City Council 2007)

Similarly, a series of website banners for Recycle Now frames green behaviour as a national habit by referencing TV shows like *Coronation Street, EastEnders*, and *Little Britain* ('Monday is recycling day in Weatherfield', 'Tuesday...in Albert Square', 'Thursday...in Llandewi Breffi' [Recycle Now 2007]). This constructs recycling as an activity so embedded in British life even fictional characters are committed to it, but runs the risk nonetheless of underscoring the repetitive drudgery of environmentally minded behaviour.

There are, however, promising signs that the 'small actions' repertoire is evolving into something more compelling. Handbooks like Mark Lynas's *Collins Gem Carbon Counter* (Lynas 2007) place an understanding of one's carbon footprint within the realm of desirable knowledge, of everyday lay science: in the same way that you might look up how many calories there are in a Mars bar, it is no longer absurdly pedantic to know how many kilograms per year of CO_2 you might save by turning down your thermostat by one degree.

In a January 2007 edition of *The Observer Magazine* journalist Lucy Siegle offered '36 positive suggestions on how we can change our lives, reduce carbon emissions and help save the planet', ranked 'breakfast', 'lunch' and 'dinner' options according to how significant a lifestyle change they involved. Remembering to turn off your phone charger was a breakfast option; more radical 'supper menu' suggestions 'for the committed green' included installing a photovoltaic system and avoiding 'driving a total of 40 miles by car' (Siegle 2007). By constructing a hierarchy of ever-greater steps the reader can make, the article helps establish the notion that small actions add up: you can start making greater strides once you are practised in the baby-steps.

It is perhaps a function of the moderating effect of the widespread media consensus on, for example, alarmist constructions of climate change, that the idea of saving the planet step by small step no longer seems quite so incongruous. There is increasing rhetorical force behind the myth of 'ordinary heroism' – the means, recommended in the first *Warm Words*, of reconciling the disparate notions of environmental catastrophe and the small actions of the individual. This is borne out in campaigns like the WWF's 'Change the world with a pen', and the Energy Saving Trust's

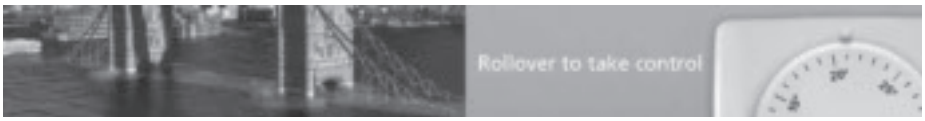


Figure 3: *Energy Saving Trust website banner*

interactive website banners depicting belching chimney stacks shut off at the click of a light switch, and floodwaters in the Thames levelled by a one-degree turn of the thermostat.

Establishment techno-optimism: 'relax: we've got it all under control'

'Establishment techno-optimism' – suggesting that large-scale technology will solve the problem of climate change – is arguably out of place in the consensus camp. Marginalised both by the consensus, and a growing apprehension of greenwash in the environmental pronouncements of government and big oil, establishment techno-optimism is still prevalent in the broadly right-wing press and energy company advertising.

As we identified in last year's report, this is a highly rhetorical register, characterised by non-specifying plurals ('technologies', 'challenges') that borrow from expert scientific discourses, but without substantiation. Holding as it does that business will provide the answers, an evasive generalism is structural to the repertoire, and is further borne out in its reliance on future tenses and the conditional mood: technologies 'will help us', hydrogen fuel 'could mean' the end of emissions. For those committed to the need for emissions reductions, 'establishment techno-optimism' can be viewed, as George Monbiot puts it, as 'another species of denial' (Monbiot 2007). It is a wriggler's repertoire, potentially: a means of diverting attention from the imperative to act via inflated, and questionably meaningful, rhetoric.

Establishment techno-optimism: 'relax: we've got it all under control'

Taking on the world's toughest energy challenges

Exxon Mobil

America is on the verge of technological breakthroughs that will enable us to live our lives less dependent on oil. And these technologies will help us be better stewards of the environment, and they will help us to confront the serious challenge of global climate change

President George W Bush

Billions of dollars of investment are now waiting to be plunged into the most promising technologies

The Sunday Times Magazine

One day, hydrogen fuel could mean the end of carbon vehicle emissions

Shell

If something does come of this, then we can all get back and enjoy life and not feel guilty about leaving the light on or putting coal on our fires

Richard Branson

Note: see pages 43-49 for full references

Non-establishment techno-optimism: 'small technology will provide the answer'

'Non-establishment techno-optimism' is a marginal repertoire, differing from its establishment counterpart in working from the technology up, rather than the intention down. That is, it proposes specific technological fixes to the problem of climate change, as opposed to stating the problem then issuing general assurances that technology will be able to fix it.

For this reason it is notably less rhetorical; it deals more in science and numbers talk ('if we can increase the reflectivity by about 3 per cent') than the non-specific promises of oil-industry advertising. The suggestion here is that the answer to climate change lies in independent inventiveness. As such the repertoire has been bolstered by the greater sense of agency, of the feasibility of (and urgent need for) effective action promoted by the moderating effects of consensus. Like last year, it largely features in approving coverage of innovation in the left-leaning press.

However the repertoire is undermined by certain factors. First, any construction that places faith in our ability to adapt to climate change risks runs counter to the reduction argument – that we should be focusing on emitting less, not working on ways to mop up our current emissions. Second, the repertoire is susceptible to wild conjecture. It is hard to keep faith in man's ability to invent himself out of trouble when 'giant sunshades in space' are on offer:

'The most ambitious (and expensive) idea would be to place a giant sunshade in space at the inner Lagrange point.' (Howard 2007)

David and Goliath: 'a small group can change the world'

Last year we held that the 'David and Goliath' repertoire – found largely in the aggressively oppositional communications of the campaigning left – was becoming 'increasingly marginal'. Since then it has arguably moved back into relative dominance, at least on the basis of the sample of material we looked at. This might be attributed to a new campaigning vigour on the part of emerging radicals like Plane Stupid and the Camp for Climate Action.

It might equally be argued that the 'furious passion' (Harris 2007) of campaigners like Merrick Lewis has been provoked in part by the growing moderation in tone of mainstream NGOs like Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth. The claim that the old firebrands of the environmental movement have been emasculated by their own success is made explicitly by the radicals who – as they would have it – have displaced them:

'The big NGOs have become too close to the government.' (Hutton 2006)

'Stop Climate Chaos...is running scared.' (Law 2007)

The language of the radicalised fringe is inflated, rhetorical, and highly adversarial. Flying is an 'obscenity', climate change amounts to 'genocide', any departure from green orthodoxy is 'criminal'. In keeping with its characteristic 'ideological fury' (Harris 2007), it is preoccupied with power structures ('we felt that we had the power'). In mock-advertorials like SPURT's call for 'unlimited aviation growth', satirical inversions are used to validate what it takes as read:

There's sleight-of-hand at work here: the reader is cajoled into accepting the inflated register of 'climate catastrophe', because to reject it would be to side with the sort of (self-evidently idiotic) sceptic that would 'dispute... 99 per cent of scientific reports'.

'We dispute the 99 per cent of scientific reports "confirming" this so-called "climate catastrophe".' (SPURT 2007)

The rhetorical tactics of the radical fringe have arguably had a destabilising effect on the language of mainstream activism. Organisations like Friends of the Earth might justly claim to have influenced big policy initiatives like the draft Climate Change Bill. As FoE's director says, 'The Big Ask... has led the call for legislation to tackle climate change' (Juniper 2007).

Nonetheless the influence of the radical fringe on mainstream activism is detectable in a certain tonal schizophrenia. For example, a recent Greenpeace ad, denouncing BA's inaugural flight from London to Newquay, recalled the belligerent campaigning of the past in its two-finger salute formed of fluffy vapour trails: 'BA's answer to climate change'. So far, so 'David and Goliath'. But the accompanying text borrows from a far less confrontational register:

'...we prefer the Richard Branson way, which is for people to "stop flying domestically"' (Greenpeace 2007)

Hardly very radical, especially when even *The Telegraph* is accusing Branson of hypocrisy, mocking him for voicing concern about climate change while 'running 24 flights a week to the Caribbean' (Hughes 2007).

The inflated register of the radical fringe ripples through the entire repertoire and beyond. Even a mainstream phrase like 'climate change denier' or 'denial' contains an uncomfortable echo of ideological fury and intemperance. As the climatologist Timothy Ball says,

Non-establishment techno-optimism: 'small technology will provide the answer'

The combination of geothermal and hydroelectric technology...can serve as a model for the future

Planning Magazine

Calculations show that if we can increase the reflectivity by about 3 per cent, the cooling will balance the global warming caused by increased CO_2 in the atmosphere

Professor John Latham

Green Biologics...will be on its way to becoming a multi-million pound operation intent on doing a significant bit to save the planet

Dr Edward Green, eco-energy expert and founder of Green Biologics

With many of the technologies, such as renewable power, there is a "learning effect", meaning that costs decrease with use

The Times

Note: see pages 43-49 for full references

David and Goliath: 'a small group can change the world'

What we urgently need is social change on an unprecedented scale. And that has always meant direct action

Leo Murray, Plane Stupid

Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace...are "shackled by their need to have an open door with the politicians"

Merrick Lewis, Camp for Climate Action

It is entirely realistic to expect people to give up flying short distances tomorrow

While we were sitting on that runway...we felt that we had the power

Joss Garman, Plane Stupid

To use the fact that somebody else is developing...as an excuse to do nothing, and fly off to Florida on holiday...is an obscenity

Duncan Law, Lambeth Green Party

Leo Murray

If we don't do this, it's not going to get done

The global nation states must take action. If not, we'll be calling it climatic genocide

Beverley Duckworth, World Development Movement

Note: see pages 43-49 for full references

'I can tolerate being called a sceptic because all scientists should be sceptics, but then they started calling us deniers, with all the connotations of the Holocaust...' (Harper 2007)

The potential danger of the inflated rhetoric at the extremes of the 'David and Goliath' repertoire is that it makes the entire green agenda easier to dismiss. The journalist Nick Cohen draws a parallel with the extremist animal-rights movement:

'The effect of their efforts has been to make it easier for the mainstream to suppress doubts and avoid difficult questions about the treatment of animals...the last thing the developed world needs is the environmental movement's lunatic fringe trumping Gore's inconvenient truth with a convenient excuse for doing nothing.' (Cohen 2007)

4. Non-consensus repertoires: what resistance to the consensus looks like

Outside the growing consensus we see some outlying repertoires – not part of the mainstream and certainly more marginalised than in 2006. However, it is important that those working to promote awareness of and action on climate change keep watching these strands of language and logic, since at least some of them remain potentially compelling in today's cultural environment.

Settlerdom: 'what's all the fuss about?'

In 2006 we characterised the 'settler' repertoire as one that rejected and mocked the notion of man-made climate change on the basis that it offended common sense. It constructed the speaker and implied audience as 'the sane majority' in opposition to 'the doom-mongers' or 'the global warming brigade' who are 'keeping us all awake'.

We named the repertoire with reference to the 'Settlers' attitudinal typology devised by the consultancy Cultural Dynamics (www.cultdyn.co.uk). 'Settlers' (so-called because they have sustenance-driven needs associated with the home) tend to look backwards to yesterday, which was better, and tend to dislike anything new or different as they feel this threatens their identity, belonging and security.

At least as far as climate change is concerned, 'settlerdom' is no longer a tenable public position. In the past year the commonsensical position – at least in the popular media – has undergone a *volte face*, and the consensus on anthropogenic climate change has largely appropriated settlerdom's place in the discourse.

Where it is evident – largely in the right-wing press – it is often in a comic contrariness, as in Jeremy Clarkson's rant about 'eco-mentalists' and 'lesbionics for mother Russia'. As we have argued, this is as much a sign of its marginality as anything: it has become naughty not to care. A similar kind of comically provocative obtuseness can be read into Kelvin MacKenzie's riff on 'global p***ing.'

It is important to reiterate, however, that this research was largely confined to the relatively 'official' space of the news media, television, radio, advertising and campaign communications. Research by Cultural Dynamics and the Energy Saving Trust suggests the 'settler' position still accounts for a significant percentage of public opinion in the UK. A glance at the unofficial space of the blogosphere, or web forums like the BBC's Have Your Say, reveals a deep current of dismissive opposition to the green agenda.

'When all the government ministers get Toyota Pious's [sic] I'll think about it, but not until then.' (Bergkamp 2007)

The possibility that the 'settler' position might have receded in public but become entrenched in private is reflected in the huge gap between word and deed revealed by the Energy Saving Trust's 'Green Barometer' survey:

'Over 80 per cent of people believe that climate change is having an impact on the UK right now and yet 40 per cent of us are doing nothing to reduce our energy use.' (Energy Saving Trust 2007)

In the face of widespread consensus it is arguably easier to feign concern then carry on exactly as you were: 'settlerdom' in sheep's clothing. This perhaps represents the biggest challenge now for organisations promoting climate-friendly behaviour.

Settlerdom: 'what's all the fuss about'

Honda have jettisoned 50 million quid's worth of sponsorship...and painted their cars with a map of the world...to highlight climate change or some such rubbish

Jeremy Clarkson

[A Christian Aid ad is] a deeply offensive attempt to make us feel guilty and empty our pockets. They won't be getting a penny from me

Richard Littlejohn

... they go after Chelsea Tractors because these are symbols of middle-class success. You have to remember that trade unionists and anti-nuclear campaigners didn't go away. They just morphed into eco-mentalists because they realised that global warming was a better weapon than striking, or doing lesbionics for mother Russia in Berkshire

How do our green chums explain going from global warming to global pi**ing in six months? Could it just be something called the weather?

Kelvin MacKenzie

Note: see pages 43-49 for full references

In sum, the 'settler' repertoire now occupies a distinctly uneasy space in the repertoire – increasingly marginal in public, stubbornly persistent in private. It is also visible in glimpses in communications that are finding it increasingly hard to ignore the reality of man-made climate change. A good example of this is SUV (sports utility vehicle) advertising. Earlier this year an ad appeared for the Land Rover Freelander that juxtaposed the car with a snow-capped Mount Fuji.

At first glance this juxtaposition of images – the ultimate icon of 'climate criminality' next to an icon of what you might call 'climate victimhood' – seems either audacious or obtuse. Is this pure, residual 'settlerdom'? A refusal to engage in the debate – or a provocative acknowledgement of climate concerns? Writing in the *London Review of Books* John Lanchester argues that the 'SUV driver is...trying at the same time to send a signal...that even if climate change comes she will be able to protect herself from it' (Lanchester 2007).

So is this the subtext of the ad? 'I'm alright, Jack?' Later versions of the same execution carried the logo of Climate Care, an offsetting service, together with the promise in the body copy to offset the first 45,000 miles with every Freelander sold. The seemingly irreconcilable strains in the Freelander campaign are indicative of the instability of the 'settler' repertoire. Public communications, however informed by the repertoire they might once have been, just cannot – quite – be seen not to care anymore. Ads for the Mitsubishi Outlander and Lexus RX400H attempt a bolder piece of myth-making: guiltless emissions.

'Enjoy it with a clear conscience' (Mitsubishi 2007)

'High performance. Low emissions. Zero guilt' (Lexus Dealers 2007)

But the uneasiness persists. The Mitsubishi ad features the SUV riding out of an inset cityscape into an immaculately snowy road through the mountains. The irony here, of course, is that vehicles like the Outlander, designed to cope with just such snowy, rugged conditions, are driven predominantly in urban environments, arguably contributing to the disappearance of the snowy conditions they were designed for. What is key, however, is that the snowscape is made to appear imaginary, an unreal space that can remain pristine in the mind of someone not disposed to think in any great depth about the environmental consequences of driving an SUV... a 'Settler' sort of mindset, perhaps....

British comic nihilism: 'oh, bugger it and open another bottle'

British comic nihilism was a marginal repertoire last year and is even more so now. As we defined it in the first *Warm Words*, comic nihilism is a very British, very middle-class, whimsical refusal to mind very much about climate change. The broad consensus on the reality of man-made climate change has made the joke harder to get away with, and its ability to amuse, if it ever had much, has arguably run its time in any case. Writing in *The Observer,* Tim Adams characterised an article in which the sceptic Christopher Monckton wrote about buying a house 'high on Richmond Hill' as 'a jokey piece of the kind with which we have...become horribly familiar' (Adams 2007).

As was the case last year, 'comic nihilism' is predominantly a feature of rightist constructions of the issue. We found examples in *The Times, The Telegraph,* and *The Sunday Times.*

British comic nihilism: 'oh, bugger it and open another bottle'

Oxford will be a coastal resort, shown on their map as "Oxford-on-Sea". That means I get a beach front property without actually having to move

Digital Camera Forum

If [global warming] continues I'll be able to turn down the central heating, thus reducing my carbon footprint

Letter to The Sunday Times InGear

Champagne-quality sparkling wine from Wolverhampton?... for once, the weather is not all bad news

The Times

Oliver Pritchett, The Telegraph

A large chunk of the polar ice cap has broken off and floated across Gloucestershire and is now blocking the drive to the house

Nudism is a policy whose time has come. It is made possible by global warming

The Sunday Times

Note: see pages 43-49 for full references

Warming is good: 'okay, but there are benefits...'

As before, 'Warming is good' bears comparison to comic nihilism in its sunny prognosis, but posits real benefits for humanity as a result of climate change, instead of blithely relishing the prospect. In other words, where 'British comic nihilism' raises a glass to the end of the world, 'Warming is good' focuses on the benefits to agriculture of a warmer climate, or the economic benefits (for example, investment in new technology) of dealing with the harmful effects of climate change.

Linguistically it is characterised by a similar sort of non-specifying generalism as applies in 'establishment techno-optimism': 'People prefer warmer climates,' says the US lobbyist Myron Ebell, quoted in *Vanity Fair*. 'They do better in them' (Shnayerson 2007). By definition it is a highly speculative repertoire, and as such is rich in future tenses, conditionals, and statements of belief: 'I also believe climate change will provide...', 'Dorset bubbly could be...', 'climate change has the potential to be...'.

Never particularly significant, this repertoire has been further marginalised by the consensus. Where it is evident (predominantly in the right-wing press and trade magazines like *British Farmer and Grower*) it relates more often to solipsistic, self-interested constructions of local or regional benefit ('delighted' Tibetan farmers, Mark Dianoco's crops) than to the greater global good.

Rhetorical scepticism: 'it's bad science – at the service of bad politics'

In 2006 we described the 'rhetorical sceptic' repertoire as a non-expert discourse that nonetheless attacked the notion of anthropogenic climate change as 'bad science'. It was characterised by emotive discounting strategies, and a heavy borrowing from expert academic and scientific discourses ('pseudoscientific', 'flawed computer modelling', 'category confusion').

Like the 'settler' repertoire, 'rhetorical scepticism' has in the last year been undermined by the growing consensus in the media. However, where 'settlerdom' has retreated into the comic margins, and/or the unofficial space of private opinion, the blogosphere, and so on, 'rhetorical scepticism' has to an extent altered its angle of attack.

As we saw last year, 'rhetorical scepticism' is distinct from 'settlerdom' in its level of engagement. Instead of dismissing the issue it aggressively confronts it, borrowing from a mix of scientific, academic and political discourses to dismantle the arguments supporting man-made climate change one by one.

The ripple-down effect of Martin Durkin's *Great Global Warming Swindle* has lent renewed force to the sort of amateur refutation of the science that characterised the repertoire last year:

'A string of impressive senior scientists...said the science was wrong.' (Pile 2007)

'...now, at last, the truth is out. A group of eminent scientists have made a television programme that shows how the "greens" have got it wrong.' (*Sunday Express* 2007)

What is particularly notable is how the repertoire relies on compensation strategies to legitimise itself. The scientists it cites are invariably 'impressive', 'senior', 'eminent' or organised into 'impressive line-ups'. Compare this with the neutrality of accounts that accept the notion of anthropogenic climate change:

Warming is good: 'okay, but there are benefits...'

I also believe climate change will provide big opportunities for environmental businesses and new energy companies

Tom Stevenson, The Telegraph

Global warming is melting the snows and glaciers - and the peasant farmers of the Tibetan plateau are delighted

The Telegraph

climate change has the potential to be a major value driver

Pensions Week

Country Life

Mark Dianoco...believes climate change will allow cultivation of produce normally restricted to warmer climes

Dorset bubbly could soon be on restaurant wine lists - thanks to global warming

The Express

Climate change offers many opportunities for farmers including: longer growing seasons

British Farmer and Grower

We will adapt and change by embracing the future rather than trying to turn back the clock of technological change

Kevin Toolis, The Express

Note: see pages 43-49 for full references

Rhetorical scepticism: 'it's bad science - at the service of bad politics'

Truly, this pseudo-religious madness has become by far the most important and all-pervasive political issue of our time

Christopher Booker, Sunday Telegraph

Despite the fact that there is not a shred of evidence that would stand up in court that mankind is contributing to climate change, all political parties are clinging to falsehoods as an excuse to levy more and more taxes

Letter to The Express

Perhaps I am sceptical about the climate change campaign because its exponents remind me so much of the people I knew years ago on the Marxist Left: repressive, self-righteous, and inherently totalitarian

Janet Daley, The Telegraph

Marketing Week

Religion and hysteria have ever been bedfellows and so it has proved with global warming

an impressive line-up of scientists disputed every facet of this fashionable assumption

Dominic Lawson, The Independent

Though far from being a 'global warming denier', I am sceptical about the newfound absoluteness of the doom-mongers

Stephen Glover, The Mail

Association of British Drivers

the biggest con trick ever perpetrated on the human race

Note: see pages 43-49 for full references

'The world's scientists yesterday issued a grim forecast for life on earth when they published their latest assessment of the impacts of climate change.' (Adam and Traynor 2007)

'Climate change is already under way...scientists and officials from more than 100 governments agreed in Brussels yesterday.' (Clover and Waterfield 2007)

Here the scientists and officials are just that: scientists and officials. The consensus position has no need of anxious qualification.

Sceptical readings of the science have of course become harder to sustain in the face of the IPCC's findings. For this reason 'rhetorical scepticism' is now more evident in rightist arguments disputing the consensus per se. In other words, there has been a general shift from 'the science is wrong' to 'anything this certain must be wrong':

'The more scientists agree, the more inclined [doubters] are to be sceptical about the conventional wisdom.' (Sieghart 2007)

In the face of overwhelming scientific consensus 'rhetorical scepticism' has had to reframe itself as a beacon of liberty holding out against statist control:

'These days you are castigated for worrying about self-indulgent luxuries such as free speech and open debate.' (Daley 2007)

As such, it has become an even more politicised, class-conscious repertoire, deploying similarly emotive discounting strategies to its polar opposite, the radical fringe of the 'David and Goliath' repertoire. So global warming is a 'liberal hoax' (Inhofe 2006); environmentalists are 'failed socialists' (James 2007) guilty of 'religious fanaticism' (Lindzen 2007); *An Inconvenient Truth* is Al Gore's 'dinner-party movie' (Gill 2007). Contrary to the pragmatic mainstream – that man-made climate change has to be addressed, whatever our qualms about 'invasive restrictions' – the project of 'rhetorical scepticism' is to make the argument ideological, keep it in the arena of political argument at the expense of concrete action. As we will go on to argue, whether it succeeds or not depends in part on the effectiveness of climate change communications.

'Expert' denial: 'we beg to differ'

The 'expert denial' repertoire essentially draws on science to refute any consensus on anthropogenic climate change. In the first *Warm Words*, we described the repertoire as a determinedly non-emotive discourse, confined to scientists engaged in public arguments with their peers, and lay writers borrowing from 'science talk' in their blogs and chat-room encounters.

In 2007 it remains a marginal repertoire, but has been given a late boost by Martin Durkin's Channel 4 documentary *The Great Global Warming Swindle*, first broadcast on 8 March 2007, and since made available on the internet. Of the instances of this repertoire we noted this year, over two-thirds explicitly reference the Durkin film.

It is arguable that 'expert denial' and 'rhetorical scepticism' repertoires are converging. 'Expert denial' was hitherto characterised by a relatively high level of 'science talk' – multiple qualifications, long sentences, terms of art – but a combination of circumstances has lent it a different rhetorical tone. The findings of the IPCC have so thoroughly depleted it on its own terms that it has had to seek other discursive tactics to maintain itself.

'Expert' denial: 'we beg to differ'

...as the frenzy over man-made global warming grows shriller, many senior climate scientists say the actual scientific basis for the theory is crumbling

The Great Global Warming Swindle

...in the post-war years when industry and the whole economies of the world really got going and human production of CO_2 just soared, the global temperature was going down. In other words, the facts didn't fit the theory

Professor Tim Ball, University of Winnipeg, The Great Global Warming Swindle

...the climate was controlled by the clouds; the clouds were controlled by the cosmic rays; and the cosmic rays were controlled by the sun. It all came down to the sun

Richard Lindzen, professor of Atmospheric Science at MIT and leading sceptic

...just as many religions, the route to personal salvation lies in the performance of superstitious rituals, such as changing a lightbulb or arranging for a tree to be planted after every plane journey

I think one of the reasons we particularly like 'global warming' is that it seems to fulfil this long history of myths about human action in relation to not just the environment but in relation to goodness and the Garden of Eden and all the rest of it. It's a great myth

Philip Stott, leading UK climate sceptic

Note: see pages 43-49 for full references

The 'expert' sceptics featured in the Durkin film have had to construct the consensus view as a militant, 'unscientific' orthodoxy. Richard Lindzen, professor of atmospheric science at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, has derided the Stern Review as 'manifestly incompetent'.

Apart from in *The Great Global Warming Swindle* itself, the repertoire was most notably evident in approving responses to the documentary online, and in the broadly right-wing press.

Free-market protection: 'it's not worth it'

The 'free-market protection' repertoire holds that the negative effects of taking action on climate change outweigh the benefits. A relatively minor strand in the discourse in 2006, it has been further marginalised since the publication of the first *Warm Words*. Clearly the conclusions of the Stern Review, and the IPCC's Working Group 3 Summary Report have done much to discredit it. Bjørn Lomborg's Copenhagen Consensus, which holds that 'approaches based on too abrupt a shift toward lower emissions of carbon are needlessly expensive' (Copenhagen Consensus 2004) no longer strikes a very consensual note, if it is widely accepted that 'costs and benefits of mitigation... are broadly comparable' (Black 2007), or, as per Stern, that the costs of mitigation are likely to be dwarfed by the costs of inaction.

This increasingly residual repertoire is now most often to be found in the public grumblings of car-industry spokesmen like VW's Martin Winterkorn and BMW's Norbert Reithofer.

'BMW's new chief executive has condemned European Commission plans to impose a limit of 130g a kilogram on CO_2 emissions...as "physically impossible" and "economically unsound".' (Gow 2007)

Aside from the short-term interests of individual companies, the 'free-market protection' repertoire has implicitly been undermined by the

Free-market protection: 'it's not worth it'

One minute we are talking about fair trade, the next minute the issue is lessening the carbon footprint by cutting markets in Africa. It is so confusing

Jane Ngige, chief executive for the Kenya Flower Council

The real present-day cost of reducing carbon dioxide levels...is almost certainly prohibitive and ruinous to economic growth

The Times

Regulations are "on the verge of endangering the future of an entire industry"

VW chairman Martin Winterkorn

we have to ask the hard question of whether we could do better by focusing on other issues first - helping real people improve their lives and resilience so they can better deal with the world's challenges

Bjørn Lomborg, author of the Sceptical Environmentalist

Note: see pages 43-49 for full references

consensus on the gravity of the likely effects of climate change, and in part by the growing body of opinion that business can benefit from efforts to mitigate emissions:

'An impending energy revolution could stimulate the global economy.' (Financial Adviser 2007)

'Free rider': 'we will – but only if you will'

Unlike the others in the sceptical camp, 'free rider' is a new repertoire, an emergent corollary of widespread media consensus. It represents a last-ditch attempt, in the face of overwhelming odds, to build a case for filing man-made climate change under 'possibly a problem – but on second thoughts let's not bother'.

It is related to what is sometimes referred to as The Prisoner's Dilemma. That is, man-made climate change might be real, but there is no point in acting if everyone else is not. It amounts to a kind of defensive, adversarial solipsism: the rest of the world does not matter, unless we all act together.

The repertoire is of course related to, and enabled by, the invisibility of the problem, because it constructs anthropogenic climate change as distant, other – not quite 'not our problem', but 'not our problem if no one else is bothering'. It is a moral repertoire, characterised by the language of righteous individualism, and scepticism of the conscious collective act ('involves making the rest of us feel guilty' [Littlejohn 2007]). The repertoire is open to obvious criticism ('absolutely nothing happens if everything is left to everyone else' [Hartnett 2007]) but it is nonetheless prevalent. Like most sceptical repertoires, it was most evident in the right-wing press; but we also found evidence of it in *The Independent* and the *Financial Times.*

'Free rider': 'we will - but only if you will'

Nothing we do in this country in isolation will make the slightest bit of difference

Richard Littlejohn

There is no point in Britain making sacrifices alone while the rest of the world enjoys itself to destruction

The Independent

TLS

Climate change is a global problem, requiring everyone to reduce greenhouse gas emissions; but as long as others act, the "cheats" can abjure any painful change, yet enjoy the group benefit

the idea that Britain should make unique sacrifices when it accounts for such a tiny proportion of global greenhouse gas emissions is ludicrous

The Express

Financial Times

there is a danger of other nations free-riding on European efforts

Note: see pages 43-49 for full references

5. Susceptibilities: weak spots in the new consensus

As we have shown, in the last year there has been a marked shift in the discourse towards a consensus position on climate change, at least in the official and public space of the established media. Although this is clearly to be welcomed by organisations seeking to promote climate-friendly behaviour, the very notion of consensus brings with it a new set of difficulties.

The suppression of debate

A common claim, particularly by commentators on the right, is that any form of publicly endorsed consensus is by nature scientifically unsound and anti-democratic. Differing views are structural both to the scientific process and to political discourse. In other words, if the scientists are as certain as the politicians claim they are, something fishy must be going on:

'In science, consensus is irrelevant.' (Crichton 2005)

'The discussion has been taken over by politically driven forces with little interest in the value of free intellectual enquiry.' (Daley 2007)

The counter-argument to this is, however, well established. There has been free intellectual enquiry; the argument has been had, and has – if the overwhelming majority of the world's climate scientists are to be believed – been won. Insistence on the dangers of man-made climate change is not a matter of suppressing debate but confronting, however reluctantly, 'a scientific consensus as strong as that which maintains that smoking causes lung cancer or that HIV causes AIDS' (Monbiot 2007):

'It has seemed appropriate to the media to treat [the climate debate] as a polarised issue, one on which there are two schools of thought, which, in respect of the science, it isn't: there is one school of thought, and a few nutters.' (Lanchester 2007)

The suppression of debate

God save us from nuclear power

Duncan Law,
Lambeth Green Party

We don't have time to waste on nukes

Greenpeace

...they tell us [investment in nuclear energy] is part of an overall plan. No, sorry: it's a response to pressures from conventional minds

You are a total waste of skin and air. Help the environment and jump off a cliff

Letter to the National Review, which had criticised Al Gore's electricity consumption

Ignore the optimists: the global warming horror stories are all true

The Guardian

Note: see pages 43-49 for full references

Considering the weight of evidence, and the urgent need implied by that evidence for radical measures, it is often held that endless *a priori* debate on the existence of man-made climate change is not only irrational but a form of quietism: bickering while the world drowns.

Nonetheless there is of course a high level of uncertainty as to what the exact consequences of climate change will be, and what should be done about them. And it is entirely consistent with a solid consensus on the existence of anthropogenic climate change that there should still be vigorous debate at this level:

'We are entering a period of climatic change...without a confident sense of what those changes will entail.' (Lanchester 2007)

'The science – as science always should be – is contradictory and confusing.' (Monbiot 2007)

'None of this is to suggest that the science should not be subject to constant scepticism and review.' (Monbiot 2007)

The discourse of climate change does not always successfully accommodate such 'constant scepticism and review' even where it is appropriate. There is a sense, particularly in communications coming from the campaigning left, that the moratorium on debate extends beyond human implication in climate change – where there is now broad agreement in the public domain – to areas where uncertainty still obtains.

What is implicit – and occasionally explicit – in the communications of some parts of the campaigning movement is that any departure from the orthodoxy is heretical. There is no consensus on the maximum temperature rise likely

over the next century; or on the need for carbon reductions to the total exclusion of adaptive measures; on the admissibility of nuclear technologies; or on the efficacy of certain renewables. There are voices, however, that would dismiss the 'huge amount of uncertainty about the details' (Meggs 2007) in favour of an inflexible insistence that a certain set of responses to climate change are the only ones allowable.

In *The Observer* Nick Cohen quotes from a rash of emails sent to an American think tank that dared to criticise Al Gore for his energy consumption. The think tank 'hadn't denied global warming'; nonetheless its vice president received death threats, was called a 'redneck bitch' and 'a total waste of skin and air', and was advised to 'Help the environment and jump off a cliff' (quoted in Cohen 2007). By lending credibility to the 'green bully' 'neo-puritan' caricature of the environmentalist movement, this kind of militant orthodoxy – the kind that insists on the unthinkability of nuclear power and the unthinking canonisation of Al Gore – risks leaving the mainstream agenda open to wholesale dismissal.

Greenwash and the problem of meaning

Earlier in this paper we noted a new self-consciousness in the discourse – a higher level of explicit analysis, particularly in newspaper and magazine accounts, not only of the facts of climate change but of the language used to describe them.

It is symptomatic of this new concern with meaning that the problem of greenwash – the dressing up in fine words of continued inaction – should have taken such a central place in the discourse. As we have noted, the Energy Saving Trust's Green Barometer survey suggested a yawning gap between the public's stated belief in climate change and the will to do anything about it.

It may also be that this anxiousness with regard to word and deed becomes self-fulfilling. People say one thing and do another, we learn; this becomes the subject of explicit analysis; the question then arises whether any account of climate change can be trusted; people are thus less disposed to do anything about it. And so on, and on, and on, as with every cycle of the logical loop, the discourse becomes more depleted of meaning.

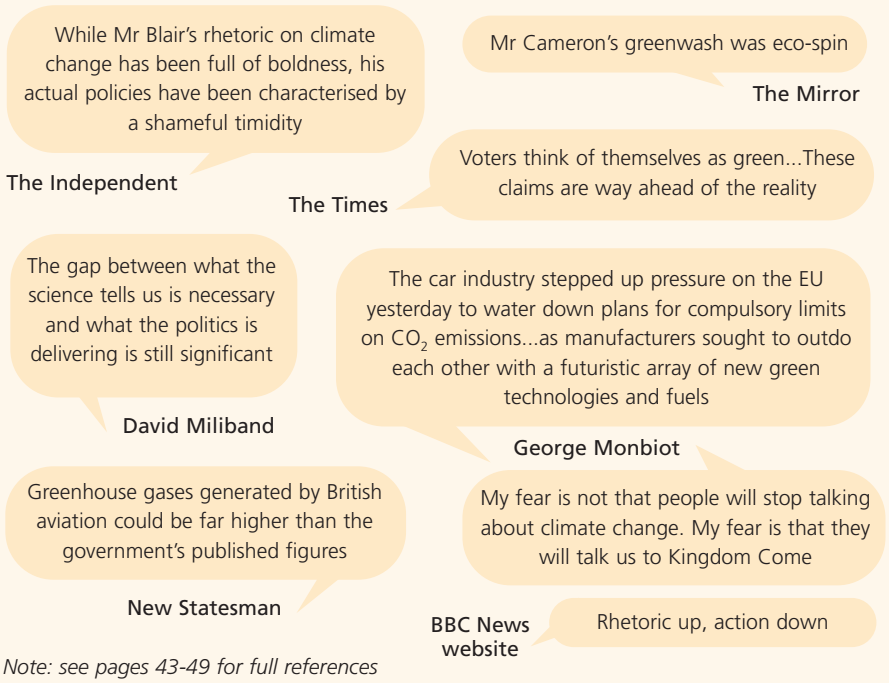
What is at stake here is a question of interpretation and belief. In *Profiles of the Future* Arthur C. Clarke proposed that 'any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic' (Clarke 1973). Whatever the consensus on climate change, whatever the 'proof' contained in the IPCC's Fourth Assessment, climate science is engaged in a similar process of selling us something we are ultimately ill-equipped to understand:

'...we are required to act on the basis of the faith in science which is one of the fundamental underpinnings of our society, but...the need to act radically, urgently and expensively on the basis of scientific models is testing that faith to the full and beyond.' (Lanchester 2007)

The problem is perhaps even harder to confront when it comes to corporate greenwash. We are trained to put our faith in brands and yet to mistrust large corporations. On the one hand we are assured that business is taking larger and more radical measures than government ever has, or ever will; on the other we hear reports that the supermarkets' 'greening' is so much lip-service to the issue, masking the self-interested intention to carry on much as before. When Marks and Spencer takes out two-page spreads in the national press advertising its 'Plan A' ('because there is no Plan B'), do we suspect them of greenwash, or do we give them the benefit of

Figure 4: Consensus in close-up

Greenwash and the problem of meaning



Note: see pages 43-49 for full references

the doubt, accepting that 'In some cases you can say that brands are leading ahead of their consumers' (Kasriel 2007)?

So how do we believe? How do we interpret the actions and rhetoric of others, and ourselves, when consensus is essentially a mass leap of faith, the efficacy of our individual efforts to combat it is almost impossible to measure, and the discourse is constantly telling us to beware of empty words? The urgent – and paradoxical – task of any climate change communication is to invest the discourse with meaning. But how do you advocate 'actions not words' with words?

This, clearly, is another major challenge facing those wishing to win over the hearts and minds of the public to the cause of climate-friendly behaviour. The problem of greenwash – of the gap between what people say and what they do – is an ironic consequence of the widespread acceptance of man-made climate change in the mainstream media. As such it is potentially even harder to overcome than the dwindling clutch of sceptical arguments – which have the advantage of being arguments, and therefore defeatable. How exactly to restore meaning to a discourse depleted by greenwash (among other things) is the subject of the next section.

6. Locality, discourse and the potential to stimulate action

In addition to national communications, as part of the research for this update to the first *Warm Words* we looked at a range of local materials. These included local newspaper articles, local authority communications, interviews with local authority staff and environmental activists, websites, local advertising and campaign communications. These were drawn from eight localities selected for their wide geographic distribution, mix of urban and rural population densities, and breadth of socio-economic status, engagement in environmental initiatives, and success in implementing them.

What we found was the features of the national discourse were largely evident at the local level, with some differences of emphasis. Perhaps unsurprisingly the local discourse was dominated by the 'small actions' repertoire – we will go on to discuss the reasons for and implications of this. There was some evidence of local 'sober alarm', and just a little 'alarmism', like the postcard issued by South Northamptonshire Council of the village of Stoke Bruerne under water, or this, from the *Cambridge Evening News:*

'East Anglia will be submerged under water if we continue to pump huge amounts of carbon emissions into the atmosphere.' (CEN 2007)

'David and Goliath' and 'non-establishment techno-optimism' were also evident, but not linguistically distinct from their counterparts in national communications. Scepticism in local discourse was largely confined to 'settlerdom' and 'rhetorical scepticism'; these repertoires are particularly evident in the letters pages of local newspapers.

So what can be said to be distinct about the local discourse? It is broadly the case that the *problem* of climate change is well covered at national level. We learn from any number of accounts adhering to the consensus that climate change is real and that we are implicated both in its causes and effects. The national discourse also offers us solutions to it, inasmuch as any solution is held to be realistic or feasible. As we have shown, there is evidence that the myth of ordinary heroism, and the notion that collectively, small actions can have a big effect, are gathering rhetorical force at the national level.

However, significant problems persist. The 'small actions' repertoire is still undermined by the disparity of scale between the mundanity of the solutions offered and the enormity of the problem. Suppression of debate, greenwash, the 'free rider' argument, and resilient sceptical repertoires all threaten to undermine the broad consensus arrived at in media discourse. Most importantly, the Energy Saving Trust's Green Barometer survey, and Ipsos Mori's recent research on attitudes to climate change, show a significant disconnection between what public discourse holds to be acceptable and true, and what people privately think:

'The Ipsos Mori poll of 2,032 adults – interviewed between 14 and 20 June – found 56% believed scientists were still questioning climate change.' (BBC News 2007)

Whatever the consensus view constructed in the national media, the public is evidently still not engaged. As Ipsos Mori's head of environmental research, Phil Downing, says, 'very few people actually reject out of hand the idea the climate is changing or that humans have had at least some part to play in this', but there is 'still a lot to do' in encouraging 'low-carbon lifestyles' (BBC News 2007).

It is our contention that this failure to engage has much to do with distance. You might accept that 'the climate is changing' and that 'humans have had...some part to play', but as long as the effects of this change remain the stuff of media reports and pronouncements by international panels of scientists, they are too easy to discount as exaggerated, or not truly worthy of attention: nothing, in other words, to do with 'us'.

Hence the disproportionate effect of even the most marginal sceptical account of climate change: it might not accord with the acceptable public position, or even what our rational selves privately believe to be true, but it speaks to our undeniable wish to 'wake up one morning and find the whole thing is a bit of a storm in a teacup'.

Local communications would seem to offer little solution to this problem. The narrowness and parochialism of the local newspaper discourse, for example, is almost comically unequal to the task of describing climate change:

'If global warming is as much of a threat as we have good reason to think it is, the subject can't be covered in the same way as church fêtes and county swimming championships.' (Lanchester 2007)

Alarmist constructions of climate change are evident at the local level, but most often in the 'national news' sections of local and regional newspapers, where they are juxtaposed with far more

nonchalant accounts of the problem as it impacts the local readership. Take these excerpts from two adjacent articles in the *Manchester Evening News*:

'Billions...will face catastrophic drought and food shortages because of climate change.' (Manchester Evening News 2007)

'Although Manchester did not see the country's hottest weather, those who stayed in the region for the bank holiday enjoyed a pleasant 15C – the same as Madrid.' (Qureshi 2007)

Much as 'small actions' has to confront the 'wallpaper' problem, so local alarm has to negotiate its own incongruity: simply stated, to discuss a chunk of ice the size of Rhode Island falling off the Larsen B ice-shelf would strike a faintly absurd note in the pages of the parish gazette.

Features of the local discourse – in more detail

We know that local news, advertising, council and campaign communications can have a solipsistic and parochial focus on the close-at-hand, sometimes at the expense of the wider context: for instance, in accounts of local interests that run counter to the national agenda.

'[Climate change] is seen as a distant and conceptual problem that is frequently trumped by short-term local and individual interests when it comes to the small decisions we all make on travel, heating and electric power.' (Spencer 2007)

Local communications are often highly personalised; the concerns of the ordinary individual are newsworthy at the local level. And they have a limited ability to compel for anyone outside the locality they address: there is not much reason to read the *Bridgend Gazette* if you come from Ipswich. It is in this often extremely narrow focus that the potential for mundanity – even comic mundanity – in the local discourse lies.

Nonetheless, it is this narrowness of focus that makes the local discourse such a perfect fit for the 'small actions' repertoire:

'So although they don't have the sex appeal of a new sun room or luxury en suite, good stout loft insulation and immersion heater lagging could help boost the value of your home.' (Mid-Ulster Mail 2007)

'Already the proud owner of 10 chickens, three beehives and two cats, [county environmentalist Julie Mason] said she had always been interested in green ideas.' (Northants Evening Telegraph 2007)

The focus on the domestic, the routine, and the small-scale courts absurdity when set against the more compelling concerns of the national discourse. Here, however, the humdrum assumptions (sun rooms with sex appeal), residual turns of phrase ('luxury en suite', 'good stout loft insulation'), and extremely high detail threshold ('10 chickens...') sit naturally in a discourse designed to describe and legitimate the everyday.

Furthermore, we occasionally encountered the impression that the national media does not offer solutions, and instead 'focuses far too much on the problem' (Almond 2007). Clearly this runs counter to the evidence: 'small actions' is everywhere in the national discourse. Nonetheless, the impression of a counterproductive national focus on what is wrong may indicate a persistent mismatch at this level between constructions of the problem and solutions to it. Agency – the power to act – may simply be more readable, more naturally expressed at the local level, as there is no significant incongruity to negotiate.

Mundanity remains a problem however. Whatever cultural work has been done to give 'small actions' persuasive force, local communications can undo it. While we looked at many adequate, and some excellent attempts at the local level to make the climate change message compelling, we saw many others that were strikingly residual and prosaic. It was notable how local communications often underscore their own mundanity with language effects. Witness this headline from the *Bridgend Recorder:*

'NATURE RESERVE CENTRE UNCOVERS ITS COOL ROOF!' (Bridgend Recorder 2007)

The rudimentary pun, awkward cooption of (residual) youth-speak ('cool'), the superfluous exclamation: all serve to emphasise the limited scope of local communications. Local newspaper discourse is often a hybrid of tabloid informality and broadsheet sobriety, without the skilful playfulness of the former, or the informational weight of the latter. Local government and corporate communications are often marked by a similar very basic deployment of rhetorical effects: a leaflet produced by Guildford Borough Council claims that fitting a wall-mounted wind turbine amounts to 'your chance to be one of the trendsetters!'.

Locality and agency: the power to act

However, there is something else highly significant at work here. Clearly, there are initiatives that can be realised at local level that simply cannot be at the national. Our research was restricted to UK communications, but such is the global influence of public discourse in the United States that its state and city-level measures to combat climate change are often reported in the British media:

'All around the country there are towns and cities and state governments that are actively working to reduce their emissions in spite of – or perhaps one should say because of – federal inaction.' (Kolbert 2006)

The US Mayors Climate Protection Agreement, which 'calls on cities to "strive or meet or beat the Kyoto Protocol targets in their own communities"' (Kolbert 2006), is a good example of this. As of May 2007, 496 US mayors had signed up to the initiative. It is an obvious but vitally important truth that radical measures are more feasible with small numbers.

And indeed, there are signs of a discourse of genuine agency emerging at the local level in the UK. In place of the mundane and parochial there is a new sense of potent collective action reflected in the language.

'...the people of Lampeter, a small community in...rural Wales, gathered together earlier this week to mobilise for a new war effort. They decided to plan their "energy descent".' (Lawrence 2007)

Here the metaphor of war avoids the potentially counterproductive prickliness of the radical campaigning fringe by framing our own fossil-fuel dependency,

Locality and agency: the power to act

Reconnect with the one planet on which we have to live, reconnect with our local communities, and relocalise with our local communities, and relocalise - because that's what's going to do it

Duncan Law, Lambeth Green Party

We're going to save the Planet, starting with Manchester

Manchester is my Planet

Richard Hurford, Lewisham Council

Innovation tends to come at the local level

Alex Swainson, Guildford Borough Council

This journalist from The Times [was] taking the Mickey about making the leap from the global climate problem to the fact that local action needs to happen...three years later that is the mainstream

Solutions...are driven at the local level

Falkirk has a huge contribution to make towards the restoration of Scotland's environment...'Think global, act local' is central to how we operate

Falkirk Council Green Manifesto

It's the local authorities that lead by example - like the Mertons, the Wokings - that raise the standards for everybody

John Bannister, Guildford Environmental Forum

Note: see pages 43-49 for full references

not 'deniers' or 'climate criminals', as the enemy. What is striking is how concrete initiative and a groundswell of public support ('the biggest public meeting in Lampeter anyone could remember') has helped to invest terms of global significance like 'energy descent' – which might otherwise have sounded an incongruous note in a local context – with real meaning.

This is the task of the local project: to make climate change, and solutions to it, real, *tangible,* in a way that is clearly far harder at the national and/or international level. Lampeter is part of the Transition Towns movement, a loose federation of communities committed to 'responding to the twin challenges of Peak Oil and Climate Change' (Transition Towns 2007). And this is near the heart of it: the very notion of 'transition' collapses problem and solution into the active present. Furthermore, the movement's model of backing up its rhetoric with concrete action that local people can witness for themselves lends meaning to a discourse in severe danger, as we have shown, of signifying nothing for all its sound and fury.

In our research for this project we visited a number of local installations, such as the hydropower unit on the River Wey at Guildford Mill, designed at once 'to generate at least 260,000 kWh per year of electricity to feed into the local electricity distribution network, supplying enough energy for 50 typical households', and to provide 'public awareness benefits to the wider community' (Paish 2003).

Like the photovoltaic panels on the roof of Sandfield Primary School nearby, or the wind turbine planned for the City of Manchester Stadium, the Guildford Mill project makes an effective response to climate change imaginable. Many national climate change communications address us as

individuals; as citizens of a threatened planet. We have seen how this can fail to grant the individual much sense of their power to act. In terms of any one person's ability to do anything about it, the problem is unimaginably large; the response is to bury one's head in the sand or dismiss the problem as remote. Even if action is taken, it is next to impossible to know how effective it is, if at all.

This need not be the case with local communications. People living close to Guildford Mill have ready access both to a *symbol* of effective action and a *concrete means* of providing renewable energy to a small community. The hydro-power unit could only possibly have symbolic force at the national level, but in Guildford it is manifestly heating offices and lighting homes. And not only is climate-friendly action reified in this way at the local level: community initiatives help to make global action seem less unimaginable, for the simple reason that the world is comprised of many fewer communities than it is people. 'We are going to save the planet, starting with Manchester' is that much more feasible a proposition than 'We are going to save the planet – starting with you.'

Learning from the local

In the course of this research, we saw many examples of local communications that essentially replicate the discursive patterns of national communications, although in a more parochial or mundane way. But there were a handful that stood out as doing something quite different. These share a set of subtle but cumulatively more energetic and engaging qualities. Taken together, these features begin to offer a template for the development of different and possibly more compelling communications, whether for a local or national audience. We will first discuss a fundamental issue – the way these communications construct or 'position' their audience – then go on to look at other linguistic features.

Communal address: a possible new model for persuasive communications

Given our observations on community as the sensible unit of agency, we suggest that future communications strategies, whether national or local, could usefully adopt a key feature of the more energetic and compelling local communications we analysed – what we have called 'communal address'.

This means addressing the potential energy saver as an individual defined by his or her membership of a knowable, physically located community, as opposed to the 'citizen of the world' constructed by most communications at present.

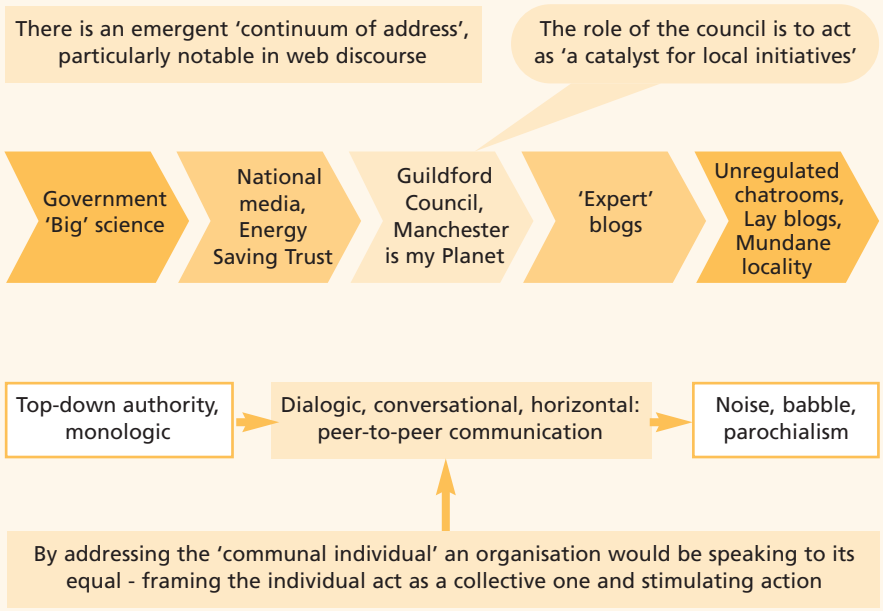
This would have several advantages:

- It frames individual climate-friendly behaviour as a conscious collective act. This helps to counteract the 'free rider' problem: if in reducing your emissions you feel you are part of a group, as opposed to a benighted individual struggling against the tide, you are that much less likely to succumb to resentment that no one else is doing anything.
- It gives the individual greater agency: he or she represents a significant percentage of an imaginable group, as opposed to a drop in the national ocean, or atom in the planetary ecosystem.
- It connects the imaginability of the problem to the visibility of the solution. Attention can be drawn to local initiatives and their concrete results.
- It harnesses the certain cultural momentum behind 'locality': Totnes/Lampeter/Brighton is where it is at.
- It helps interested organisations speak with the voice of 'collaborative authority': a powerful emergent code.

There are several useful models for this. In the wider cultural context, there is gathering force, as we have indicated, behind the notion of 'collaborative authority'. This is particularly notable in online discourse. Websites like eBay and the peer-to-peer lending service Zopa are authoritative only insofar as they are so widely used: the company itself only facilitates or oversees a process whereby trust is built by mass collaboration and peer review. Figure 5 shows how this model fits into what might be called a continuum of address.

Between the top-down, monologic authority of government, and the unregulated babble of the blogosphere, comes a potentially useful positioning for organisations promoting climate-friendly behaviour. As opposed to the voice of authority telling the individual what to do, the interested agency might usefully address the 'communal individual' as an equal, a partner in the collaborative process of combating climate change. As its Environmental Policy Officer Alex Swainson says, the role of Guildford Council is to act not as an instigator but as 'a catalyst for local initiatives' (Swainson 2007).

Figure 5: Peer-to-peer – a powerful emergent code



As for communications dealing specifically with climate change and energy efficiency, we found a number of examples of 'communal address' used to advantage:

- *Manchester is my Planet* – a campaign 'running across Greater Manchester to bring about a green energy revolution in the region', managed by Manchester: Knowledge Capital, a partnership of 'all ten Greater Manchester authorities, four universities, the strategic health authority, other key public agencies and leading businesses'. What is interesting here is the suggestion that the individual has an effect on the planet inasmuch as (s)he is a Mancunian. The notion of saving the planet 'starting with Manchester' makes the global effort more imaginable: we can do it city by city. The bright, colourful, iconic visual style, and note of cheeky humour in the text, borrow more from the language of popular culture and advertising than the dry discourse of public sector communications. (www.manchesterismyplanet.com)
- *Love Lewisham* – this Lewisham Council initiative, raising awareness of environmental issues in one of the country's few beacon local authorities for sustainable energy, frames the individual pledge to be active as a communal act. (www.lovelewisham.org)
- *Cambridge Carbon Footprint* – 'a small, local, voluntary organisation' aiming 'to make people more aware of their personal impact on climate change and...help people reduce that impact'. It is notable that on the website the individual's carbon footprint stands for the city's – the personal and the communal combined in one image. (www.cambridgecarbon footprint.org)
- *Planet St. Helens* – 'the hub of a community network promoting local action in support of Agenda 21 and sustainable development in the Borough of St Helens, UK.' This adopts playful use of communal address in similar manner to Manchester is my Planet. (www.planetsthelens.net)
- *Everybody's talking about climate change* – a 'Defra-supported local government climate change public awareness campaign throughout Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire.' This one is notable particularly for the 'Carbon Saved' banner on the right-hand side of its homepage, detailing the tonnes of carbon saved in both counties. This is a reifying device: it helps to make communal effort imaginable. (www.everybodys-talking.org)

We hear a great deal today about 'virtual communities', but our desire for real-life connectedness and belonging remains strong. It is clear that people who share a physical location can come together and think of themselves as a community, even if socially very disparate. The idea of the located community is highly relevant today – and offers climate change communicators some distinct benefits.

Most importantly, the 'unit' of the physical locality allows a degree of reification – making real and concrete – of the otherwise abstract and unknowable connection between action and effect in climate change. Furthermore, addressing people as members of a located community – as we have suggested – positions them as having more power to act. They are big fish in a small pond, not relatively powerless members of an unmanageably large group (the nation, for example, or the human race).

Talking about located physical communities with a sense of real, concrete boundaries and shared space raises the question of how large these areas can be. Generally we are thinking here of local authority or city council territories, or localities like villages and

towns, but also self-defined neighbourhoods within big cities. However, in the sense that Great Britain is bounded by the undeniably physical border of the coastline, it might also function as a suitable unit for 'local' approach. It is possible that one could (with care) use communal address, national pride and a sense of national community to address the 'Free Rider' problem – we Britons might simply decide to lead the way, regardless of others.

We are aware that both this particular kind of national pride and the desire for local 'community' might be most meaningful to a middle-class audience. However, there is a strong case for targeting communications at specific like-minded groups (as we argued last year), and middle-class sensibility is a good place to start – the affluent are both the most likely to lead action, having resources to spare, and are the heaviest individual polluters (based on Energy Saving Trust consumer research).

We suggest that 'communal address' could be a powerful way to construct climate change communications, whether these address specific local audiences, or are in fact designed for wider, even national, audiences. We believe it would be possible to take a creative approach that addresses the 'community member' in all of us, even through mass communication. This is not necessarily easy – we are aware, for example, of a risk in what we would call 'cut and paste', or the transparent and cynical grafting of quasi-localisation onto essentially national communications. The specifics of how best to harness 'communal address' do need more working through, but its potential seems clear.

The linguistic framing of positive action

Aside from the issue of 'communal address', at its best the emergent local discourse is different in several respects to its national counterpart – as Figure 6 shows.

Some of these features we have already discussed. The 'energetic' local discourse deals in the real, the tangible, the directly imaginable. It speaks the language of collective action, in contrast to the relatively disempowered individualism of 'small actions' at the national level. It addresses the individual, as we have demonstrated, as a member of a community, as opposed to a citizen of the planet, and speaks peer-to-peer rather than from the standpoint of authority.

Beyond this, the climate change communications we identified as 'emergent' (that is, fresh, vigorous, engaging) also employ language that is subtly but significantly different from the majority. National communications, and many local ones, tend to operate with the imperative ('we must!') or conditional ('if we all…'). In contrast, these emergent communications consistently use the present and future tenses to frame positive climate-friendly activity as already happening, or about to happen. Their approach is pragmatic, descriptive and inviting (we are doing this – come and join in!), rather than hectoring or rhetorical.

Emergent local communications also differ noticeably from the majority in their construction of the problem and the action required. Instead of constructing the climate change problem as an epic battle ('war against...', 'tackle', 'combat'), the emergent discourse speaks in calm and pragmatic terms of a new energy economy that is already in the process of establishing itself ('transition', 'energy descent', 'beyond oil').

Crucially, the emergent local discourse uses imaginative and metaphorical language to frame climate-friendly behaviour as desirable. So we have playful juxtapositions like 'Planet St Helens' and 'The Magic Boiler Scheme' and the informality of, for example, 'Love Lewisham'. The use of imaginative, creative and informal language, and surprising combinations, is a feature of many areas of public and popular discourse – not just popular media and advertising but the everyday playful language of ordinary people. This is especially relevant for the British, known for their love of puns and word-play, a trait reflected in much popular and populist UK advertising. Using such language in the context of climate change lifts these communications away from the far more common framing of climate change issues through discourses of public service, politics and campaigning ('campaign against…', 'xxx initiative', 'action plan on…').

We argue that understanding the powerful effect subtle language shifts like this can have on the engagement of ordinary people is a vital step for organisations striving for real and widespread public action on climate change.

Figure 6: The national and local discourses compared

	National	Residual/ dominant local	Emergent local
Mode of representation	Symbolic and abstract - unimaginable		Real, tangible, visible, imaginable
Actions	Small individual actions		Collective actions, collective decisions
Address	Citizen of UK, inhabitant of the planet, member of human race		Member of town/village/district community
Authority/voice	Top-down authority		Peer-to-peer
Tense and modality	Imperative (we/you must), conditional (if we all) or modal (you can do this)		Descriptive; present and future tense (*we are doing..., we're going to save the planet, starting with x*)
Construction of problem/action	War: tackle, stop, combat climate change		Pragmatic, leapfrogging to a new future. A whole new vocabulary: *energy descent; beyond oil, transition, carbon constrained, energy lean*
Discourse	Political (*campaign*) and public sector/govt)		Language of popular culture and advertising (*Manchester is my Planet; the Big Ask; the Magic Boiler Scheme; Planet St Helens; Love Lewisham*)

Conclusion: persuasive climate change communications revisited

In last year's report *Warm Words*, we offered a set of recommendations for those creating communications designed to encourage climate-friendly behaviours. A year on we need to revisit these, partly because public discourse has changed significantly, and partly because we have had the benefit of analysing an additional source of insight and inspiration – climate communications and action at a local level.

In 2006 we argued that the overarching message for the lay public was that nobody really knew whether climate change was real or not. Twelve months later a consensus seems to have emerged, at least on some of the key questions and in the established media. The challenge for communicators today will be to capitalise on the media consensus, using it to bring about real and positive behaviour change among individuals and organisations, before it fractures or fades.

A significant recommendation from 2006 followed from the then-enormous disparity in public discourse between the scale and nature of the problem (vast, unimaginable, hyperbolic) and that of the actions on offer (small, mundane, domestic). We suggested turning this apparent chasm from a problem into an opportunity through the creative myth of 'ordinary heroism'. There is still room for this approach, and we see it developing usefully, but the discourse has shifted, and the disparity between the portrayal of the problem and of its solution is no longer so immense. We thus need to develop additional strategies to suit the evolving communications climate.

Our third major recommendation from 2006 remains just as valid now, however – to work within the current cultural context to produce engaging communications. The challenge is still to make climate-friendly behaviours inherently sensible or desirable, not merely dutiful, 'working within the cultural norms, value systems and communication contexts that are meaningful to large sections of the population'.

We revisit and develop all these issues as we outline below our recommendations for climate change communicators from the 2007 analysis.

1. Capitalise on the consensus, before greenwash erodes its potential

The move to apparent consensus represents a huge step forward for organisations wishing to encourage the public to reduce energy consumption – but this is potentially a crucial and delicate time. That is, we might indeed be at a positive tipping point – the point at which climate-friendly actions and attitudes become 'normal' and we move towards a culture of environmental responsibility. But alternatively, today's consensus in the public sphere might be just a narrow window of opportunity, after which climate change becomes yesterday's issue, or after which 'greenwash' leaches all meaning and power from the discourse.

So the apparent consensus needs to be handled carefully. Organisations now need to recognise certain distinctions and subtleties in the climate change debate, helping people separate the questions over which there is now scientific and growing consensus in the public sphere (that climate change is happening; and that we are at least partly responsible for it) from other questions over which there is still legitimate debate (how bad the effects might be; and what we should do about it). Without this differentiation, the embryonic consensus itself will perhaps be threatened; we already see evidence that publicly people might accept the arguments, but privately doubt them and fail to act.

2. Make it easier for people to understand what they can do

Climate change is a complex and abstract issue, encompassing many different concepts, objects and possible actions: 'CO_2'; 'energy'; 'carbon'; 'ozone'; flying; driving, leaving the TV on standby… and so on. It is complex, but myriad concepts and actions are consistently presented to a general audience, and are presented as having complicated and unfathomable interrelationships. As individuals, we are asked to do many (apparently) only loosely connected things – turning off our lights, lagging our lofts, holidaying in the UK, spending thousands on microgeneration technologies, 'offsetting' our 'emissions' and so on. We are asked to save energy, reduce carbon – or any one of many other notions. Some of the required actions are further complicated by being inactions: stopping doing something, or doing it less. The abstraction and intricacy of the climate change discourse easily become reasons to ignore it. We might compare this with, say, anti-smoking campaigning, where the behaviour change is unequivocal and easy to communicate, even if achieving it is hard for the individual.

There is therefore a need to organise possible actions so that they are digestible. One example from our data is the 'menu' approach taken by Lucy Siegle in *The Observer Magazine* (Siegle 2007), grouping actions according to the level and type of commitment required. Such an approach bridges the gap between the banality and potential ridiculousness of the small single action ('turn off your TV') and the *entire* undifferentiated list of climate-friendly behaviours. From a different field, retailer Boots's 'Change One Thing' leaflet series also provides a useful model – the display encourages the customer to focus effort on just one (health-related) issue; each leaflet then gives simple but detailed support and advice around how to do this one thing (Boots 2007).

If this were a commercial task, we might in fact suggest creating a single 'brand' (representing the desire to act in a climate-friendly way) under which lies a range of specific behaviours, each supported and promoted as a 'variant' of the overarching brand. This allows each variant (behaviour) to be communicated simply, and targeted appropriately, reducing the general noise and confusion in the 'marketplace', and allowing people to find the mix of behaviours that speaks most clearly to them. One could in fact rotate the public salience of these variants/behaviours, sustaining interest through relative novelty, and thus making a virtue out of the problem of complexity. This is of course an unfamiliar and perhaps extreme way to think about a public issue like this – but it is a novel way to generate alternative approaches for effective communication.

3. Harness opportunities offered by real, located 'communities'

We hear a great deal today about 'virtual communities' and undoubtedly our patterns of social engagement and alliance have changed beyond recognition with electronic connectivity. However, our desire – even need – for real-life connectedness and belonging also remain strong. There is also nothing like a shared local problem or concern (a threatened phone mast or rash of new crack houses) to mobilise a local community, given some impetus and leadership from within the locality. It is clear that people who share a physical location can come together and think of themselves as a community, even if socially disparate (our data in fact included some such groups).

We might also detect a growing desire for a sense of locality – at least among some population sectors – in the rise of farmers' markets and demand for locally produced food. It is clearly not out of date to talk about physical communities. At its most contemporary, in fact, the virtual becomes a bridge to the physical. The online social networking site Facebook enables located communities to 'find' each other virtually, then agree, if they wish, to meet physically. And our data included examples of physically defined communities mobilising at least partly through online connection and activity.

So the idea of the located community is highly relevant today – and offers climate change activists some distinct benefits.

Most importantly, the 'unit' of the physical locality allows a degree of reification – making real and concrete – of the otherwise abstract and unknowable connection between action and effect. That is, at the local level it is possible for people to see or at least imagine the connection between specific collective actions and their effect on energy use – and to celebrate their collective achievements.

Second, addressing people as members of a located community positions them as having more power to act. They are big fish in a small pond, not relatively powerless members of an unmanageably large group (the nation, for example, or the human race). In the main body of this report we discuss the idea of 'communal address' as a language resource for tapping into the latent power of desire for community, as well as a way of reinvesting individuals with a sense of their own power to act. It is important, too, that the tone of these communications should not represent the voice of authority – there is much evidence for the growing

contemporary importance of peer-to-peer, not top-down, influence.

We believe that by harnessing the latent power of locality, interested organisations could begin to close the gap between the official consensus on climate change and the public's willingness to do something about it.

4. Use all possible routes to engagement

Finally, we return to a key theme from last year's report – our challenge to climate change communicators to work right across the spectrum of routes to engagement. Organisations do need to encourage rational public engagement with the climate change issue, especially with regard to the remaining debates. But winning hearts *and* minds will be more effective than minds alone.

Communicators need to *attract* people to the issue, make it appealing and interesting and make it feel individually meaningful. When people are drawn emotionally to an action they are far more likely to sustain it than if they act through simple civic duty or obedience. For this reason, we would incidentally suggest that the common phrase 'do your bit' is highly counter-productive in communications, evoking as it does a rather dated discourse of duty.

Resources for achieving engagement are varied. At one extreme lies the 'brand' idea referred to above – but there are many other ways communicators can engage people on an emotional level. From the current research, we would strongly suggest there are lessons to be learned from certain communications coming from locally-organised initiatives. These benefit from using the rich, imaginative and playful language of popular culture, media and everyday discourse, rather than the discourses of politics, campaigning and the public sector. We also see in these communications the emergence of a new, more positive and energetic lexicon of climate change – and the difference this makes is profound.

Efforts to curb emissions will never be successful without radical policy measures at the national and international level. But without 'a shift in cultural norms, in the mores that shape everyday behaviour' (May 2007), the policy effort will be fruitless. There is considerable evidence to suggest that such a shift in cultural norms has begun to happen in the mainstream media. There is an equal amount of evidence to suggest that this has failed to filter through sufficiently to stimulate the public to act. Organisations have the opportunity to integrate environmental awareness and commitment into the way people think, feel and live in the UK in the 21st century – and they can and must use a full range of communications approaches to do so.

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Figure 5: Peer-to-peer – a powerful emergent code (page 34)

'The role of the council is to act as "a catalyst for local initiatives"' Conversation with Alex Swainson, Environmental Policy, Guildford Borough Council, 3.5.07

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