

How sensible people should talk about climate change

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Summary

- Sensible people in positions of responsibility struggle over how to talk about climate change
- Any dissent from extreme crisis rhetoric triggers blowback and controversy
- But asymmetry in the way opinions are challenged causes overall discussion to be thrown out of balance
- People who consider themselves mainstream in their views on science and economics need to learn how to articulate their position without getting cancelled in the process

Examples

- David Malpass

President, World Bank

Pressed three times, Malpass would not say whether he accepted that human-made greenhouse gas emissions had created a worsening crisis that is already leading to more extreme weather.

"I'm not a scientist," he said.

World Bank president David Malpass tries to restate views on climate change amid calls for dismissal

DAVID GELLES AND ALAN RAPPEPORT
THE NEW YORK TIMES
PUBLISHED SEPTEMBER 22, 2022



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<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/business/international-business/article-world-bank-president-david-malpass-tries-to-restore-views-on-climate/>

Examples

- Stuart Kirk

(Former) head of Responsible Investing, HSBC Asset Management

*"One of the **tragedies** of this whole debate, which we **obsess about at HSBC**, is that we **spend way too much on mitigation and financing and not enough on adaption financing.**"*



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<https://www.zerohedge.com/markets/who-cares-if-miami-underwater-100-years-hsbc-global-head-slams-nut-job-climate-alarmists>

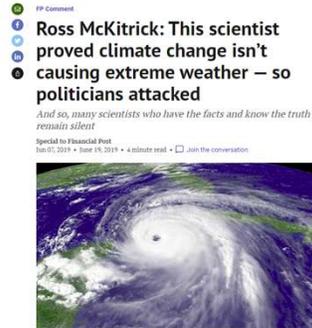
Examples

- Lisa Raitt

Former federal MP and cabinet minister

Tweeted article about Prof. Roger Pielke Jr's efforts to draw attention to IPCC findings on extreme weather

-harassed and bullied into deleting tweet & apologizing



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https://www.rossmckitrick.com/uploads/4/8/0/8/4808045/dear_lisa.pdf

Examples

- John Rustad

Former BC MLA

Retweeted Patrick Moore's tweet about absence of warming in Australia and Great Barrier Reef reaching record coral cover



Things in common

- The underlying positions were reasonable and backed up by valid evidence
- Regardless of rank or status the people expressing these views were “cancelled”, forced to recant and in some cases fired

Note the asymmetry

- People expressing extreme or fallacious views in the other direction are never challenged or cancelled

Example: President Obama, 2012

- “[w]hat we do know is the temperature around the globe is increasing **faster than was predicted** even ten years ago”



- press conference, November 14 2012, reported in *Washington Post*, 2012

IPCC (2013 ch 9): warming over past decade well below model predictions

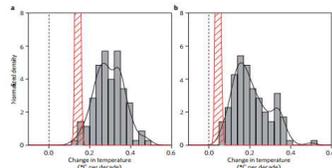


Figure 11 Trends in global mean surface temperature. a: 1979-2012, b: 1998-2012. Histograms of observed trends (red hatching) are from 100 reconstructions of the HadCRUT4 dataset. Histograms of model trends (grey bars) are based on 117 simulations of the models, and black curves are smoothed versions of the model trends. The ranges of observed trends reflect observational uncertainty, whereas the ranges of model trends reflect forcing uncertainty, as well as differences in individual model responses to external forcings and uncertainty arising from internal climate variability.

- 111 out of 114 model runs predicted more warming than observed since late 1990s
- Fyfe et al. (2013): models projected more than 4x the observed warming

https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/02/WG1AR5_Chapter09_FINAL.pdf pp. 769-772.

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu, NDP MP

• Oct 15, 2018:

Not even a month ago, six tornadoes hit the national capital region, in Hull and Ottawa. This was unprecedented, and these kinds of events are increasingly common: **earthquakes** in Haiti, **tsunamis**, flooding, forest fires in British Columbia, and I could go on.



<https://www.ourcommons.ca/DocumentViewer/en/42-1/house/sitting-334/hansard#Int-10297047>

IPCC (2012): Special report on extreme weather - tornadoes

- “Over North America, a **declining trend** in 50th and 90th percentile wind speeds has been reported for much of the United States over 1973 to 2005 (Pryor et al., 2007) and in 10-m hourly wind data over 1953-2006 over western and most of southern Canada (Wan et al., 2010).”
- “observational trends in tornadoes, hail, and lightning associated with severe convective storms are not robustly detected due to insufficient coverage of the long-term observations.”
 - Pp. 150-152



http://ipcc.ch/pdf/special-reports/srex/SREX-Chap3_FINAL.pdf p. 176

IPCC (2012): Special report on extreme weather - floods

- “In the United States and Canada during the 20th century and in the early 21st century, there is no compelling evidence for climate-driven changes in the magnitude or frequency of floods”
- “Research subsequent to the AR4 still does not show clear and widespread evidence of climate-driven observed changes in the magnitude or frequency of floods at the global level”
 - These conclusions were reaffirmed in the 2013 5th Assessment Report

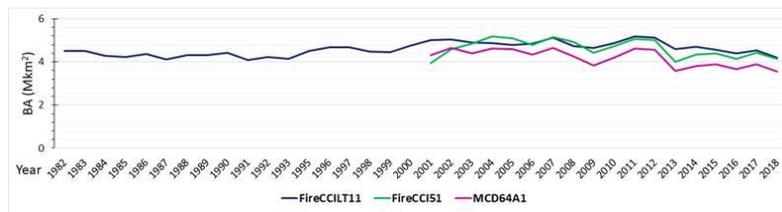


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http://ipcc.ch/pdf/special-reports/srex/SREX-Chap3_FINAL.pdf p. 176

Global forest fires

- European Space Agency: Burn area declining since 2010

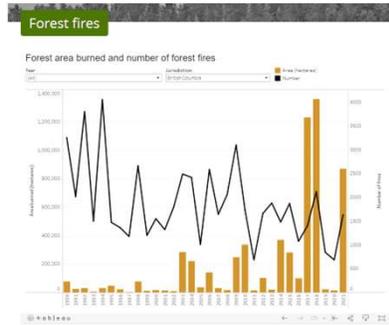


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<https://climate.esa.int/de/news-events/multi-decade-global-fire-dataset-set-support-trend-analysis/>

BC Forest Fires 1990 - 2021



- Source: National Forestry Data Base, NRCan
<http://nfdp.cfm.org/en/data/fires.php>

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<http://nfdp.cfm.org/en/data/fires.php>

Ms. Alexandra Mendes, Lib. MP

• Oct 15, 2018:

- Today, in question period, I was shocked to hear an opposition member complain about the early snowfall in Alberta and Saskatchewan that is jeopardizing cereal crops and then turn around and call for the elimination of the carbon tax. How is it that the opposition does not understand that the early snowfall in Alberta and Saskatchewan is caused by uncontrollable global warming?



<https://www.ourcommons.ca/DocumentViewer/en/42-1/house/sitting-334/hansard#Int-10297047>

Result:

- People who want to challenge the crisis rhetoric go silent
- People who want to amplify it have a clear path and compete to outdo each other
- The context for decision-making gets more and more distorted

Needed

- A strategy that enables ordinary, sensible people in positions of responsibility who dissent from the extreme catastrophe narrative to inject valid information and balanced views into the public discussion without getting blown up

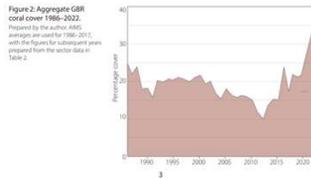


Fundamental question:

- Who has *standing* to address the issue?
- MYTH: Standing belongs to scientists, technical experts and informed observers discussing official data and peer-reviewed literature
 - All examples of “cancellation” involved well-informed people citing competent authorities, credentialed scientists and official data

E.g.: Rustad on Great Barrier Reef

- Australian Institute of Marine Science 2020/21 survey
- Aggregated by marine physicist Dr. Peter Ridd:



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https://www.aims.gov.au/sites/default/files/2022-08/AIMS_LTMP_Report_on%20GBR_coral_status_2021_2022_040822F3.pdf
<https://www.thegwpf.org/content/uploads/2022/08/Ridd-Record-Coral-GBR.pdf>

Narrative-based Standing

- When standing to comment is determined by adherence to an approved narrative rather than qualifications or knowledge, even when the narrative originates in activist community, not from scientists or policy experts
- In this situation an untrained person who adheres to the narrative is accorded higher standing than a qualified person who dissents
- Likewise untrue statements that amplify the narrative are never challenged, while true statements that contradict it are denounced

How does this situation arise

- When important public policy decisions hinge on complex scientific questions
- Policymakers turn to science bureaucracy to organize scientific advice
- But the incentives in policy context are very different from those in academic literature
 - Need for “nice tidy consensus”
 - Non-adversarial by construction
 - Reflects need to amplify authoritativeness

Non-adversarial

- Unlike courtrooms with adversarial representation, cross-examination, appeal processes etc
- Typically led by like-minded lead authors who limit the consideration of alternative points of view
- IPCC review process allows authors final say on their own material

Oriented to needs of policymakers

- IPCC Summaries are drafted by government representatives under requirement that “statements are as direct, clear and unambiguous as possible in summarizing the material contained in the corresponding Working Group Assessment Report or Special Report.”
- Afterwards the underlying report can be rewritten as “necessary to ensure consistency with the Summary for Policymakers” – these edits are not subject to Expert Review
- Anchoring bias: Positions get synchronized across agencies: E.g. ECCC, EPA etc. rely on IPCC reports to avoid being an outlier

https://archive.ipcc.ch/news_and_events/docs/factsheets/FS_ipcc_approve.pdf

Amplified scientific standing

- Bureaucratic advisors given status out of proportion to their academic standing

Amplified scientific standing

- Bureaucratic advisors given status out of proportion to their academic standing
- E.g. Rajendra Pachauri “world’s top climate scientist”
 - PhD in mechanical engineering and economics
 - Briefly worked in railway modeling before becoming an administrator
 - No academic publications in climate science



Results

- Politicians and activists obtain a risk-free path when invoking and amplifying the narrative
 - Appeal to authority
- But on the other hand:
 - Even biased processes like the IPCC have to report on the data and summarize the relevant science.
 - Much gets buried in the reports and kept out of the Summaries
 - Narrative-enforcers rarely look past the summaries

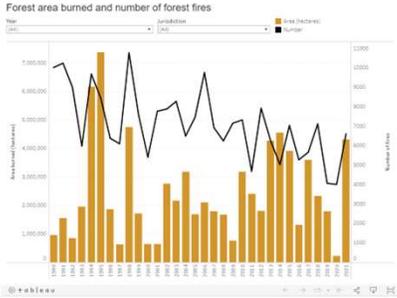
Turning to strategy

- Sensible people ...
 - Should base their views and statements on what the reports say, not on the third-hand summaries of summaries
 - They should get tutored on important details of mainstream climate science and economics that don't support the Catastrophe Narrative or Net Zero agenda

Check the sources and the numbers

- E.g.: Environment Minister Catherine McKenna, Oct 15 2018, HoC debate
 - “We have seen forest fires that are burning longer and brighter than ever. We have seen floods. We have seen droughts.”
- No one checked whether these statements were valid

Fires, floods and droughts



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<http://nfdp.ccfm.org/en/data/fires.php>

Fires, floods and droughts

Extreme Precipitation:

Environment and Climate Change Canada *Canada's Changing Climate Report* (2019, p. 119):

“Extreme precipitation is also projected to increase in the future, although the observational record [for Canada] has not yet shown evidence of consistent changes in short-duration precipitation extremes across the country.”

IPCC 6th Assessment Report WG1 Ch 11 p. 55:

“In Canada, there is a lack of detectable trends in observed annual maximum daily (or shorter duration) precipitation (Shephard et al., 2014; Mekis et al., 2015; Vincent et al., 2018).”

https://www.nrcan.gc.ca/sites/www.nrcan.gc.ca/files/energy/Climate-change/pdf/CCCR_FULLREPORT-EN-FINAL.pdf

<https://www.ipcc.ch/report/sixth-assessment-report-working-group-i/>

Fires, floods and droughts

Extreme Precipitation:

IPCC AR6 (2021 Ch. 11 page 78) on droughts:

“There are only two AR6 regions in which there is at least *medium confidence* that human-induced climate change has contributed to changes in meteorological droughts (Section 11.9)... South-western South America [and] Northern Europe... **In other AR6 regions, there is inconclusive evidence in the attribution of long-term trends, but a human contribution to single meteorological events or subregional trends has been identified in some instances...**”

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<https://www.ipcc.ch/report/sixth-assessment-report-working-group-i/>

The point is...

- If you build your position on the contents of the major assessment reports and the mainstream scientific and economic literature, you will end up with a non-catastrophic view
- It takes a willingness to get tutored and to learn how to articulate the information

What should David Malpass have said?

- *My views on this matter are guided by the findings of mainstream scientists and experts as summarized in reports like the ones produced by the IPCC scientific panel. They do not use words like “crisis” or “emergency” or “catastrophe” to describe what is happening and I also prefer to avoid that kind of terminology.*
- *Over the past century the warming we have experienced has been small and has not prevented great advances in our standard of living. I expect that over the coming century the effects of warming on most economic sectors will continue to be small compared to the many other challenges the world will face. These are the kinds of things we need to keep in mind when engaging in long term policy planning and priority-setting.*



When the critics pounce...

- Word searches in IPCC reports: “catastrophe”, “emergency” etc. don’t show up.
- IPCC economic assessment on the 21st century:
 - **For most economic sectors, the impact of climate change will be small relative to the impacts of other drivers.** Changes in population, age, income, technology, relative prices, lifestyle, regulation, governance, and many other aspects of socioeconomic development will have an impact on the supply and demand of economic goods and services that is large relative to the impact of climate change.

Source: IPCC 5th Assessment Report Working Group Chapter 10.
https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/02/WGIIAR5-Chap10_FINAL.pdf

https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/02/WGIIAR5-Chap10_FINAL.pdf

What about the SR1.5?

- The basis of many inaccurate claims that “scientists” have told us we have to radically cut emissions by 2030 and move to Net Zero
- But they didn’t make such recommendations, which require comparing costs and benefits of policy plans.
- They specifically ruled out doing cost-benefit analysis:
 - “Thus standard cost–benefit analyses become difficult to justify (IPCC, 2014a; Dietz et al., 2016) and are **not used as an assessment tool** in this report.”
 - SR1.5 p. 76 (emphasis added)

<https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/>

In general

- Identify the point you are aiming to make and then make it using the authority which the other side thinks they rely on themselves, e.g. IPCC and ECCC reports

Examples

- Stuart Kirk:
 - Quote the IPCC AR5 WG2 conclusion
 - point out that Nordhaus' Nobel Prize-winning economic analysis does not support trying to stop warming or hitting a 1.5C target, it only recommends eliminating the lowest-value CO2 emissions and otherwise adapting to the remaining climate changes

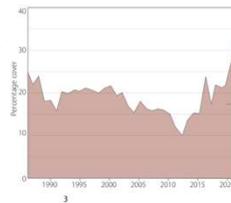
Examples

- Lisa Raitt should have said:
 - *People keep citing the increased risk of extreme weather (floods, droughts, hurricanes, tornadoes, etc) due to climate change as the reason we need more aggressive climate policy. I can't find page references in IPCC reports to support this. Any suggestions?*
- (And when the trolls attack, just keep demanding the page numbers.)

Examples

- John Rustad should have said:
 - *According to Australian govt data, Great Barrier Reef coral cover has hit a 30-year high. This is good news and opposite of the predictions that climate change would destroy the reef*

Figure 2: Aggregate GBR coral cover 1986-2022. Prepared by the author. AIMS averages are used for 1986-2017, with the figures for subsequent years prepared from the sector data in Table 2.



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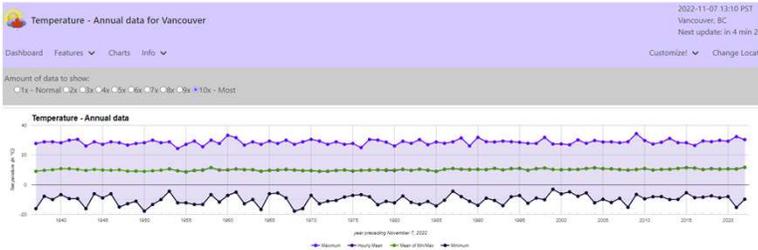
Conclusions

- Sensible people in positions of responsibility who are obliged to discuss the climate topic and want to dial down the extremism often find that trying to do so leads to eruptions of controversy and cancellation
- The problem of *narrative-based standing* turns normal rules of discussion upside-down
- But it also creates a large gap between what people think the expert reports say and what they actually say

Conclusions

- If you are going to help move the dominant narrative back to the mainstream you need to know the details better than those who endorse the narrative
- In the case of climate change many activists and politicians appear not to know what is in the reports they presume to rely on
- Base your views on what mainstream science and economics says and you will end up dissenting from the climate crisis narrative, but the activists won't be in a position to attack you for it

Good luck



<https://vancouver.weatherstats.ca/charts/temperature-yearly.html>

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<https://vancouver.weatherstats.ca/>