

IAN CHRISTIE - POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

1. Climate disruption and other dimensions of unsustainable development are in essence grand collective action problems - hence the extreme difficulty of motivating and coordinating action from international to household levels. Collective action problems are potentially 'tragedies of the commons'. To resolve them, we need some or all of the following:

- major public and private actors willing and able to be first mover in breaking deadlocks and establishing new framework for action, bearing short-term costs and risks;**
- coalitions of the willing at all levels able to break ranks and establish new patterns of self-regulation in resource use;**
- consistent and strong lobbying of national governments from business interests and civil society, accompanied by demonstrations of willingness to accept costs of transition and reward political leadership;**
- a trusted framework of resource management and mutual monitoring at every scale.**

2. Not enough of this is in evidence. Putting it simply: we have a Mexican stand-off between government, big business and citizenry - each actor thinks the other two need to take the lead. The collective action problem for nation-states is very complex and serious. They find it very hard to show leadership on climate action. They need non-nation-state actors to demonstrate the required leadership - this in turn will give governments 'permission to lead'. National governments have major problems in responding to climate change and related ecological challenges, as shown by several decades of experience and by a large literature on barriers to action. Political engagement with formal political systems at national level is important, but in the light of these problems political engagement must also encompass coalition-building at grassroots and corporate level with non-state institutions - eg business alliances, NGOs, citizens' community groups.

3. Action by non-state actors will reflect enlightened self-interest ; some far-sightedness and willingness to act based on being a dominant force in a given sector or region ; and some an ethic of resistance to and overcoming of selfish mimesis and a decision to model self-sacrificial love and generosity to people and creatures remote in space and time.

4. The actors that have the motivation and capacity to break through the collective action problem seem to be the '4 Cs': Corporations (esp. in food); China; Cities and city-regions/states such as California; Churches and partners in Civil Society

5. The evidence:

Corporations - Unilever, Wal-Mart, sustainable certification schemes, B Corp. business model, World Business Council on Sustainable Development, emerging business-led forums on rethinking capitalism for sustainable development.
China - ecological civilisation discourse; city pollution and discontent; renewables boom; slowing GHG emissions; scale and potential influence on USA.
Cities - Pope's gathering of pro-environmental mayors; Ben Barber's analysis of cities' potential as leaders of major transitions; many alliances for city/regional action - e.g. C40; R20; ICLEI.
Churches - Laudato Si' Encyclical ; Lambeth Declaration and Islamic Scholars' Declaration on climate action ; Interfaith Power and Light; Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC) programmes worldwide; ARC's and UN's support for 'generational plans' on environment from faith communities (see e.g. CHURCH AND EARTH, the 2009 plan for the Church of England).

6. Role of churches:

- trusted convenor and space for ethical debate - maybe we need churches to host a truth and reconciliation process on sustainable care of the global and local commons?**
- ethical model : energy, food, water, re-investment of funds divested from fossil fuel interests**
- pervasive conversation: normalising and disseminating debate about what matters to us and what we can do next regarding care for Creation ; engaging with companies and governments; making eco-action normal for congregations**
- trusted partner with new allies in sustainable development and exemplary action**
- e.g. NHS, National Trust, major retailers, other faith communities, city governments.**

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