



Mediating Change; Culture and Climate Change

Publics: Culture, Democracy and Climate Change

Quentin Cooper

Hello. We may be recording this as winter looms but actually it's very warm, balmy, sweaty sticky even. Around me are all sorts of plants that even ten years ago you would never have seen growing here. It's beyond doubt, beyond argument that the climate has changed and that it is entirely our doing. Or at least it is here in the entirely man made Mediterranean Biome at the Eden Project in Cornwall, which a decade ago was still being built. We - and I'll get on to who 'we' is in a minute - are here in front of a select audience for the second of four discussions on different aspects of cultural responses to our changing climate. The grand plan is that these mediating change discussions will help to build a framework for thinking about and improving these responses, making them more involving, more wide reaching, maybe even more effective. This time round our focus, and we will try to stay focused even with this panel it may not be easy, is on popular culture, making a splash in the mainstream. Movies and plays, TV drama and comedy, new programmes and documentaries, public art and museums, stand up and anything else that can reach out beyond the likely to be like minded, to engage with the wider public, even the ones who say they are sick to death of hearing about climate change.

In the 1967 Hammer version of Nigel Kneale's Quatermass and the Pit, Professor Quatermass asks his archaeologist friend 'If we found that our earth was doomed, say by climatic changes, what would we do about it?' The archaeologist replies 'Nothing, just go on squabbling as usual'. That prescient exchange is by some margin the earliest reference I'm aware of to climate change in something that reached a mass audience, not only anticipating what would take a few decades to become a global issue but anticipating our fudged and fumbled response to it as well. Fast forward to now and you will find plenty of mainstream references to climate change or more often to global warming. But now filter out the ones that are just using it for a topical reference or a cheap gag. What's left that genuinely raises awareness, changes attitudes or alters behaviours and what more can and should artists, writers, performers and other creatives do within popular culture to address this most pressing of planetary problems?

Now there is lots more I could say but I'm going to leave the bulk of the talking to our panel.

With me are Tim Smit – palindrome – Co-Founder and Chief Executive of the Eden Project. Creative Producer Vicky Long who specialises in developing cultural work related to climate

change. Comedian Marcus Brigstocke, or more accurately comedian who does quite a bit about the environment in and beyond his routines. And Joe Smith, Senior Lecturer in Environment at the Open University and consultant on media and environment.

Tim Smit, I'll start with you since we're on metaphorically and literally home soil. This demi paradise Eden that we find ourselves in, it's just coming up for its tenth anniversary and of course it's now associated as a beacon of sustainability of greenness, of approaches to climate change but back when you were planning it presumably that was much lower down in the public consciousness. So how has it evolved to become part of this and how would you have done things differently if climate change had been the issue then it is now?

Tim Smit CBE

Well we came at it from the point of view of the environment in the widest sense being the most important issue and wanting to connect people back to realising they were dependent or rather inter-dependent on the natural world, because I think a lot of people were seeing the natural world as being something apart from us. We wanted to be the world's first rock and roll scientific foundation because we were really fed up with hearing an awful lot of intelligent people talking to a lot of other intelligent people about their own prejudices rather than addressing the people who weren't interested in environmental issues. So for us the issue of what we would have done differently is a moot point because I'm not sure we would have done very much differently. In fact, because the story evolved, and I think what we are going to find is that the climate change story is going to deconstruct again away from the word climate change because people can't get round climate change and go back towards breaking it into its constituent building blocks that led to climate change, so that people can feel they have some agency if you like over being able to effect a change, because I don't think any of us feel realistically we can do anything about it as a global umbrella title but I think we can do a heck of a lot if we have a new narrative which is about putting the little bits that build up the constituent parts together.

Quentin Cooper

So you are almost suggesting that what we can do in terms of popular culture and climate change is largely frighten people about those two words but if we actually break it down as to what climate change will cause and what we can do about it then we have a better chance of success?

Tim Smit

Absolutely. When I go and talk there's usually one clever clogs who stands up at the end of question time who says I think you're an agent of the so and so and climate change isn't happening blah, blah, blah. And you have then got a choice as to whether you are going to have a stand up argument with the guy where you exchange your prejudices with his. It's

always a guy, never a woman for some reason. And, but the way to disarm people like that is to very sweetly say 'Do you agree that we are not living as easily with the weft and weave of nature as we could be?' And they always go 'Yes, I do agree with that.' And then you can say, 'Well we can be friends then.'

Quentin Cooper

Do you think you have more chance of actually reaching that kind of sceptic – and I think the latest statistics are that something like forty per cent of the British public still claim to be sceptical about climate change – do you have more chance of reaching them through something like Eden because they may come through the doors than something would do that was a climate change play or a climate change TV programme that might actually self select an audience who was already predisposed to those issues?

Tim Smit

If I was being honest, yeah, because I think lots of people I meet who talk about climate change bore the hell out of me. Really they come across –

Quentin Cooper

We'll try not to today

Tim Smit

No – but you get all this hair shirt thing. You're going to have to give this up. You're going to have to give that up. We're going to – you know, to be resilient, we've got to do less, less, less. I think the idea is to actually show people that life can be lived joyously and fully and that the challenges that are being thrown at us for the first time for our generation are worth actually facing up to. I think it's rather fun. It should be viewed as fun rather than 'Oh my God, we're doomed'.

Quentin Cooper

Joe Smith - is this a problem that's only got worse down the years the more people, quite legitimately with the statistics, with the figures, with the scientific research, try and draw attention to climate change and the consequences and what we need to do, the more they are seen as doom mongers, hair shirt purveyors, frighteners, paralyzers, rather than a potential agent for change?

Dr. Joe Smith

Well I ought to offer the glass half full version first. In the period since the Quatermass film was made we have gone from climate change being a seminar room conversation among a few dozen people to being an idea, a weird abstract idea that the things we do every day affect the global climate. That's been accepted by sixty to seventy per cent of the population,

in the developed world. And that's an amazing achievement. That's an achievement particularly of the science and policy community. It's an achievement of specialist journalists, who've I think told the story pretty effectively. Where I agree with Tim thoroughly is that we tended to tell a story about the future of our response to this wholly in terms of fear and denial of things. So, the forty per cent of people that actually we need to draw with us to build a working majority, they didn't arrive at the beginning of the twenty first century expecting to be rationed and that's a question, when you begin to move out of developing – developed world countries and have international negotiations, actually you've got a lot of people in the south who absolutely think that fridge's, access to cars and so on is part of the plot for them in the twenty first century. So, I think the fear and personal denial story is not going to be able to build substantial action on the topic.

Quentin Cooper

Marcus, how do we get round this problem? If you have a TV programme about the environment, if you have a play that is about climate change, if you have an article that is about sustainability that a lot of the people who you most want to reach with that will turn the channel, turn the page, turn their mind away from it.

Marcus Brigstocke

For me that's what's at the core of what's most difficult about discussing climate change and sustainability in the work that I do. I could have quite easily by now written a two hour stand up show about climate change but there is absolutely no point because the only people who would come and see it already agree with me. So the approach I've taken is to sort of drip feed it into everything that I do whenever I'm on the radio or doing a stand up show on any subject, or sketches, or whatever else is to just try and keep it in there just a little bit. And people are on to me, it's no slight of hand, they know what to expect when I appear, wherever I appear. But I do think that it sort of crosses that divide. I think to be honest one of the most effective ways of bridging that gap is to get the right people involved, people who are perhaps a little bit unexpected. There was a film that Leonardo DiCaprio made called The Eleventh Hour, which wasn't really any good. I mean it was fine, nothing wrong with it. It wasn't brilliant but it was fine. But for me it was a really exciting thing, because I thought there are a lot of people who are just going to watch this because Leonardo DiCaprio is in it and he's not only an extremely good actor, he, I think, is fairly ornamental to look at. And so you know people would be inclined to watch that and I think that's a good thing. I think that the more in the celebrity sort of culture that we have the more you can engage people who it makes you go 'Oh, oh right, well I didn't know - well if they take it seriously perhaps I will as well.' I think that's a way of bridging that gap. But you can't convince people of something that they don't wish to be convinced of. You just can't do it. And I think, I don't know, I mean for me in terms of creating comedy one of the easiest routes has been to mock the people who think that it's not happening because personally I find them easily mock-able. They will say a great deal

but when questioned they haven't read anything. And for me to get laughs, what's been more challenging has been to try and take the idea of sustainability and sort of 'green living', for want of better expressions, and try to express the positives in it, and how much I've enjoyed it.

Quentin Cooper

Okay. So since you've talked about positives, before we go any further let's try and talk about the successes in this area, things not necessarily directly on climate change but to do with sustainability, any environmental and greens that have used popular culture and reached an audience that wasn't just already of that mind. Vicky –

Vicky Long

I think I've been very fortunate to work with a really broad range of artists on climate change and I think really imagination has a big role to play. We need to grab the public's imagination on this subject and I think artists have a role to play in that. Yann Martel has talked about climate change being an impersonal force that's deeply disempowering and I think that –

Quentin Cooper

Yann Martell, who did Life of Pi.

Vicky Long

And what he says is that in contrast to that impersonal force that climate change is, art and the making of art is personally involving for the artist and for the spectator. And so I think in working with artists and making exhibitions films, events, working with places like the Eden Project we've been able to really bring people in, involve them in the subject and can reach their bloodstream in some way. It's been very exciting. I mean all of the work I've done over the last five years I see as an experiment. I don't think there is any magic answer to what works and what doesn't work - what will be successful. But the experiment has been very vital and interesting and I think there have been many successes along the way.

Quentin Cooper

You say there isn't any magic formula but after five years of experience aren't there things that we can at least learn and extrapolate and say actually we are better to focus over here than we are over there

Vicky Long

I think it's really about bringing people together and involving them. So I think a mixed offer works. If for example at the Eden Project we have a comic, a musician, a scientist, we have an installation, a piece of visual work. I think that really works because there is something that just about near everybody can relate to and become involved in.

Quentin Cooper

You're not meaning come for the comedy stay for the science? You're meaning more than that.

Vicky Long

I think people will come – as Tim says – come to the Eden project to be at the Eden Project and what Cape Farewell has done is to create events here - I've worked for the Cape Farewell project over the last five years

Quentin Cooper

Which is an arts science engagement with climate change organisation?

Vicky Long

It works with quite a mongrel group of artists and brings them into contact with climate scientists, and then the group at the centre of Cape Farewell works with those artists to produce work, and closely with partners like Eden Project, Southbank Centre, the British Council -

Quentin Cooper

Tim – same questions for you and don't necessarily answer in terms of successes at Eden

Tim Smit

Well I think what we are talking about in terms of culture is fundamentally important to give us permission to act in a different way; to create a mandate for politicians, public servants, individuals, to get behind a new vision of what the future is and well that sounds like a pretentious sentence. I happen to believe that we are living at a time which a hundred years from now could be seen as the dawning of something as important as the Renaissance. If we can buy into the fact that we can take agency over our futures rather than our passive flotsam and jetsam on the top of it. But before you can have a situation where - just dream a little - where say, the current government decides it's going to radically transform the budgets it has and to go with a single minded-ness that would have, if you like, the urgency of a war effort, to become completely energy independent on renewables. If you just took one particular thing, the only way they could get a mandate for that would not be as an example simply of a response to climate change, because of the way that everything is monetised in our world intellectually, it would have to be to do with, we could also as a tribe get advantage through actually this brave, bold effort to show that we have actually understood first the rhythms of the earth and we are responding to them. And that's why art has such an incredibly powerful role to play to create if you like the wall paper around the rooms in which the thinking is done to give people the bravery to make that leap because it feels the right thing. And I think also it

somehow needs to project onto those who are opinion makers and decision makers the sense that they are at a moment in history where if they do not have the bravery to make decisions or take public opinion that way they will be found wanting. You are living at a time when you could actually harness something brilliant in us which is aspirational and that it will say something about who we are right now. That's the way to go. Not 'We're doomed, we're polluting the oceans.' Whether that's true or not, that's not an inspiration for change. The idea that through your own agency and linking up with others you suddenly become tens, hundreds, thousands, millions of people, you can actually affect – that's one of the beauties of modern communication is that you can create an atmosphere and persuasive proposition to a huge audience in a very short period of time.

Quentin Cooper

Can you give me some actual concrete examples if concrete is not the wrong word to use in these circumstances of things that you think have worked, actual genuine successes?

Marcus –

Marcus Brigstocke

We're sitting in one obviously and we've touched on it already but the thing that really blew me away was when I got over to the gallery over there and saw what this used to be and that it was a dead clay pit. It was this great big hole in the ground and now look at it. I think it's astonishing. This is quite an easy thing in a sense to get hold of when you look at it as a visitor. But at the moment I'm finding, because they've got these, they're not free but very cheap, bikes to rent in London, it's a question of what you are willing to define as art and culture. People cycling around London on bikes sponsored by Barclays Bank is not necessarily art but it's altogether visually more appealing than people sitting, swearing and sweating in their cars. And so I do see that and I live in London where people live stacked up on top of each other and actually I see a lot of very positive changes there. I see more and more people on bicycles, not perhaps as many as there are dropping their children off at school in a Sherman Tank. But nonetheless, there are things to get hold of – simple things like the pedestrianisation of Trafalgar Square and various other bits of London where people are walking around. I think there is a lot to get hold of and there are a lot of successes and a lot of examples where you can be hugely encouraged.

Quentin Cooper

Joe, if we are talking about successes do we also have to factor in the news media may not be doing exactly what the environmental movement would like but we have seen climate change as you say shift from being a very obscure term to something we all know roughly what it means.

Joe Smith

In news media we can find some examples. But actually day in day I think out it's wrong to finger editors and journalists on the topic first. I think you've got to go a bit further upstream of the story and it's an incredibly ambitious intellectual question: how do we make sense of human beings place in the world and their possible influence on the atmosphere? Now actually, almost all of the people who have any claim to authoritative knowledge on those questions agree that humans are changing the climate almost certainly in hazardous ways. But we have to be slightly more honest about that being a long and uncertain journey intellectually. So when we try and communicate that in popular culture – I'll give you two big examples of films made five or six years ago, both influential, and one of them I view as a hit and one of them I view as a miss. So Al Gore's Inconvenient Truth spends a hundred and fifty eight minutes bashing you over the head with phrases like 'The science is finished', very assertive. And then spends two minutes with a lot of Second World War references about 'Come on guys we can do it together.' You know, 'We will change six billion light bulbs' and so on. I think that actually set up a whole set of hazards for the environment policy and science community, particularly the political community. But contrast the Al Gore film with a pair of documentaries made by the BBC at about the same time. They were fronted by David Attenborough, universally loved and trusted. It was important that he presented himself as having taken a journey with the topic and arrived at a conclusion that it's clear that on the balance of evidence we should act on it. The second really important thing was they threw lots of money at design in the production so they really worked hard to try to bring to life the idea that the carbon we generate in everyday life is tangible. They made graphic carbon blocks that would appear above the household of a typical American family. In the second part it was all about actually how you would take those carbon blocks out of the sky without damaging the quality of life of that American family. So there was an even balance where Al Gore had offered a hundred and fifty eight minutes of 'grimathon'. The second film had a much more even balance, a much more compelling case. I would say that we need to focus on that. Where would we go now, and those films were made a few years ago? Well, I kind of want to scale up that second message and really push much harder at the questions like – and this is something that comedy and drama as well as the factual people can do a good job of - really push at the question of what have we won from sixty years of a really hearty carbon burn? What have we won in terms of relationship breakdown, relations between generations, the quality of life day in day out in a city or in a town or in a village? Actually we know instinctively that we've pumped all this stuff out of the ground and into the atmosphere and actually won very little in terms of advances in quality of life. So it's not saying, 'Right, what do we have to give up when we turn off the carbon tap?' It's rather saying 'Right, as we get smart about energy, how can we do a much better job of winning a better quality of life?'

Quentin Cooper

Marcus - another aspect of those documentaries that Joe's talking about is I think they were the first ones to be shown in peak time in the United States that actually dealt with

environmental issues. Even when he made his series Blue Planet, when they showed it in the United States they initially just dumped the programme that dealt with the environmental issues at the end and showed all the nice pretty ones about the animals. Is that the difficulty, that the mainstream - when you actually get to the right platform there is this reluctance to give the time to do it or if you are allowed to do it you are labelled and judged as being from an environmental background so there is that risk of 'Oh he would say that, because of who he is'?

Marcus Brigstocke

That is exactly the problem. But that actually, not just the explicit documentary that David Attenborough made about climate change and his journey and all the rest of it, but you know looking at the pretty animals and fish and all the rest of it on Blue Planet and Life on Earth and all the rest of it, that's exactly the positive message in terms of I think trying to reconnect people with the fairly small planet that we all share. That's the good stuff. And I think it's better to be, I don't think they're deliberately oblique, I just think they do a better job than anything explaining because you can't really talk about climate change without touching at least on the idea that this is very important and very urgent because life as we know it will change very, very dramatically. You know you sort of can't do it. So I think to just try and engage people in more creative ways in what the solutions might be is better. I think there is an appetite for that. It's just a question of whether it also needs at the same time for programmes to be made that say look we've really got to do this now. I mean it's bizarre just looking at the news coverage of it how this was a – sustainability, climate change all the rest of it - was a big political subject until the economic crash and then it disappeared. It went absolutely. And it's not really re-emerged yet as part of the kind of narrative of what politics is. It's just gone.

Quentin Cooper

That sort of sense that 'Oh, climate change - that was a 2007 story' –

Marcus Brigstocke

Yeah, that definitely exists and that's an extraordinary idea that it was something we did for a little while and wasn't it interesting and 'Oh, we all gave ourselves a bit of a scare where that's concerned'. I mean it often comes up when I get into a battle with someone who hasn't read enough about it. They will say, 'Well, I mean the last one was that hole in the Ozone layer wasn't it and they said that was going to be awful and then it went away'. Well largely speaking, if it has properly gone away, isn't it because we acted on it? You know there was a problem. We found a solution. We did it. And it seems to have worked.

Quentin Cooper

In fact that is a positive message, that you can say if you have concerted global action you can actually make a difference.

Marcus Brigstocke

Yes

Quentin Cooper

I wonder is there a lesson that all the different art forms can almost learn from comedy, because I'm guessing part of being a comedian is you are nimble enough that you just don't deliver the same material audience to audience night by night? You adapt what you do. The same themes might be in there but there is a bit of flexibility. You feel who you are talking to. And do we need to do that when we are talking about climate change as sustainability – pitch it differently to different ages, different groups, different sections of the public?

Marcus Brigstocke

I tweak it a lot and it's interesting for me when I talk in my shows about lots of subjects. Theology is a good one because you'd think that would be very divisive and upset people. Not nearly as much as talking about climate change does. My audience divides into three groups at that point where there's 'It's not happening at all and even if it was there's nothing we can do about it'. Then there's 'It's definitely happening. It's all our fault and we feel ghastly about it'. And then there's everybody in between who are sort of 'Yes, we think this probably is happening and Oh God!' - you know. And so none of those groups are particularly comfortable about laughing about climate change, the environment, sustainability, whatever you want to call it which is exactly why I am perversely interested in it. I enjoy that. Dealing with that thing where people feel exposed and feel that they are being asked to do something.

You know I mean a simple ice breaker thing that I nearly always do when I talk about it in the show is say 'Who here has got eco bulbs in their house?' and most people put their hands up, some of them very quickly because they want others to know that they've got eco bulbs in their house. And then say 'Good, so you like me spend the first ten minutes in every room in complete darkness'. And acknowledge the fact that some of these things are a bit sort of they're not difficult or hard but they are just a bit weird and they take a little bit of getting used to.

Tim Smit

I think what's actually happened to far too many people in the environment movement is that we have been bought out and that one of the biggest betrayers actually by default is yourself – not you personally but the BBC for example. Let me give you a completely different story about David Attenborough who I adore and I think ought to get a sainthood, but when was the last time you saw a human being in a David Attenborough film? It's as if the world and the

natural world is apart from us. Your own rules at the BBC for equality of access is the opposite view. This created the most incredibly beige betrayal of our culture, to give everybody an equal voice regardless of a million people know the world is not flat and one person thinks it is flat. We've got to give equal balance –

Quentin Cooper

I think that's a general media thing. It happens in the papers and other TV and radio as well as the BBC I think –

Tim Smit

Yeah sure but –

Quentin Cooper

But it is part of the problem I think –

Tim Smit

I wasn't singling out the BBC but there is an actual huge lack of courage you know that whole stuff about Bernard Shaw you know 'The world needs to be changed by unreasonable people because reasonable people bend themselves to it'. It's true - you see it everywhere.

Quentin Cooper

Vicky – we talked here about the difficulty of being perceived as an artist too closely associated with climate change but of course you work with some artists who almost willingly embrace that term. Is that difficult for them to be, or are they so happy to say 'This is the biggest issue facing our planet today? I'm an artist. I have no choice but to try and address it through my work.'

Vicky Long

Well actually, I work with artists who don't work mostly on climate change or haven't worked on climate change until they've come into contact with the projects I've been involved in. And what I've found is that through the experience that we give them, bringing them into contact with climate science, on a journey mostly - so I've worked on the Cape Farewell project where we take artists on a boat to the Arctic but we've also visited the Andes in Peru and trekked there –

Quentin Cooper

These are artists and scientists so they can see the science as well.

Vicky Long

Together, that's right. That gives them a very direct route into the science of climate change. And people change on those journeys and there's something about creating at the same time an environment in which people can come together, talk, share ideas, hatch new ideas, that just changes somebody and changes what they want to do with their practice and where they actually are in the world. And there is something very important also about giving people a story to tell. So it's not just about the work that you then go and do but it's the story that comes with that. And I think that good ideas and work travel on the wings of a good story.

Quentin Cooper

Joe, we've just heard from Tim about the problems of the media notion of balance, that if a thousand scientists think there is overwhelming evidence for climate change and you can find one that says well I'm not so sure then that is reported in that way. Do we just have to accept that is the way the media works? It is not the job of the environmental movement to change the way the media is and this is a consequence, a positive consequence if you like of this story moving from the periphery into the mainstream, that it will get that kind of treatment and the green washing and the green bashing that comes with it?

Joe Smith

Well I think there was a period of a couple of years in the run up to Copenhagen where editors and journalists took, I think you know, a broadly accepted line in the science policy community that climate change is a problem and humans must address it. And that built up, kind of you know, like an infection in editors and journalists. They resented some sense of being enrolled in what seemed to be some kind of soft left agenda because of the nature of the things you have to do if you are going to take climate change seriously. Yes, you're enrolled into a body of things that do imply action. So I think actually this infection built up and they were really looking for an opportunity to lance it and there is still a sense of 'Well, you know, actually climate change - we're through that. We're on to another story now.'

But I'd like to suggest there is a slight difference between climate and weather. We need to understand this is intellectual weather that we've just suffered and the long-term signals are the thing to focus on. And the long term signals are that actually I think we are really bedding down an acknowledgement in culture quite widely but also in news culture climate change is a serious issue that we will have to face at some time. I'm surprised and deeply disappointed that we didn't review the economic crisis as an opportunity to rethink the economy in ways that would add the environment into our accounts. We've missed the boat and I would say that's a measure of something very important which is that popular culture around environmental change lacks a political culture and I don't mean one that agrees with itself. This is something where we need to make space for a really vigorous debate but the one thing they all have to agree on is we must account for biodiversity in our household and national accounts. We must give carbon a price that allows us to be energy intelligent.

After that, we don't know how we are going to make that journey. I think environmental researchers have failed to focus on that problem and I think the short cuts we took in the first decade of the twentieth century we are going to pay for, for a little while. But while we are paying for them let's think hard about how we make more space for a kind of vigorous political culture around those issues. Mostly that's going to have to happen in the kind of factual realm, it's going to happen in news. But actually we didn't work out some of the trickier social questions of the late twentieth century in those spaces. Comedy and drama were really important to how families were rethought. Ethnicity, gender – some really big topics in society. That didn't really happen in the news or factual space. Comedy and drama kind of helped us work it out and then we worked it out at kitchen tables and in pubs.

Quentin Cooper

Marcus, as Joe was just articulating in some detail, trying to get the mainstream media, popular culture to engage with issues around climate change is complicated, it's nuanced, it's multifactorial. But for the climate deniers sometimes it seems actually it's much simpler and they can make little mocking comments. They can tell you - you don't need to do anything. They can be very reassuring. They can get the quick laugh. Is the game almost skewed in their favour?

Marcus Brigstocke

Well Top Gear is the most successful programme that the BBC makes, which really genuinely makes me want to hang myself from the top of this biome as a sort of protest. But it's immensely successful and it thrives on exactly that. You know Jeremy Clarkson looking straight into the camera going 'and it only does twenty miles to the gallon'. And that's sort of a badge of pride because it's an 'up yours' to the environmental movement. It sort of flies in the face of, and it feels a bit dangerous and you know and it's really easy to do.

Quentin Cooper

And if also you're told that the world is a scary place and you have to be responsible, having fun becomes all the more appealing.

Marcus Brigstocke

Yes exactly. But what I do think is interesting about the cultural response is that we are more often exposed to advertising than we are to what I would call explicit works of art. Most advertising that we see and the stuff that you don't think you've seen is even better. And it's genius. And there's so much from that I think we can be encouraged by and one of the things, perversely, that I think we should be hugely encouraged by is the success of bottled water. When you think about it, right, in the UK there isn't anywhere where you can't drink the tap water. There are one or two buildings where the link between what's available in the taps might get dirty in the pipes in a building but there isn't anywhere where you can't drink the tap

water and yet we buy in plastic bottles something that's much more expensive than petrol. When petrol goes up by a penny it makes the news. They've convinced us to buy water from the Alps, which you'd be very hard pressed to tell the difference between that and tap water. But we do it. We do it all the time. And so the success of marketing has worked on us. Now if the environmental movement managed somehow to harness that, to embrace that and get people to do something which seems from where we are now crazy to a lot of people, but it's nuts that we buy bottled water. It's absolutely insane. I think there's a lot of encouragement to be taken from that.

Quentin Cooper

So you take hope from human malleability and susceptibility to marketing, that we can - even if we don't understand the reasons - be made to change our behaviour?

Marcus Brigstocke

Absolutely.

Quentin Cooper

We are rapidly running out of time and there's a couple of things I think I ought to bring in before we end. Joe, we've not really said anything about new media, that's making a huge difference isn't it? A blogger can suddenly have as much influence as a columnist, a video can go viral in minutes and be seen by millions?

Joe Smith

Well if you described to me a medium that was almost free to enter and allowed diverse public debate across the planet and that could cover environmental change around ten years ago I would have said 'Fantastic, just the job'. Of course one of the things we've seen is that disproportionately to their kind of legitimate authority, sceptics of climate change or deniers or contrarians - I probably prefer the last term - have had a field day and they've had an impact on mainstream media out of all proportion and that's actually a serious problem because there are influential chunks of populations, particularly young people, who are increasingly grazing for their content across these ranging plains and that is turning into a serious problem. So, how do you recover the sense that it's an opportunity? Well I would say it does require a change of frame. A change of thinking about this set of problems and I would say, starting from accepting and promoting the idea that we are on a difficult and uncertain journey. We've got the potential to take everyone to a better place than we are now. It's a good medium for that.

Quentin Cooper

Tim briefly – you’ve made good use of the Web here at Eden. Do you think it's a positive thing or as Joe’s indicated there is also the risk that there are so many messages so many streams that people will make their own narratives up and they will graze between them?

Tim Smit

I think a lot of it is background noise. I think it identifies quite embarrassingly to what degree we are all sheep because the supposed opening up of democracy through the Web often indicates that people just don’t want to be different to everybody else so they will just accept something without question. I’m hopeful for the Web in a way but it's not – I don’t think it's particularly exciting yet. I think what we are missing here is climate change is a terrible title. Global warming is a terrible title. I think we should stop talking about climate change in the way we do. I think we've got to look for the battles we can win and by winning odd battles and then seeing how the quality of life is better for everybody - don’t even mention to the people that – deniers or anything that it's an effort against them. I think we've got to be careful it doesn’t become ‘us and them’. So okay, let's just win that battle there. We will win that one and then once we've done that, do you all agree it's much better not to see plastic bags going down the streets and all the rest of it, and turtles are not drowning and the rest of it, and then we will do the next thing and the next thing - suddenly a culture of the possible will emerge.

Quentin Cooper

Okay. Tim has given us a sort of positive outline, so things that he would do that might make a difference, that are making a difference. Can I ask each of you to echo that using popular culture? What would be the most successful avenues to explore? Is it having an environmental story editor on the Archers? Would it be having a character in EastEnders who suddenly is into recycling? Is it going to be getting George Clooney to be spokesman for the planet? Joe -

Joe Smith

Why, thank you. I think the mistake is that there is one place that you will find this and also a mistake to think that you will go and insert a story line. I mean if I had a pound for every time I heard ‘Let's just get recycling into EastEnders and the world will change for the better’. The public have a great nose for authenticity. They’ve got to kind of recognise themselves in any of this kind of activity. The best I would suggest, just one off, would be to see everyday lives represented with the real impact of the carbon really back grounded but the real experience of the daily life. So just the trip to work, you know, people spend forty minutes in unpaid labour sitting in their steel boxes yet there is no opportunity for them to cut gym fees, have a lovely bicycle, have a dedicated cycle lane and showers at work when they arrive, you know. Safe routes to school for kids. I'd like to see some of the great kind of film makers, comics, drama writers, just shine a light on the perversity of the last sixty years. We've won so little at such huge cost. Take it off the climate change topic. Of course it's there. It's in the background.

Just nestle it in our real concerns, everyday, which kind of summarised as food, sex, death and have we had a nice day.

Quentin Cooper

And because we will be more open to change if we realise that what we have isn't as much worth protecting as we think it is?

Joe Smith

That's it - yes.

Quentin Cooper

Vicky –

Vicky Long

Well simply really to encourage a culture of exploration, I think, and that's what Tim's been talking about and what Joe's just talked about. I think we are on a journey, an uncertain journey and we need to delve into that and enjoy it and find out things. I think we expect answers, we expect solutions, unfairly often from scientists, but actually all of us just now need to take a leap of faith and go forward and explore.

Quentin Cooper

And finally Marcus –

Marcus Brigstocke

I think anything that brings groups of people together in a way in which they are fully aware that they're surrounded by other people is perhaps a big change that I would like to see more of. And I think the more we can develop culturally and you know just literally a sense that the world is filled with other people who are worth meeting and whose space is just as important to them as mine is to me, that that's a sort of oblique way of going about bringing about environmental change because you can avoid the topic then and people can have a really good time.

Quentin Cooper

Focus on the joining together, on the doing something. Okay well we are a community that has briefly come together but I think one of the ways that popular culture stays popular is knowing when you can have too much of a good thing. So that is where we will leave things, although the Mediterranean biome at the Eden is a very pleasant place to chat away the day. I'm going to thank the panel of Tim Smit, Vicky Long, Marcus Brigstocke, and Joe Smith. Thank you to yourselves whoever you are for taking the time and trouble to listen. As I said at the start this is one of four specially recorded mediating change discussions around the

broader theme of cultural responses to our changing climate. The first is on the history of such responses. The third will be an attempt to analyse and categorise the range of responses and the final will not unreasonably look at the future and the ways that culture, politics and science interact as we try to anticipate and respond to climate scenarios.