

# Warm Words

**How are we telling the climate story  
and can we tell it better?**

**Gill Ereaut and Nat Segnit**

AUGUST 2006

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## About the authors

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# Preface

Climate change is one of the greatest challenges facing mankind this century. Unchecked, no one will remain immune from its consequences. Yet we each contribute to it. Every time we use electricity and gas at home, drive a car and get on an aeroplane we are emitting greenhouse gases that are warming the planet and changing our climate. If dangerous climate change is to be avoided, the public's contribution to it will need to be reduced dramatically.



This report was commissioned by the Institute for Public Policy Research (ippr) as part of its project on how to stimulate climate-friendly behaviour in the UK. Putting in place effective policies to achieve that is clearly essential, but so too is the use of effective communications. Today in the UK, more stakeholders, including every type of media outlet, the Government, environmental groups and companies, are discussing or communicating on climate change than ever before.

But what impact are these stakeholders having? Are they helping or hindering efforts to achieve behaviour change? Will producing more of the same communications do the job, and if not, how could the way climate change is communicated be improved? To help answer those questions, ippr commissioned Linguistic Landscapes to analyse current UK constructions and conceptions of climate change in the public domain, using some of the tools and principles of discourse analysis and semiotics.



## Discourse and semiotic analysis

Discourse analysis is a desk-based analysis method developed within the social sciences that has been adapted for communications consultancy. In academic research, discourse analysis methods are hugely varied, ranging from macro-scale cultural or historical analyses to micro-level dissection of how everyday conversations work. Linguistic Landscapes selects tools and concepts from across this range as appropriate for the given project, and puts them to work to answer key questions for businesses and other organisations. Its methods are essentially qualitative, and so do not involve numerical analysis. They are a combination of art and science: interpretative, while also evidence-based and systematic.

Like all qualitative research, this interpretation engages not only the specific material being analysed but the cumulative experience in cultural analysis of the researchers themselves. In some cases this means that strands of discourse have been identified that are only just visible, but that are known by the researchers to connect with cultural meanings expressed in many other fields.

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

Together, the discourse analysis and semiotic approaches enable us to map structural patterns in communications and in other discussions of climate change, and to assess their implications for connecting with mass audiences.

## Objectives and scope of the study

The objectives Linguistic Landscapes was asked to meet for this study were to:

- provide top-line analysis of the dominant discourses or 'voices' evidenced in popular media coverage of climate change and in communications designed to change relevant attitudes and behaviours, as well as the norms, values and lines of argument that go with them
- examine who these communications are targeting – implicitly or explicitly
- look, to a degree, at public discourse (for example, in chat rooms, jokes, popular language) and also at 'competing' discourses around climate change
- explore the unspoken backdrop to different sets of communications approaches – for example, what is treated as true, obvious and unproblematic versus what is marked as contentious or contested
- explore where these discourses might connect or clash with other discourses and value systems,

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helping or hindering the public's understanding of the issues and attempts to change attitudes and behaviours

- examine patterns in the detail of language and communications that might help explain why they fail to connect with popular imagination and consciousness at an effective level
- explore, on this basis, how communications might need to develop, in order to most effectively communicate the issue of climate change
- provide broad guidance towards codes, concepts, discourses and tonality that could frame a new and more effective means of communicating climate change to the public – especially in the context of the need to achieve reductions of energy use in the home and transport.



The research was carried out in late 2005 and early 2006. It involved reviewing some 600 articles from the UK daily and weekly press and magazines, about 40 television and radio advertisements and news clips, and 30 press advertisements. It also analysed around 20 websites. These included the websites of the Government's Climate Challenge campaign ([www.climatechallenge.gov.uk](http://www.climatechallenge.gov.uk)), the Energy Saving Trust ([www.est.org.uk](http://www.est.org.uk)), Greenpeace ([www.greenpeace.org](http://www.greenpeace.org)), Friends of the Earth ([www.foe.co.uk](http://www.foe.co.uk)), WWF ([www.wwf.org](http://www.wwf.org)), RSPB ([www.rspb.org.uk](http://www.rspb.org.uk)) and Stop Climate Chaos ([www.stopclimatechaos.org](http://www.stopclimatechaos.org)).



The scope of the study is relatively narrow, in that Linguistic Landscapes focused primarily on the climate change discourse arena itself and carried out a systematic but pragmatic level of analysis. A more comprehensive approach might look at a wider range of material, in more detail, across a wider range of media and over a longer period. Nevertheless, what we present here gives useful, indicative insight into the discourse of climate change communications in the UK today.

## Future work

In later stages of our project, it is likely that we will want to look at informal lay discourse, to assess how different groups of people themselves talk about climate change – whether in naturally occurring forms or through interviews and groups. It is also likely that further work will be needed to inform particular communications objectives for specific target groups. The results of any such work will be published in a final report outlining the findings of the whole project, as well as practical examples of how the findings might be applied by government and others seeking to change public behaviour on climate change.

**Simon Retallack**

Head of the Climate Change team, ippr

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# Executive summary

If [dangerous climate change](#) is to be avoided, the public's contribution to it will need to be reduced dramatically. Deploying effective communications, as well as effective policies, will be essential. There is now more media coverage and communications on climate change in the UK than ever before. But there has not, up to now, been any systematic exploration of what it amounts to or what effect it may be having. This report aims to begin to fill that gap.



The report sets out the results of research into how climate change is being communicated and discussed in the UK, how it might be connecting or failing to connect with mass audiences, and how it could be made more effective. Using techniques from discourse analysis and semiotics, reviews were carried out of 600 articles from UK newspapers and magazines, as well as of TV and radio news clips and ads, press ads and websites (including those of government and environmental groups) over three months between late 2005 and early 2006.

## An overview of the discourse

The research found that the climate change discourse in the UK today looks confusing, contradictory and chaotic. For every argument or perspective, whether on the scale of the problem, its nature, seriousness, causation or reversibility, there is a voice declaring its opposite. The conclusion must be that the battle is not won: climate change is not yet an issue that is taken for granted. It seems likely that the overarching message for the lay public is that in fact, nobody really knows.

Nevertheless, we may be coming towards the end of this period of disputation and uncertainty. Although the climate change discourse is still very unstable and in flux, some streams emerged through this study as dominant or stable enough to capture.

It is possible to identify several distinct linguistic repertoires on climate change in the UK today. Repertoires are systems of language that are routinely used for describing and evaluating actions, events and people. They offer different ways of thinking and talking and act as different versions of what can be considered 'common sense'. They are important because they are resources that people can draw on as they try to make sense of an issue and what it means for them.

There are three groups of climate change repertoires in the UK. There is an 'alarmist' repertoire, which is fundamentally pessimistic and is in a category of its own, as well as two groups of 'optimistic' repertoires – one that includes repertoires that assume 'it'll be alright' and a more pragmatic set of repertoires that assume 'it'll be alright as long as we do something'.

### Alarmism

Climate change is most commonly constructed through the alarmist repertoire – as awesome, terrible, immense and beyond human control. This repertoire is seen everywhere and is used or drawn on from across the ideological spectrum, in broadsheets and tabloids, in popular magazines and in campaign literature from government initiatives and environmental groups. It is typified by an inflated or extreme lexicon, incorporating an urgent tone and cinematic codes. It employs a quasi-religious register of death and doom, and it uses language of acceleration and irreversibility.

The difficulty with it is that the scale of the problem as it is shown excludes the possibility of real action or agency by the reader or viewer. It contains an implicit counsel of despair – 'the problem is just too big for us to take on'. Its sensationalism and connection with the unreality of Hollywood films also distances people from the issue. In this awesome form, alarmism might even become secretly thrilling – effectively a form of 'climate porn'. It also positions climate change as yet another apocalyptic construction that is perhaps a figment of our cultural imaginations, further undermining its ability to help bring about action.

### Settlerdom and British comic nihilism

'Settlerdom' (named after the 'settlers' attitudinal typology devised to describe people with sustenance-driven needs) is one of two significant optimistic but 'non-pragmatic' climate repertoires. It rejects and mocks the alarmist discourse – and with it climate change – by invoking 'common sense' on behalf of 'the sane majority' in opposition to 'the doom-mongers'. It dismisses climate change as a thing so fantastic that

it cannot be true and reflects a refusal to engage in the debate. It is seen most clearly in the broadly right-wing popular press, but is also likely to be the stuff of pub conversations. It is significant because it is immune to scientific argument and its prevalence underlines that the task of climate change agencies is not to persuade by rational argument but to develop a new 'common sense'.



'British comic nihilism' is another evasive rhetorical repertoire. Its rejection of climate change is whimsical, unserious, blithely irresponsible – a sunny refusal to engage in the debate, typified by comic musings on the positive possibilities of a future with climate change. It is currently marginal, seen in just a few places in the middle-class press and radio. But it is potentially important because it is a very British repertoire (self-mocking and contrary, dealing with adversity and threat by use of humour) and a very middle-class one, which could be important if agencies choose to address a middle-class or professional audience.

## Small actions

'Small actions' is the pre-eminent 'pragmatic' optimistic repertoire, and, along with alarmism, is the most dominant of all the climate repertoires, prevalent in campaign communications and mainstream popular press. It involves asking a large number of people to do small things to counter climate change. The language is one of ease, convenience and effortless agency, as well as of domesticity, seen in reference to kettles and cars, ovens and light switches.

The problem with it is that it easily lapses into 'wallpaper' – the domestic, the routine, the boring and the too-easily ignorable. It can be lacking in energy and may not feel compelling. It is often placed alongside alarmism – typified by headlines like '20 things you can do to save the planet from destruction'. But this contrast can also be used to deflate, mock and reject alarmism and, with it, climate change. Bringing together these two repertoires without reconciling them, juxtaposing the apocalyptic and the mundane, seems likely to feed an asymmetry in human agency with regards to climate change and highlight the unspoken but obvious question: how can small actions really make a difference to things happening on this epic scale?

## Conclusions and recommendations

Many of the existing approaches to climate change communications clearly seem unproductive. And it is not enough simply to produce yet more messages, based on rational argument and top-down persuasion, aimed at convincing people of the reality of climate change and urging them to act. Instead, we need to work in a more shrewd and contemporary way, using subtle techniques of engagement.

To help address the chaotic nature of the climate change discourse in the UK today, interested agencies now need to treat the argument as having been won, at least for popular communications. This means simply behaving as if climate change exists and is real, and that individual actions are effective. The 'facts' need to be treated as being so taken-for-granted that they need not be spoken.



The disparity of scale between the enormity of climate change and small individual actions should be dealt with by actually harnessing this disparity. Myth (which can reconcile seemingly irreconcilable cultural truths) can be used to inject the discourse with the energy it currently lacks.

Opposing the enormous forces of climate change requires an effort that is superhuman or heroic. The cultural norms (what we normally expect to be true) are that heroes – the ones who act, are powerful and carry out great deeds – are extraordinary, while ordinary mortals either do nothing or do bad things. The mythical position – the one that occupies the seemingly impossible space – is that of 'ordinary hero'. The 'ordinary heroism' myth is potentially powerful because it feels rooted in British culture – from the Dunkirk spirit to Live Aid.

More generally, the challenge is to make climate-friendly behaviours feel normal, natural, right and 'ours' to large numbers of people who are currently unengaged, and on whose emotional radar the issue does not figure. The answer is not to try to change their radar but to change the issue, so it becomes something they willingly pick up, because it means something valuable in their own terms. This can be achieved by shaping communications in several key ways, including:

- Targeting groups bound by shared values and behaviours rather than by demographics – making desired climate friendly behaviours feel simply like 'the kinds of things that people like us do' to large groups of people.





- 
- Reflecting the fact that a large proportion of the population have esteem-driven needs – they want to feel special and are accustomed to achieving this through what they do and buy, rather than what they do not do or do not buy.
  - Working on the basis that people increasingly trust other people more than governments, businesses and other institutions.
  - Using non-rational approaches like metaphor as well as more rationalistic approaches to enable people to engage emotionally and make desired behaviours appear attractive.

Ultimately, positive climate behaviours need to be approached in the same way as marketers approach acts of buying and consuming. This is the relevant context for climate change communications in the UK today – not the increasingly residual models of public service or campaigning communications. It amounts to treating climate-friendly activity as a brand that can be sold. This is, we believe, the route to mass behaviour change.

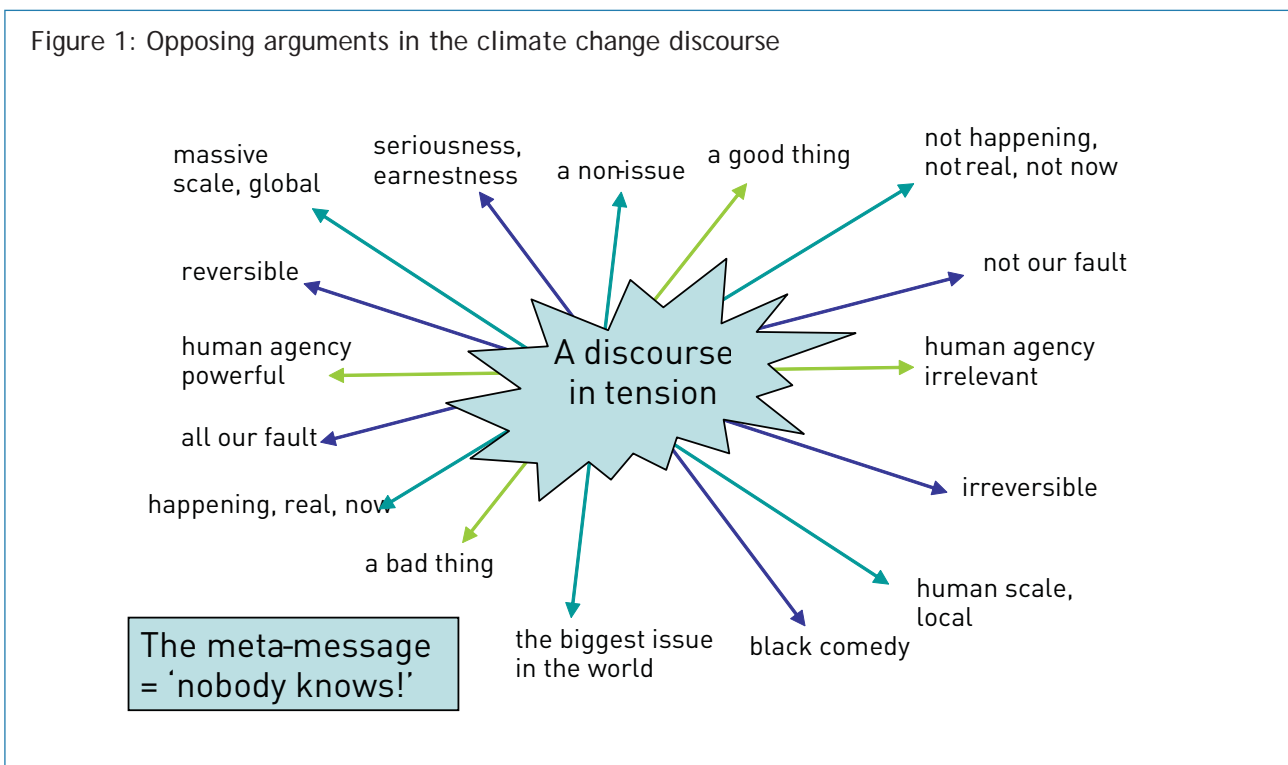


# 1. Climate change: a discourse in tension

In the British mainstream media today, the climate change discourse looks confusing, contradictory and chaotic. Many opposing positions and assertions are evident in the overall discourse, and for every argument or perspective, there is a voice declaring its opposite.

This situation is represented in Figure 1, which shows a range of views revealed by our research. Although there seems a general bias towards the left-hand side of this diagram (where the views are expressed that climate change is real, it is caused by humans, and we can bring about change), the conclusion must be that the battle is not won. Overall, it is not yet taken for granted that climate change exists, that humans have caused it, or that there is anything we can do about it.

It is a very noisy and messy language landscape out there, with advocates apparently arguing among themselves in the battle for consensus. It seems likely that the overarching message for the lay public is that in fact, nobody really knows.

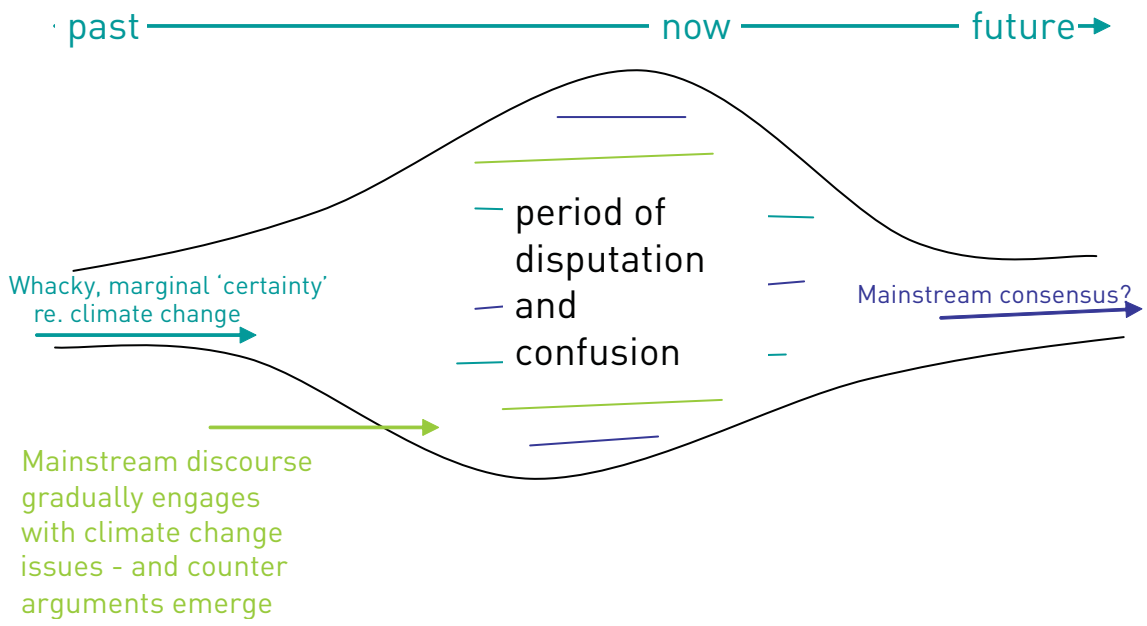


Nevertheless, it seems possible that we are coming towards the end of this period of disputation and uncertainty (see Figure 2). When climate change was first discussed in the 1970s and 1980s, it was talked about only by a fringe minority, but with a large degree of certainty and conviction. As the debate entered the mainstream in the 1990s, opposing views and positions were developed, leading to the fragmentation, chaos and tension still evident now. Although the climate change discourse is still very unstable and in flux (and traditional political divisions are of no help in making sense of green politics – or, indeed, vice versa), some streams or themes emerged from this work as dominant and/or stable enough to capture. So perhaps a consensus is in the process of emerging.

Figure 2 is a representation of the possible evolution of the climate change discourse. If it is right, it suggests that there is value in helping to 'quieten' the discourse, taking it out of argumentative mode. As Futerra has suggested, we need to 'forget the climate change detractors' ([Futerra Sustainability Communications Ltd 2005: 6](#)) and work to establish a new form of common sense. In this new popular consensus, the taken-for-granted nature of climate change is treated as being beyond argument. In other words, there is no need to discuss it – we can just get on and do what is required.

This raises some questions, which we will discuss later, about the role of communications in this field – whether the need is to produce yet more 'messages' (implicitly still arguing the case for climate change itself) or whether instead we should take a different approach to the issue.

Figure 2: The 'shape' of the discourse now



## 2. How the discourse looks: linguistic repertoires

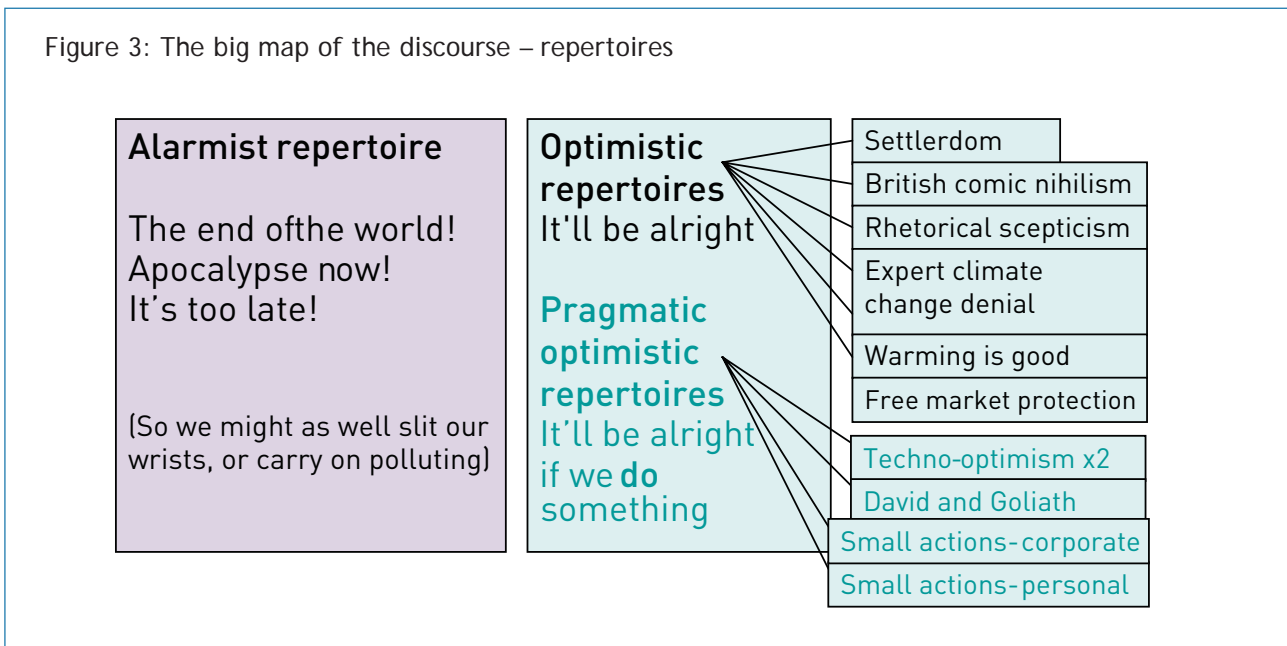
For this project, we adapted the idea of the ‘linguistic repertoire’: an analytic framework that we have borrowed and developed from discourse analysis in the academic field (for example, see Potter and Wetherell 1987). Linguistic repertoires are systems of language that are routinely used for describing and evaluating actions, events and people. A repertoire might include a distinctive lexicon, a set of grammatical or stylistic features, or particular images, metaphors, idioms, stories and categories.

As an example, think of the police officer repertoire that is in evidence whenever such a person appears on TV news: there is a distinctive way of structuring speech and typical category terms such as ‘offenders’, ‘victims’ and ‘the occupants of the premises’.

Repertoires are important because they are not merely styles or registers – they constitute different versions of what might be considered ‘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, such as what things mean, what is right and what is wrong, what is acceptable and not acceptable, and what flows logically from what.

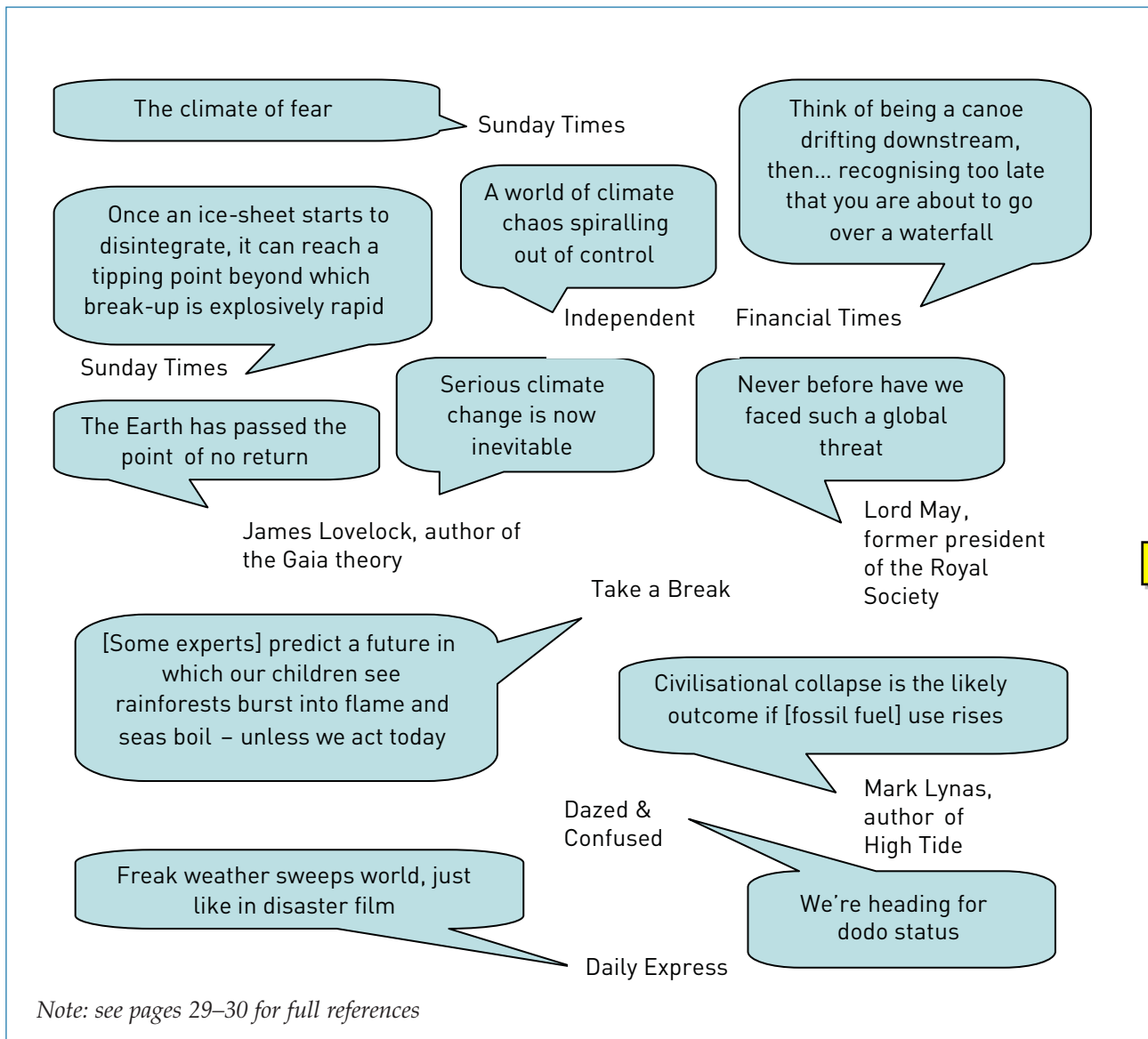
The range of repertoires available in our culture offers us a palette of sense-making devices: ways of talking or thinking that can be put together in specific situations to make our case, explain our own actions, predict what might happen next and so on. In these terms, Figure 3 shows a map of the climate change discourse as it looked at the point of this research.

Figure 3: The big map of the discourse – repertoires



As Figure 3 shows, there are different categories of repertoires on climate change: an alarmist repertoire as well as two groups of ‘optimistic’ repertoires – one which includes repertoires that assume ‘it’ll be alright’ and a more pragmatic set of repertoires that assume ‘it’ll be alright as long as we do something.’ Of those shown in Figure 3, the alarmist and small actions repertoires appear currently to be dominant. We describe all the repertoires in turn.

## Alarmism ('We're all going to die!')



The alarmist repertoire is typified by an inflated or extreme lexicon. It incorporates an urgent tone ('We have to act. Now. Today!') and cinematic codes, with images and ways of speaking that are familiar from horror and disaster films ('astonishing scenes that might have come straight from Hollywood' (Catt 2005)). It employs a quasi-religious register of doom, death, judgement, heaven and hell, using words such as 'catastrophe', 'chaos' and 'havoc'.

It uses language of acceleration, increase, intractability, irreversibility and momentum ('temperatures shot up', 'process of change... surged ahead', 'a tipping point beyond which break-up is explosively rapid' (Leake and Milne 2006)). It allows for no complexity or middle ground – it is simply extreme. Metaphors and omens or predictions of war and violence extend the physical threat into a societal threat: 'the breakdown of civilisation'.

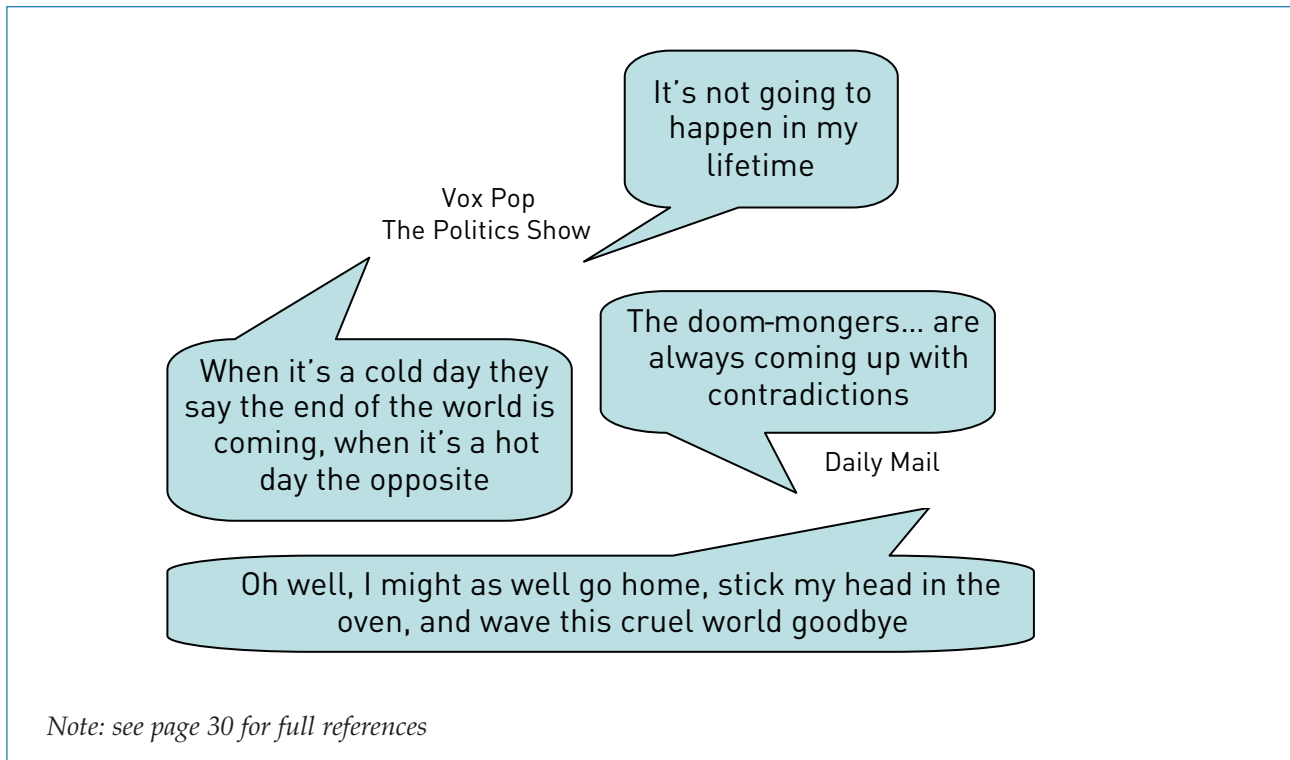
Climate change is most commonly constructed through the alarmist repertoire – as awesome, terrible, immense, beyond human control – and this repertoire is not just evidenced in the tabloids. In fact, it is seen everywhere, and is used or drawn on by many, including many of those seeking to bring about attitude or behaviour change on this issue. It is common in campaigning materials – from the [Stop Climate Chaos](#) website to the [Climate Challenge](#) online video produced by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra).

The alarmist repertoire does try to bring climate change close to people's lives, through shock tactics such as the image of a boat in a UK suburban street (in Boscastle, for example). However, more often it distances people from the problem. This is because the scale of the problem as it is shown within this repertoire

excludes the possibility of real action or agency by the reader or viewer. The dangers of alarmism include the implicit counsel of despair – ‘The problem is just too big for us to take on’. Key terms in this repertoire include ‘despair’, ‘hopeless’, ‘overwhelmed’, ‘chaos’ and ‘helpless’.

The sensationalism of alarmism and its connection with the ultimate unreality of the movies also serve to create a sense of distance from the issue. What is more, in this ‘unreal’ and awesome form, alarmism might even become secretly thrilling – effectively a form of ‘climate porn’ rather than a constructive message. Finally, alarmism potentially positions climate change as yet another apocalyptic construction that is perhaps a figment of our cultural imaginations. All of this serves to undermine the ability of this discourse to bring about action.

## Settlerdom (‘What’s all the fuss about?’)



The settler repertoire is so-named in reference to the ‘settlers’ attitudinal typology devised by the consultancy Cultural Dynamics ([www.cultdyn.co.uk](http://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, security and safety.

In this context, ‘settlerdom’ rejects and mocks the alarmist discourse – and with it climate change – not through any form of expert discourse or argument but through invoking ‘common sense’. This repertoire constructs itself (in other words, 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’.

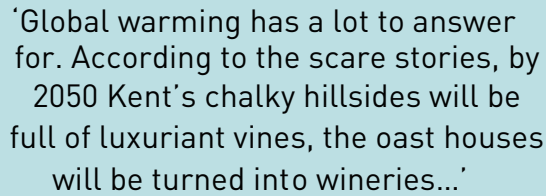
This repertoire is effectively a refusal to engage in the debate. It dismisses climate change as beyond human imagination and outside of common sense – a thing so large and fantastic that it cannot be true. Here, any sign of complexity or uncertainty in climate change is constructed as internal contradiction or confusion, and again is used to dismiss climate change claims as a whole. (For example: ‘[It is not] politically correct to mention that the scientists say we are going to both freeze and boil... So which is it to be? These predictions can’t both be right’ (Hanlon 2006).

The settler discourse on climate change is seen most clearly in the broadly right-wing popular press, such as the *Daily Express* and the *Daily Mail*, but is arguably also the stuff of pub conversations and everyday conversational dismissals of climate change. Cultural Dynamics estimates that settlers make up around 21 per cent of the UK population (Rose *et al* 2005).

What is significant here is that this discourse is immune to scientific argument, since it is simply constructed in a different way. Its currency is not science but ‘common sense’. The prevalence of this

repertoire in public media underlines that the task of climate change agencies is not to persuade by rational argument but in effect to develop and nurture a new 'common sense'.

## British comic nihilism ('Oh, bugger it and open another bottle!')



'Global warming has a lot to answer for. According to the scare stories, by 2050 Kent's chalky hillsides will be full of luxuriant vines, the oast houses will be turned into wineries...'

The Daily Telegraph

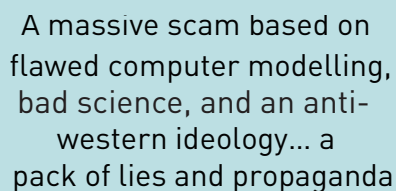
*Note: see page 30 for full reference*

This is another evasive rhetorical repertoire. It is currently marginal; we saw just a couple of examples in the middle-class press and radio (*The Daily Telegraph* and Radio 4).

Although marginal, this repertoire is potentially an important one to watch and understand. This is partly because it is very British – self-mocking and contrary, dealing with adversity and threat by use of humour. It is also a very middle-class repertoire, which could be important if agencies choose to address a middle-class or professional audience.

In this repertoire, the rejection of climate change appears to be less aggressive than that of the 'settlers'. It is whimsical, unserious, blithely irresponsible – a sunny refusal to engage in the debate. Our examples include comic musings on the positive possibilities of a future with climate change, with British vineyards and gloriously sunny weather in 2050; and the late Linda Smith's wry speculation on Radio 4 about the effect of increased temperatures on 'ASBO youth' in the North.

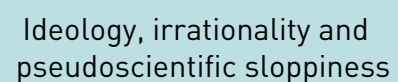
## Rhetorical scepticism ('It's bad science, over-hyped')



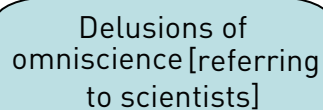
A massive scam based on flawed computer modelling, bad science, and an anti-western ideology... a pack of lies and propaganda

Robert Matthews,  
Financial Times

Melanie  
Phillips,  
Daily Mail  
columnist



Ideology, irrationality and pseudoscientific sloppiness



Delusions of omniscience [referring to scientists]

*Note: see page 30 for full references*

This repertoire is distinct from the settler repertoire in its level of engagement – it involves an aggressive campaigning scepticism as opposed to laissez-faire solipsism. The rhetorical sceptic repertoire is a non-expert discourse, but one that attacks the expert discourse as ‘bad science’. It is characterised by a heavy borrowing from a mix of expert academic and scientific discourses – ‘pseudoscientific’, ‘flawed computer modelling’, ‘category confusion’ (Melanie Phillips quoted in Monbiot G (2006)), with emotive discounting strategies, using terms such as ‘scam’ and ‘a pack of lies and propaganda’.

This repertoire constructs the green movement as irrational, naïve, emasculated and intellectually lightweight, and treats issues such as energy efficiency as ‘something only liberals, tree-huggers and sissies believe is possible or necessary’ (Friedman 2006). It also constructs scientists warning of the threats of climate change as arrogant and absolutist, and dismisses all claims on this basis alone.

This repertoire is highly rhetorical in that it has to build its arguments by form rather than by scientific content. In doing so, of course, it is itself open to attack, as George Monbiot argues sarcastically, writing in the *The Guardian*: ‘As usual, the scientists have got it wrong, and only Phillips, the autodidact professor of epidemiology, meteorology and atmospheric physics, can put them right’ (Monbiot 2006).

### Free market protection (‘Ah, but what you haven’t thought of is...’)

The trouble is that we would all be too impoverished to cope with the consequences

Professor Philip Stott, leading UK climate sceptic

Bjorn Lomborg, author of *The Skeptical Environmentalist* (paraphrased in the Sunday Times)

In the total sum of human well-being, money spent on battling climate change could be better spent elsewhere

Even if we shut every fossil-fuel power station, crushed every car and grounded every aircraft, the Earth’s climate would still continue to change

Sunday Telegraph

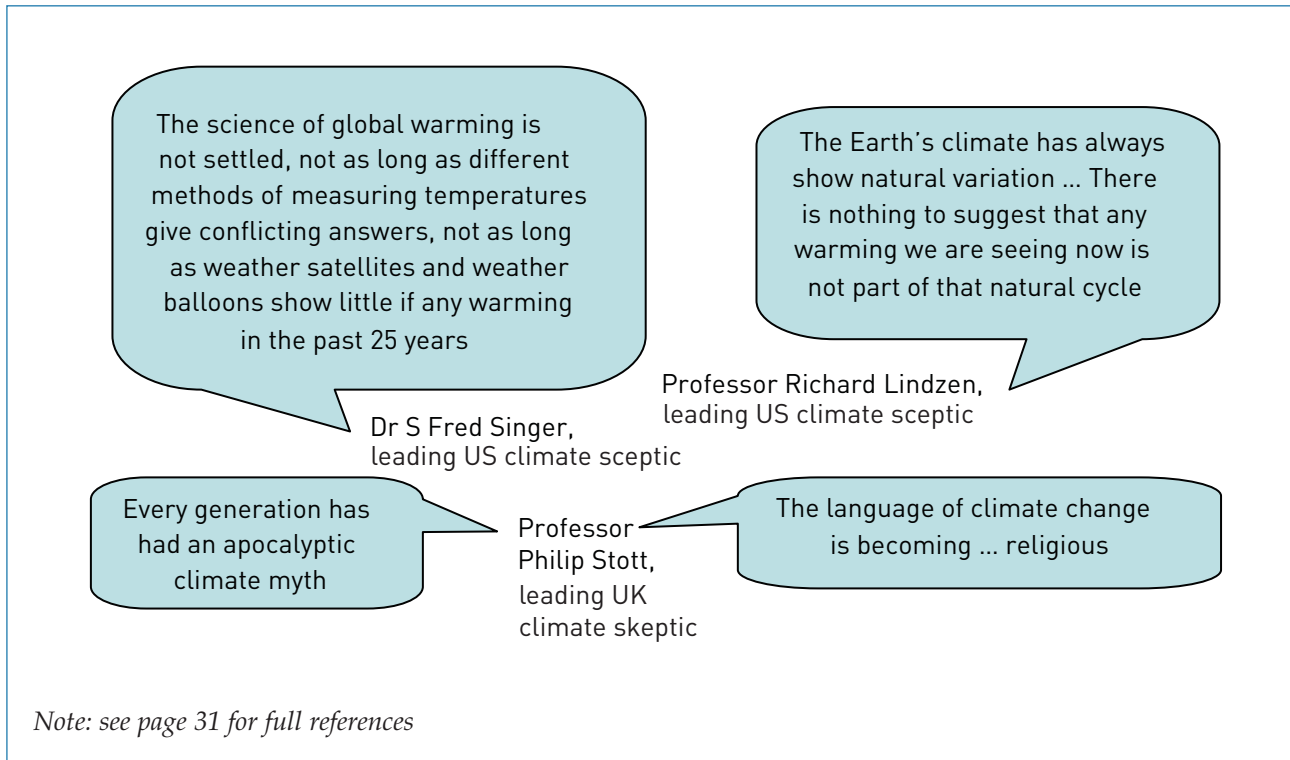
*Note: see page 31 for full references*

The free-market protection repertoire is not about whether or not climate change exists, nor whether it is man made, nor about the possible success of measures to address the problem. Instead, it is concerned with the possible negative effects of measures and actions that may be taken to counteract climate change.

This repertoire constructs such measures or actions as being possibly, or probably, destructive to economic prosperity. It characterises efforts to curb emissions as the one thing that might ruin our chances of survival, because the effects on the global marketplace would leave us ‘too impoverished to cope with the consequences’ of survivable climate change. Environmentalism is thus constructed as a form of apocalyptic self-flagellation and self-destruction.



## 'Expert' denial ('I beg to differ...')

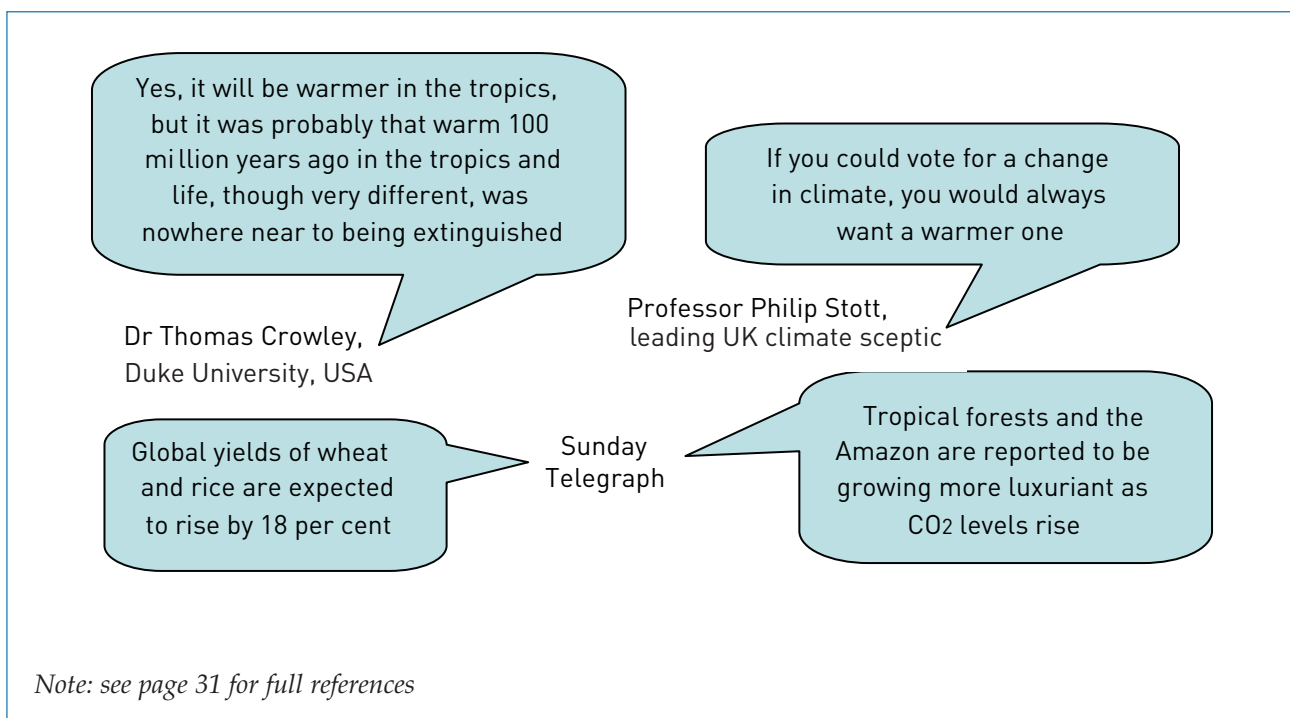


This is a repertoire in which scientists slug the debate out on their own terms. It demonstrates a tendency to typical scientific discourse, with multiple qualifications, long sentences, a less emotive register, and use of numbers. It includes the complaint that the language of climate change is becoming 'religious'.

The constructions of this repertoire leave little room for inflated registers, other than to negate or discount them (using terms such as 'apocalyptic climate myths'). It is also characterised by a tendency to construct climate change as being predominantly caused by 'natural' (in other words, not man-made) factors.

The expected audience for this repertoire is other scientists, or those potentially beaten or impressed by 'science talk'. For example, this repertoire is used in chat rooms to counter lay claims about climate change.

## Warming is good ('Relax, don't worry...')



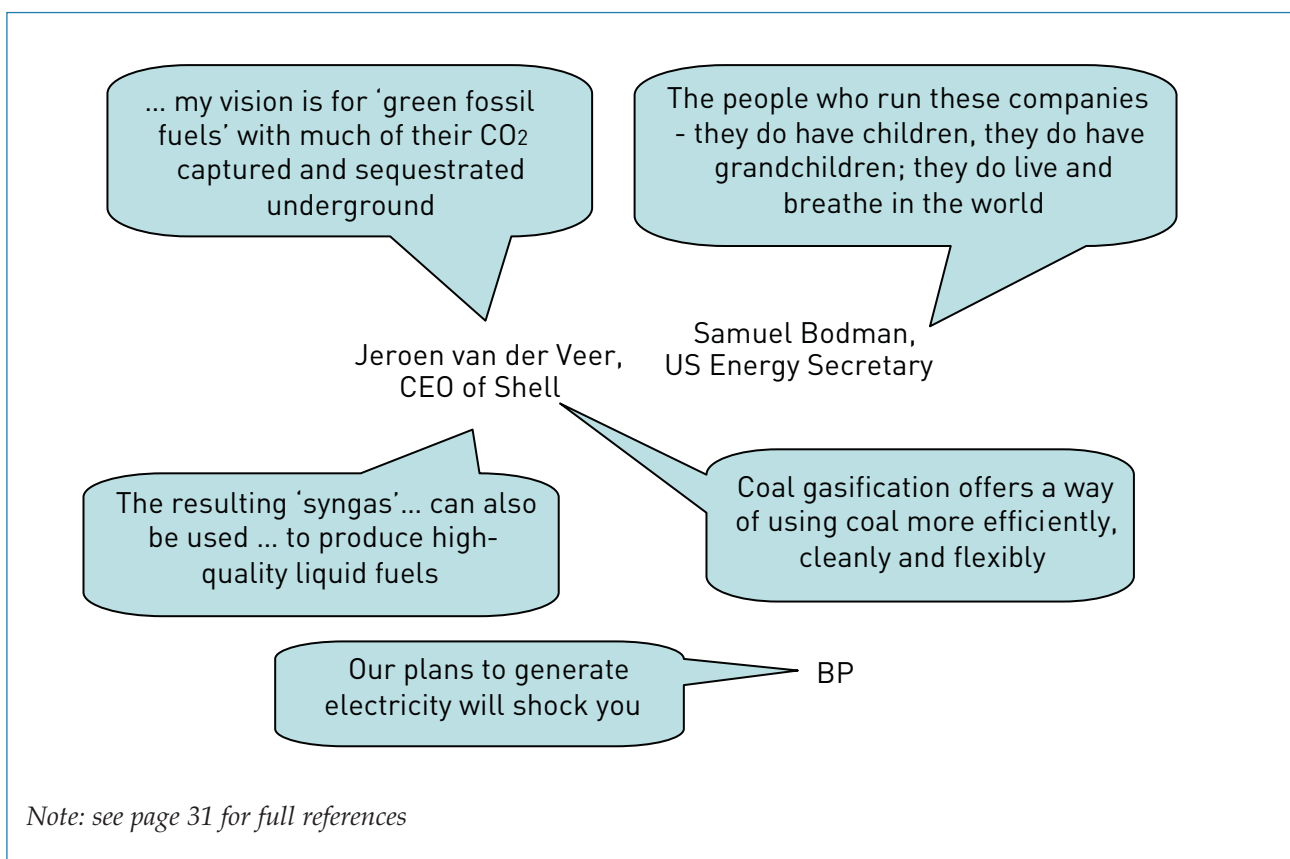
This repertoire displays apparently informed optimism: 'Professor Pollyanna says climate change is inevitable but potentially beneficial.' It is related to the comic nihilism position – here is the 'truth in jest'. While the comic position makes a joke of it, the 'warming is good' line of argument proposes seriously that climate change brings benefits.

Key words and phrases here include 'optimistic', 'adaptability', 'natural climate change' and 'natural variation'. This repertoire also includes negated negatives and denial of doom and gloom, as seen in the box above. The verbal structures used here tend to construct a model of continuity and natural cyclicity, as opposed to the dramatic constructions of sudden violent change. The audience is considered to be both the alarmist and the person being oppressed by alarmism.

## Techno-optimism ('Technology will provide the answer')

There are two forms of this particular line of talking about climate change: 'establishment' and 'non-establishment'.

### Establishment techno-optimism



The establishment form of this repertoire holds that established technology or business will find the answers, as seen above. Its starting point is the status quo and its emphasis is on evolution, not revolution. This focuses on developing the apparent oxymorons of 'green' fossil fuels and 'clean' industry.

This is a highly rhetorical repertoire. Its typical form and structure display an anxiety to manage not only these apparent contradictions but issues of stake, interest and past responsibility. This 'stretch' requires certain discourse strategies to manage it, such as trumpeting its own surprising audacity, using the inclusive 'we' and 'our' ('your interests and ours are the same'), humanising ('our scientists have kids too'), and deploying a rhetorical register. This instability is open to attack in public discourse, through criticisms such as 'the gathering of polluters' (International Herald Tribune 2006), 'counter-Kyoto' (Cornwell 2006), and other accusations of tokenism.

## Non-establishment techno-optimism

On the technology side I'm very optimistic. It's there. On the policy side, I'm not exactly pessimistic - but that's where the hard work needs to be done

Professor Marc Jaccard

Woking borough council has extensively used micro-generation methods - solar panels, small wind turbines, and a static fuel cell - together with energy efficiency measures. Both have cut carbon emissions

The Guardian

Central government has failed to tackle climate change ...The problem for environmental policy is that it is long-term

*Note: see page 32 for full references*

The non-establishment form of this repertoire holds that the answer will come from inventive genius and independent interests, existing interests being the obstacle to progress. There is a notable lack of rhetorical devices here; instead an assured techno-speak. This gives a certainty and assuredness in discourse that is lacking in the establishment form.

These two repertoires share much. However, they fundamentally differ in that they position government and big business in quite different ways. The first sees these organisations as providing the answer, while the second sees them as part of the problem.

## David and Goliath ('A small number can change the world')

Never doubt... that a small number of dedicated people can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has

Greenpeace, misquoting Margaret Mead, eminent cultural anthropologist

Get Your Filthy Hands Off My Future

Friends of the Earth

Just £3 a month will help Greenpeace bring about change

Greenpeace

Charges against climate criminals include fraud, deception and putting the lives of millions of people at risk

*Note: see page 32 for full references*

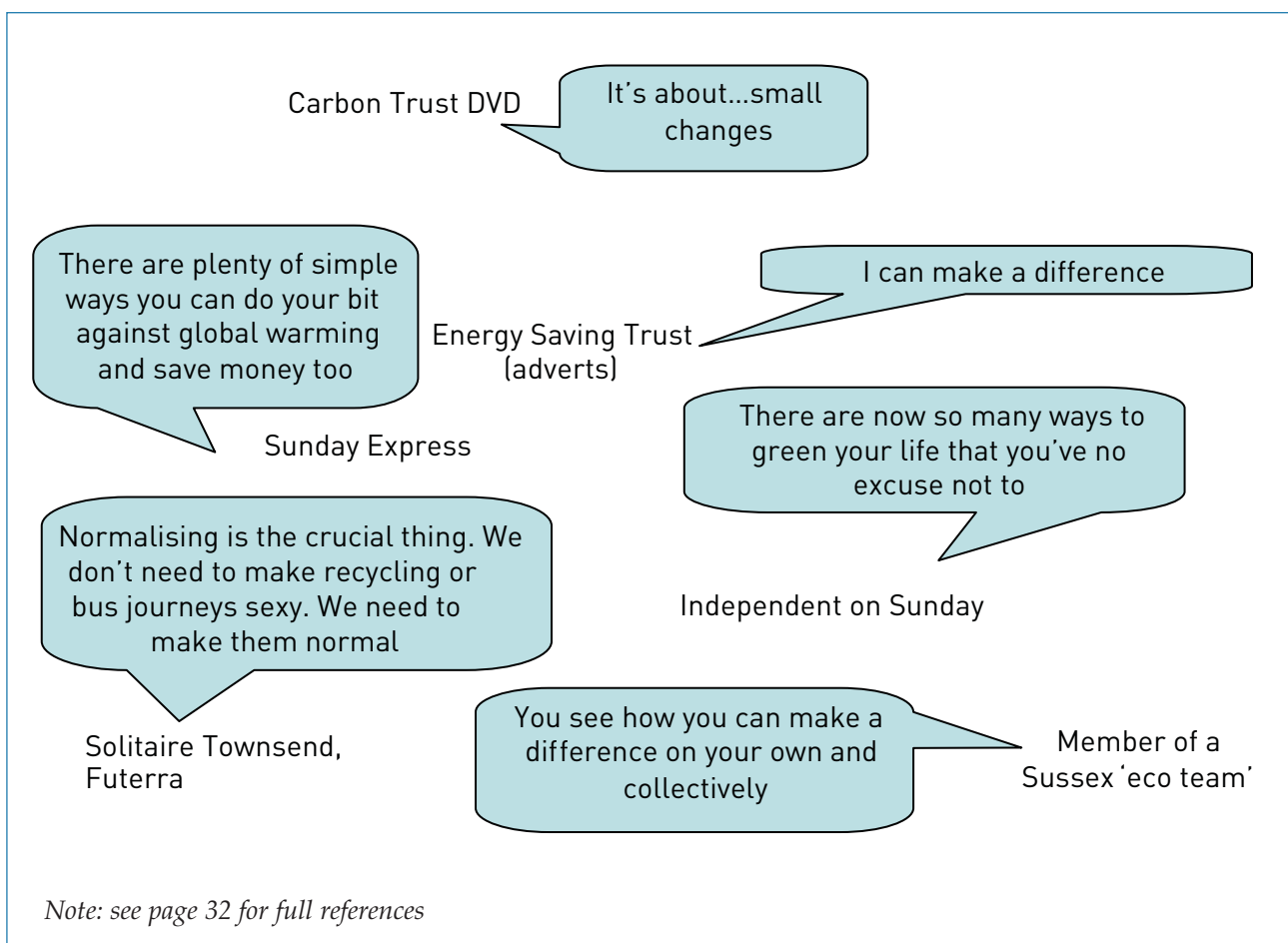
This repertoire embodies a residual model of aggressive, oppositional campaigning environmentalism and radical heroism: ‘a small number of people doing large things.’ There is a marked use of the exclusive ‘we’. There is also a tendency to accuse, using neo-Orwellian coinages such as ‘climate criminal’ and ‘climate enemy’. It is characterised by the use of imperatives and an aggressively preemptory syntax.

This repertoire conveys the impression of positive action. But it can be used all too easily by others to dismiss the advocates of action as ‘long-haired hippies out to change the world’ or even to dismiss moderate contemporary positions – especially if they are not compelling. In these instances, the strident voices might have a disproportionate impact.

## Small actions (‘I’m doing my bit for the planet - and maybe my pocket’)

The ‘small actions’ repertoire is the dominant model in campaign communications. This involves asking a large number of people to do small things to counter climate change. Again, there are two versions of this repertoire: personal and corporate.

### Personal small actions



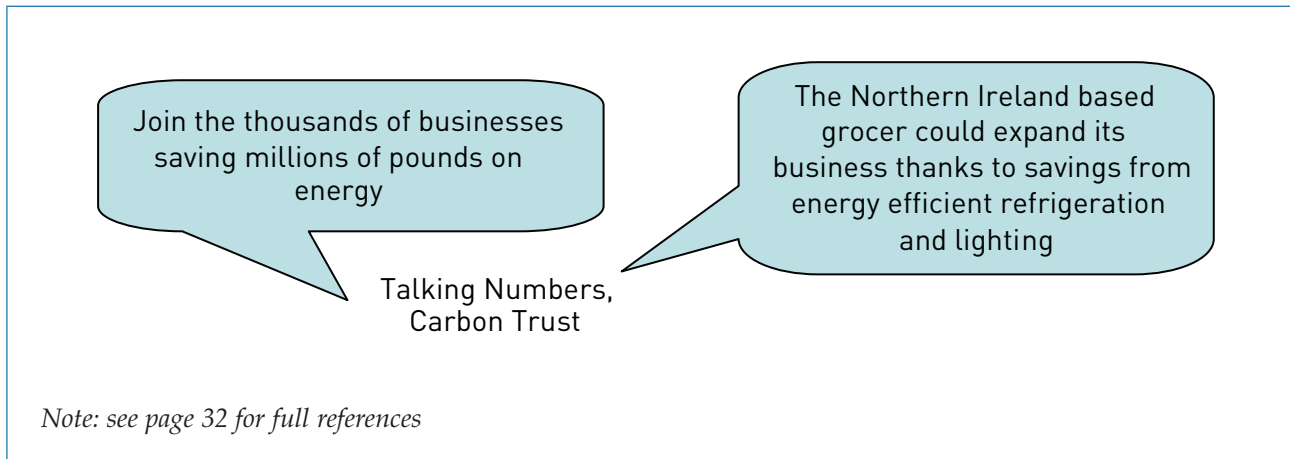
The personal form of this repertoire, shown above, is ‘I’m doing my bit for the planet, and maybe my pocket’, constructed as motivated by ethics and/or self-interest. This repertoire is clearly a vital one to understand in relation to achieving large-scale behaviour change.

Examples of the personal small actions repertoire include the Government’s ‘Are you doing your bit?’ campaign (1998–2000), the Energy Saving Trust (EST) ‘20%’ campaign (2005–06) and numerous articles in mainstream popular magazines. The language is one of ease, convenience and effortless agency, through phrases such as ‘without spending any money’, ‘basic’, ‘don’t have to go down a car size’, ‘virtually effort-free’, ‘it’s about making small changes’.

The problem with the personal small actions repertoire is that while it normalises the discourse in the face of movie-code alarmism, it easily lapses into ‘wallpaper’ – the domestic, the routine, the boring, the too-easily understood and ignorable. If used alone, it can be rather lacking in energy and may not feel very compelling.

In practice, this domestic repertoire is often placed right alongside alarmism – for example in popular magazine features with typical headlines similar to ‘20 things you can do to save the planet from destruction’ (such as turning down thermostats, not leaving TVs on standby, appropriately filling up kettles and buying efficient light-bulbs). But this very contrast can also be used to deflate, mock and reject alarmism and, with it, the very notion of climate change.

## Corporate small actions



The corporate model, shown above, argues that tackling climate change is good for business and the planet (ethics collapsed into self-interest). As one of the currently dominant streams, this repertoire is clearly related to the emergence of a corporate social responsibility discourse. Within this, there is emergent construction of climate change as a cost, as opposed to constructing measures that counter climate change as a cost.

In Section 5, we will discuss briefly how the juxtaposition of alarmist energy with small-action agency might be made to work positively rather than negatively.

## Summing up

Across the media we examined we identified one clearly dominant repertoire – alarmism – and a number of other more optimistic ways of thinking and talking about climate change. The alarmist discourse is so familiar and dominant that it is used as fuel or foil for other ‘positions’: being mocked by ‘rhetorical scepticism’, or turned to comic effect by ‘comic nihilism’, for example.

Although several voices can be heard, the stage seems dominated by the tension between ‘alarmism’ on one hand and ‘small actions’ talk on the other. Powerful, compelling and literally alarming, the alarmist discourse is however ultimately paralysing. It robs the reader or viewer of the possibility of agency, offering instead a thrilling or terrifying spectacle. At the opposite extreme, ‘personal small actions’ offers the possibility of action – but is all too easily mundane, domestic and un compelling. Finding a way to reconcile and use these different forms of ‘common sense’ is an issue we address later in this report.

### 3. Where the repertoires are found

The various repertoires identified in Section 2 are not sealed units of discourse but linguistic resources that can be drawn upon. As such, each repertoire rarely exists in isolation or confines itself to one ideological or rhetorical position. However, certain ideological or rhetorical positions do tend to draw on certain repertoires more than others, and so it is possible in broad terms to identify where each is most likely to be found.

Recourse is made to the alarmist repertoire across the ideological spectrum. We found evidence of it in *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *The International Herald Tribune*, *The Daily Mail*, *The Daily Express*, *The Star*, the *London Evening Standard*, and the *Metro* (London). It is there in popular magazines, such as *Eve*, *Mizz* and *Take a Break*. It is also in campaign literature, especially that of Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace, and in the online presences of government and NGO initiatives (for example, the baleful sunsets of the RSPB's otherwise sober, rationalist climate-change pages).

Ideological positions tend to be evident in the way in which publications deal with alarmism and how they treat or oppose it. In the case of the left-leaning press, taking *The Independent* and *The Guardian* as the prime examples, alarmist constructions of human-induced climate change are often subjected to subtle critique by the small-actions repertoire – sometimes within the same piece of text.

In contrast, the right-leaning press often embraces the alarmist repertoire, only to undermine it with sceptical constructions drawing on the settler, climate-change denial or comic nihilist repertoires. For example, in January 2006 the *Daily Express* ran a news item headlined 'How the humble kettle is causing global warming' (Ingham 2006), characterised by alarmist language such as 'new threat to the planet', followed by a leader item entitled 'Pots and kettles', lightheartedly dismissing the idea:

'Could the humble kitchen kettle really be responsible for global warming? A new report says so. We say it's potty – or a clear case of the tin pots calling the kettle black.' (Ingham 2006)

On the one hand, it is typical of tabloid discourse to borrow from entertainment codes – expressing everything in terms familiar from entertainment media, including subject matter, visual design and tone. However, placing immoderate alarmist language ('new threat to the planet') alongside scepticism verging on derision seems likely to result in confusion and inaction.

As in the leftist press, the campaign literature for NGOs such as the World Wildlife Fund and Friends of the Earth, and the Government's climate-change website, make alarmist constructions but then mount a call to small action against them. This approach runs the same risk of inducing a defeatist apathy (see 'Small actions repertoire', p. xx in Section 2). Meanwhile, Greenpeace tends to use both the alarmist and David and Goliath repertoires.

Unsurprisingly, the settler repertoire is a feature of populist views of climate change expressed in the right-wing press. We found it particularly in operation in the *Daily Express* and the *Daily Mail*, through articles such as 'A scorched earth? Let's stay cool' (Hanlon 2006).

Meanwhile, comic nihilism is a feature of rightist, middle-class constructions of the issue. This approach is drawn upon, for instance, in the *Daily Telegraph's* sunny prognostication of thriving vineyards in southern England (referred to above), and Quentin Wilson's provocative defence of gas-guzzling super-cars, in his *Sunday Mirror* motoring column (Wilson 2006).

The rhetorical sceptic, free-market protection, expert climate-change denial, and 'warming is good' repertoires are all drawn upon to varying degrees in the right-wing press, and, in the case of free-market protection, in public political discourse. We also found evidence of the expert climate-change denial repertoire in chat-room and message-board discussions of climate change.

It is worth noting that sources that draw on the rhetorical scepticism and expert climate-change denial repertoires tend to assume a more informed reader than those that borrow more heavily from the settler repertoire.

'Establishment' techno-optimism is most often in evidence in energy industry communications (for example, BP's current press campaign (BP 2005)). It can also be found in rightist or ideologically neutral constructions that give a voice to industry spokespersons (see Shell chief executive Jeroen Van Der Veer writing about 'green fossil fuels' (Van Der Veer 2006)). It also may be found in leftist or otherwise critical

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constructions that seek to expose the repertoire as tokenistic and/or disingenuous, such as in the coverage of so-called 'green' advertising in the *International Herald Tribune* (Robison and Viscusi 2006).

Non-establishment techno-optimism tends to feature in approving coverage of innovation in the left-leaning press. Examples include the Guardian's coverage of Woking and Southampton councils' successes in reducing emissions (MacGregor 2006), its interview with energy expert Marc Jaccard (Sutherland 2006), and the Independent's Diary of an Eco-Builder (Anderson 2006). This repertoire is also evidenced in campaign literature.

David and Goliath is a residual repertoire that is confined almost exclusively to leftist campaign communications. It is particularly in evidence in Greenpeace pamphlets and web pages, and less so in the more moderate communications put out by Friends of the Earth. For understandable reasons, the personal and corporate small actions repertoire is mainly found in campaign communications, but is also found in the press.

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## 4. Which repertoires are dominant or marginal?

In this study, any judgements on the dominance or marginality of the repertoires set out in Section 2 are based on a limited data sample and one restricted to a relatively narrow range of media. Nonetheless, such a clear pattern emerged that some extrapolation seems justified.

In the material that we analysed, two repertoires vied for dominance – alarmism, and personal or corporate small actions. This is unsurprising to the extent that they are direct contrapositions – or, if you like, two sides of the same coin. In contrast to some of the non-pragmatic optimistic repertoires, both acknowledge the existence and scale of human-induced climate change. However, the alarmist repertoire glorifies the scale of climate change and diminishes our sense of being able to act: the personal small actions repertoire focuses only on human agency and effectively shuts its eyes to the issue of scale.

We can see this difference in focus or emphasis in the different languages used. The cinematic language and sublime or apocalyptic provenance of the alarmist repertoire constructs a reader who is at once terrified and entertained, but effectively distanced from the problem of climate change. In the domestic language used by the small actions repertoire, with references to kettles and cars, ovens and light switches, family activities and walks to work, we see a focus on the small and mundane, but no sense of the scale or urgency of the problem or of the solutions to it.

The drawbacks of each repertoire have been set out in section 2 – but briefly, both will tend to engender inaction: alarmism for its distancing effect, and personal small actions for its failure to compel.

The rhetorical scepticism and expert climate-change denial repertoires are likely to become increasingly marginal in the face of mounting evidence for the existence of anthropogenic climate change. Indeed, it may be for this reason that their rhetorical content is currently so marked. Journalist Melanie Phillips's talk of 'scams' and 'packs of lies' (Monbiot 2006) perhaps provides the perfect example. This rhetoric represents the erosion of meaning from a repertoire that seeks to refute the ever-more irrefutable. Simply stated, a repertoire or discourse lacking signifying force is going to have to shout increasingly loudly to get itself heard.

Settlerdom is arguably a more stable repertoire, in that its refusal to engage – its dogmatic solipsism – makes it just about impregnable to rationalist counterargument. It seems impervious to messages and information, no matter how well-informed or argued, because it simply operates on different terms. It remains to be seen whether campaign communications can make a cultural norm of belief in anthropogenic climate change, and society's ability to tackle it, to the extent that they will be seen to constitute the commonsensical position, thus destabilising the settler repertoire on its own terms.

In place of these repertoires, which sit at various places on a continuum of scepticism, techno-optimism looks as if it is moving into relative dominance. Again, this is unsurprising, as a techno-optimistic repertoire that places faith in industry initiatives is the natural corollary of the fading salience of sceptical repertoires. 'Alright,' it says, 'maybe climate change does exist (and maybe it's our fault), but we've got it all in hand.' A leftist techno-optimistic repertoire – one that suggests individual and small-scale initiative as the solution and industry as an obstacle – will, in turn, gain in salience, along with the credibility of the small-actions repertoire.

Of the remaining repertoires, free-market protection and 'warming is good' are both marginal repertoires, significant only to the extent that they lend support to other sceptical repertoires. Comic nihilism is highly marginal, but of potential significance as a resource that might be drawn on and converted to entirely different ends. Finally, David and Goliath is an increasingly marginal repertoire. In the sample of material that we looked at, it was significant to the extent that it is used in sceptical arguments, with references to 'tree-huggers and hairy hippies', to discredit all countervailing green repertoires by association.



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## 5. Conclusion: persuasive climate-change communications

While the research conducted for this project was, as we have noted, relatively restricted in its scope, it has been possible to produce a number of recommendations for the future design of communications strategies. This section outlines an analysis of some past and current persuasive communications, and suggests a novel framework – drawn from our work with brands and brand communications – for the development of future communications.

### Treating climate change as beyond argument

Much of the noise in the climate change discourse comes from argument and counter-argument, and it is our recommendation that, at least for popular communications, interested agencies now need to treat the argument as having been won. This means simply behaving as if climate change exists and is real, and that individual actions are effective. This must be done by stepping away from the ‘advocates debate’ described earlier, rather than by stating and re-stating these things as fact.

The ‘facts’ need to be treated as being so taken-for-granted that they need not be spoken. The certainty of the Government’s new climate-change slogan – ‘Together this generation will tackle climate change’ (Defra 2006) – gives an example of this approach. It constructs, rather than claims, its own factuality.

Where science is invoked, it now needs to be as ‘lay science’ – offering lay explanations for what is being treated as a simple established scientific fact, just as the earth’s rotation or the water cycle are considered.

### Personal small actions: the current problem

As mentioned earlier, populist climate change discourse (for example, in magazines) tends to put together alarmist and small-action repertoires, through features such as ‘20 ways to save the planet from destruction’. In bringing together these two repertoires without reconciling them, these articles feed a notion of asymmetry in human agency with regards to climate change. The result is a belief that individuals are responsible for causing climate change, but are really powerless to negate it.

Rather than offering the public a good solution, this juxtaposition of the apocalyptic and the mundane seems in fact to highlight the unspoken but obvious question: how can small actions really make a difference to things happening on this epic scale? This approach perhaps offers the reader some semi-humorous ways to not worry, or tokenism, rather than ways to feel good, powerful, and active.

Some recent and current climate-change campaigns for personal behaviour change can also be seen as effectively (if unconsciously) disempowering and distancing audiences, as the four examples below show.

#### Doing your bit - DETR, 1998-2000

This TV campaign by the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) comprised a series of filler advertisements in which presenter Mark Lamarr and other celebrities encouraged viewers to ‘do their bit’ for the environment, through activities such as energy saving and recycling.

The use of celebrity and irony moved into the right area, offering the viewer a degree of pleasure and interest (something clearly needed if the public is indeed to be engaged). However, the line ‘doing you bit’ constructed the desired action as civic duty. Other real-life language contexts in which ‘doing your bit’ appears always summon up the notion of duty – for example, in language used by organisations such as the Scouts Association, local committees, and charity fundraising campaigns.

#### It’s a crime - Energy Saving Trust, 2003-04

This campaign comprised TV and radio advertisements that placed animated caricatures of appliances, such as a fridge and washing machine, in comic situations to communicate that ‘it’s a crime’ to waste energy. This approach humorously twisted the kinds of slogans used by Greenpeace – such as ‘climate

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criminal'. The campaign attempted to grab attention through the kinds of 'groaning' puns common in British comedy and in many ads. The overall effect is to construct the viewer as an unsophisticated consumer of humour – which is not likely to engage or persuade, especially in an advertising market full of sophisticated humour.

### Andy/Katie saves... - Energy Saving Trust, 2003-06

This campaign comprised a series of TV filler advertisements showing someone rushing urgently home to do something highly important they have forgotten to do, which turned out to be an energy-saving activity such as turning off the light, or turning down the thermostat.

These advertisements admit the potential dullness of their subject, and try to insert energy and agency. They seem at first to be informed by 'ordinary heroism' (see below), borrowing from action-movie codes. But the bathos of the final image points to a different dynamic – the switching off of the light or thermostat is mock-heroic. The campaign recognised the un compelling domesticity of its subject matter and makes a joke out of it, in a way that is typical of advertising in retreat from its informational content. The ads effectively construct the desired behaviour as comically neurotic – probably not especially good at creating engagement or action.

### Save your 20% - Energy Saving Trust, 2005-06

This campaign comprises a series of TV and press advertisements asking, 'Are you saving your 20%?' in a number of situations. It has been the most successful Energy Saving Trust campaign in prompting members of the public to seek energy-related advice (EST 2006). However, in this campaign, disconnected talk about numbers and percentages probably risks engendering inaction just as shock tactics would.

The obvious question is 'Save 20% of what?'. Without any clear connection between 'my' 20% and some greater goal (and, indeed, some way to make '20%' meaningful to the individual), the number 'floats'. Given that much of the population is known to be uncomfortable with maths, percentages and so on, the ads potentially place the reader in a position of discomfort.

This press campaign is also subtly disempowering, by infantilising the reader with children's storybook codes in colour and typography. Essentially, it represents top-down instruction from an impersonal authority source – a mode that is increasingly residual in today's culture and today's communications arena.

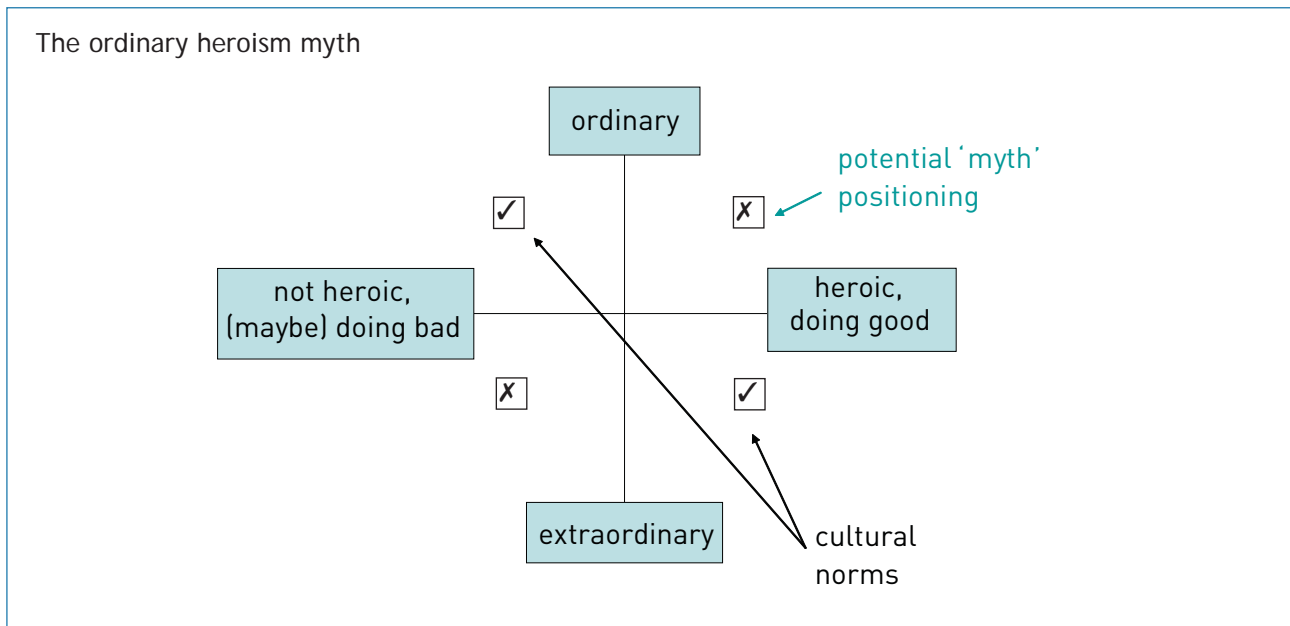
It is clear, then, that current communications aiming to inspire domestic climate-friendly actions can easily come up against problems, even those seeking to build progressively on consumer feedback, as is the case with EST campaigns. However, inspiring such actions is critical for tackling climate change. So we need to ask how 'small actions' can better be presented to the British public. Below we look at this issue using ideas and models drawn from our work on persuasive communications in another field – that of brands.

## Personal small actions: an opportunity for change

The 'problem' of disparity of scale – between the enormous problem (depicted in alarmism) and small individual actions – is potentially the opportunity. It is currently the source of wry juxtapositions: 'Unplug your TV, save the planet'. With the right approach, one could properly harness this disparity by using myth to inject the discourse with energy (a 'myth', in this sense, reconciles seemingly irreconcilable cultural truths).

Opposing the enormous forces of climate change requires something superhuman or heroic. Science is not enough – especially when scientists argue among themselves. What is needed is something more magical, more mythical. Many strong and successful brands have a kind of myth at their core – they appear to reconcile things that are normally impossible to reconcile (Dove's 'real beauty' core proposition would be an example). Our suggestion from this research is that the key powerful myth for action on climate change is 'ordinary heroism' (see the diagram on the next page).

In this model of communication, the cultural norms (what we normally expect to be true) are that heroes – the ones who act, are powerful and carry out great deeds – are extraordinary, while ordinary mortals either do nothing or do bad things. The mythical position – the one that occupies the seemingly impossible space – is that of 'ordinary hero'.



Some grains of this solution are already visible in some communications. Examples include:

- *Tower-block advertising, Energy Saving Trust, 2005* – Here, individuals are shown dismissing climate-friendly actions as irrelevant and unimportant – ‘a load of twaddle’ – but then the camera pulls back to show the multiplied effect of such individual attitudes across a whole district, city or country. This TV execution shows a very useful structure, creating a graphic metaphor of the collective power of individuals. However, this is a negative version of the principle (the collective negative force of negative attitudes and behaviour). The positive version of the same structural idea – collective power – appears only in the radio advertisement (a weaker medium). We suggest that this essential idea might be harnessed very productively within the ‘ordinary heroism’ myth.
- *‘Together we can achieve amazing things’, Defra, 2006* – This statement, which forms part of the ‘Acting Together’ section of the climate change initiative guide is an ‘ordinary heroism’ statement (p.6).
- *DIY Kyoto* – The message of this design, technology and innovation organisation (see [www.diykyoto.co.uk](http://www.diykyoto.co.uk)) is that people can have a big impact on climate change through their own actions (hence ‘Do it yourself Kyoto’). It powerfully juxtaposes the small with the big, the domestic with the global, the amateur with the professional, and the active (‘I can do it’) with the passive (‘They will have to sort it out’). This represents some version of ‘ordinary heroism’, though further analysis is needed to unpick the detail and the potential here.

What is potentially powerful about the ‘ordinary heroism’ myth is that it feels rooted in British culture – from the Dunkirk spirit to Live Aid. Conscious and concerted formulation of ordinary heroism might offer even more powerful solutions. It is easy to imagine it providing fertile ground for creative communications.

## Working within today’s cultural context: the real challenge

More broadly, we strongly suggest it is not enough simply to produce yet more messages to convince people of the reality of climate change and urge them to act. We need to work in different and more sophisticated ways, harnessing tools and concepts used by brand advertisers, to make it not dutiful or obedient to be climate-friendly, but *desirable*.

Specifically, climate-friendly actions need to be made to feel attractive and compelling in terms that make sense to people today. Doing so means working within the cultural norms, value systems and communication contexts that are meaningful to large sections of the population.

This raises some vital questions for communicators of future messages and the research they carry out about how to work within today’s cultural context:

- **Who are we talking to?** For communications and research to be effective, it must be targeted – at least at a gross level. It is most effective, too, if it is targeted at groups bound by shared values, behaviours and communications literacy, rather than by demographics. We need to work with the idea that people

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form cultural classes (Valentine and Alexander 1989) – ‘people like us’. People understand their behaviour as shaped from the inside by their own cultural values and attitudes. Desired climate friendly behaviours need to be made to feel simply like ‘the kinds of things that people like us do’ to large groupings of people.

- **How do we want people to feel?** Making desired behaviours attractive and compelling to ordinary people means using metaphor as well as more rationalistic approaches, to enable them to emotionally engage with the desired action, rather than emotionally disengaging with the problem through fear overload. We should not present ‘messages’, with the implication of rational argument and top-down persuasion. Instead, we need to work in a more shrewd and contemporary way, using subtle techniques of engagement.
- **What kind of authority can we harness?** We live in a culture where top-down authority is being systematically replaced by bottom-up or horizontal authority – where people increasingly trust other people (even those they have not met) more than governments, businesses and other institutions. This has huge implications for the way climate change needs to be tackled. Communications that emanate from authority sources and that continue to instruct, or even cajole, are likely to be less successful than those that work with this emerging dynamic.
- **What will really make people act?** We also live in a culture in which celebrity rules supreme, and in which 44 per cent of the population is ‘outer-directed’. That is, they have esteem-driven needs, seeking success, recognition and status through acquiring and displaying the ‘right’ brands, fashionable lifestyles and other goods, services and experiences (Rose *et al* 2005). Cultural Dynamics’ work indicates that the outer-directed section of the UK population offers a ripe opportunity for climate-related behaviour change. People like this want to feel special, and are accustomed to achieving this feeling through what they do and what they buy, rather than what they do not do or do not buy.
- **How can we change what constitutes ‘common sense’?** The challenge is to make climate-friendly behaviours feel normal, natural, right and ‘ours’ to large numbers of people who are currently unengaged, and on whose emotional radar the issue does not figure. The answer is not to try to change their radar but to change the issue, so it becomes something they willingly pick up, because it means something valuable in their own terms.

Inevitably, these conclusions lead us to treat climate-change communications in the same way as brand communications: we have to approach positive climate behaviours in the same way as marketeers approach acts of buying and consuming. This is the relevant context for climate change communications in the UK today – not the increasingly residual models of public service or campaigning communications. *It amounts to treating climate-friendly everyday activity as a brand that can be sold.* This is not necessarily a familiar or comfortable proposition for those engaged in campaigning or public sector work, but it is, we believe, the route to mass behaviour change.

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### *Alarmism (p13)*

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'Think of being a canoe drifting downstream, then...recognising too late that you are about to go over a waterfall'

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James Lovelock, quoted by McCarthy M (2006) 'Environment in crisis: the earth has passed the point of no return', *The Independent*, 17 January: 8

'Serious climate change is now inevitable'

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'Never before have we faced such a global threat'

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'We're heading for dodo status'

Jackson N, Bradbury A and Stanley R (2005) 'Atmosphere' *Dazed & Confused* no. 127, July: 87

#### *Settlerdom (p14)*

'It's not going to happen in my lifetime'; 'When it's a cold day they say the end of the world is coming, when it's a hot day the opposite'

The *Politics Show*, vox pop quotations, 6 February 2005

'The doom-mongers...are always coming up with contradictions'; 'Oh well, I might as well go home, stick my head in the oven, and wave this cruel world goodbye'; 'Nor is it politically correct to mention that the scientists say we are going to both freeze and boil...So which is it to be? These predictions can't both be right'

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#### *British comic nihilism (p15)*

'Global warming has a lot to answer for. According to the scare stories, by 2050 Kent's chalky hillsides will be full of luxuriant vines, the oast houses will be turned into wineries...'

Clark R (2006) 'Blighty is pick of le bunch', *Daily Telegraph*, 7 January: 8

#### *Rhetorical scepticism (p15)*

'[Anthropogenic climate change is] a massive scam based on flawed computer modelling, bad science and an anti-western ideology...a pack of lies and propaganda'; '[An artefact of] ideology, irrationality and pseudoscientific sloppiness'

Melanie Phillips quoted by Monbiot G (2006) 'The scam of global warming is that we pay others for our complacency', *The Guardian*, 17 January: 25

'[scientists have] delusions of omniscience'

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'[the Bush administration] ridicule [energy efficiency] as something only liberals, tree-huggers and sissies believe is possible or necessary'

Friedman TL (2006) 'Green is red, white and blue', *International Herald Tribune*, 7 January: 7

'As usual, the scientists have got it wrong, and only Phillips, the autodidact professor of epidemiology, meteorology and atmospheric physics, can put them right'

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*Free market protection (p16)*

'The trouble is that we would all be too impoverished to cope with the consequences'

Professor Philip Stott, quoted by Matthews R (2005) 'Is There a Sunny Side to Global Warming?', *Reader's Digest*, 12 June: 118

'In the total sum of human well-being, money spent on battling climate change could be better spent elsewhere'

Bjorn Lomborg, paraphrased by Leake J and Milne J (2006) 'The Climate of Fear', *Sunday Times*, 19 February: 15

'Even if we shut every fossil-fuel power station, crushed every car and grounded every aircraft, the Earth's climate would still continue to change'

Matthews R (2005) 'Is There a Sunny Side to Global Warming?', *Reader's Digest*, 12 June: 118

*'Expert' denial (p17)*

'...the science of global warming is not settled, not as long as different methods of measuring temperatures give conflicting answers, not as long as weather satellites and weather balloons show little if any warming in the past 25 years...'

Fred Singer S (2005) 'Ripe for change', *Guardian Unlimited*, 30 June, available at [www.guardian.co.uk/climatechange/story/0,,1517943,00.html](http://www.guardian.co.uk/climatechange/story/0,,1517943,00.html)

'The Earth's climate has always show natural variation...There is nothing to suggest that any warming we are seeing now is not part of that natural cycle'; 'Every generation has had an apocalyptic climate myth'; 'The language of climate change is becoming...religious'

Professor Richard Lindzen quoted in Leake J and Milne J (2006) 'The Climate of Fear', *Sunday Times*, 19 February: 15

*Warming is good (p17)*

'Yes, it will be warmer in the tropics, but it was probably that warm 100 million years ago in the tropics and life, though very different, was nowhere near to being extinguished'

Crowley T (2006) letter to *The Independent*, 18 January: 28

'If you could vote for a change in climate, you would always want a warmer one'

Professor Philip Stott quoted in Matthews R (2005) 'Is There a Sunny Side to Global Warming?', *Reader's Digest*, 12 June: 116

'...tropical forests and the Amazon are reported to be growing more luxuriant as CO2 levels rise'; 'Global yields of wheat and rice are expected to rise by 18 percent'

Matthews R (2005) 'Is There a Sunny Side to Global Warming?', *Reader's Digest*, 12 June: 117

*Establishment techno-optimism (p18)*

'...my vision is for 'green fossil fuels' with much of their CO2 captured and sequestered underground'; 'The resulting 'syngas'...can also be used...to produce high-quality liquid fuels'; 'Coal gasification offers a way of using coal more efficiently, cleanly and flexibly', Shell CEO Jeroen Van Der Veer (2006) 'A vision for meeting energy needs beyond oil', *Financial Times*, 25 January: 21

'The people who run these companies – they do have children, they do have grandchildren, they do live and breathe in the world'

US Energy Secretary Samuel Bodman quoted in Cornwell R (2006) 'Polluters' Summit: 'Industry will solve problem of global warming', *The Independent*, 12 January: 2

'Our plans to generate electricity will shock you'

BP press ad 2005-2006

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*Non-establishment techno-optimim (p19)*

'On the technology side I'm very optimistic. It's there. On the policy side, I'm not exactly pessimistic – but that's where the hard work needs to be done'

Marc Jaccard quoted in Sutherland J (2006) 'The ideas interview: Mark Jaccard', *The Guardian*, 31 January: 24

'Woking borough council has extensively used micro-generation methods – solar panels, small wind turbines, and a static fuel cell – together with energy efficiency measures. Both have cut carbon emissions'; 'Central government has failed to tackle climate change...The problem for environmental policy is that it is long-term'

MacGregor J (2006) 'Local government must now step into the breach', *The Guardian*, 25 January: 8

*Daniel and Goliath (p19)*

'Never doubt ... that a small number of dedicated people can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has'; 'Just £3 a month will help Greenpeace bring about change'; 'Charges against climate criminals include fraud, deception and putting the lives of millions of people at risk'

Greenpeace campaign literature

'Get Your Filthy Hands Off My Future'

Friends of the Earth, 2005

*Personal small actions (p20)*

'I can make a difference'

Energy Saving Trust ads

'There are plenty of simple ways you can do your bit against global warming and save money too'

Jones H (2006) 'Help planet and yourself', *Sunday Express*, 22 January: 38

'There are now so many ways to green your life that you've no excuse not to'

McCarthy D (2006) 'Be Greener: Secret of being a true friend of the Earth' *Independent on Sunday*, 1 January: 44

'Normalising is the crucial thing. We don't need to make recycling or bus journeys sexy. We need to make them normal'

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*Corporate small actions (p21)*

'Join the thousands of businesses saving millions of pounds on energy'; 'The Northern Ireland based grocer could expand its business thanks to savings from energy efficient refrigeration and lighting'

Talking Numbers print ad (2005)