Communicating Climate Changed Why so Difficult? - Why so Toxic?

Prof Chris Rapley CBE
University College London
christopher.rapley@ucl.ac.uk
@chrisrapley3131
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To tell a complex story make everything as simple as possible, but not simpler
Most Complex Object
Global warming stopped 16 years ago, Met Office report reveals

Graph showing tenths of a degree above and below 14°C world average

Global Temperature - simplistic
‘Vital Signs’

- **Historic Indicators** - Metrics to characterise system and its evolution - to support improved communication and dialogue with policy makers, practitioners and the public

- **Future Risk Indicators** - To inform of societal impacts - to guide mitigation and adaptation policy and actions
Climate Change Index

- Global land surface temperature anomaly
- Atmospheric CO$_2$ content
- Global mean sea level
- Arctic minimum sea ice extent
Not the Higgs
Anxiety, Fear, Loss, Grief, Guilt, Helplessness
Challenges strongly held values and beliefs - and powerful issues of identity
“My World’ - Citizens’ Concerns

9,722,465 votes for All Countries & Country Groups / All Genders / All Education Levels / Age Group (All Age Groups)

- A good education: 6,518,160
- Better healthcare: 5,517,816
- Better job opportunities: 5,423,715
- An honest and responsive government: 4,415,023
- Affordable and nutritious food: 3,980,859
- Protection against crime and violence: 3,672,487
- Access to clean water and sanitation: 3,574,592
- Support for people who can’t work: 3,270,714
- Better transport and roads: 3,183,160
- Equality between men and women: 2,918,461
- Reliable energy at home: 2,897,138
- Political freedoms: 2,784,022
- Freedom from discrimination and persecution: 2,688,825
- Protecting forests, rivers and oceans: 2,499,045
- Phone and internet access: 2,455,252
- Action taken on climate change: 1,975,999
Information Deficit
Storytelling - Engaging - Meaningful - Hopeful - Actionable
Experiential
Theatrical Experience
Museological Experience
Discussion

Debate

• Assuming there is one right answer
• Combative
• About winning
• Listening for flaws
• Defending assumptions
• Pursuing your outcome
• Asymmetries of engagement
• Entertainment

Dialogue

• Assuming others have pieces of the answer
• Collaborative
• About finding common ground
• Listening to understand
• Exploring assumptions
• Discovering new possibilities
• Seeking constructive progress
Role of Scientists

- **Pure Scientist** - generate facts and insights and deliver them to the pool of human knowledge

- **Science Arbiter** - answer factual (positive, not normative) questions about scientific output - arbitrate interpretation

- **Science Communicator** - communicate with society about results and implications directly or via intermediaries - to draw attention to issues judged important

- **Honest Broker** - engage co-productively in decision making to assist practitioners to fulfil their role

- **Informed Citizen** - actively intervene in society as informed citizen to promote dialectic based on expert knowledge and understanding