

Julie Doyle:
Mediating Climate Change.
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In this book, a strong personal engagement in environmental issues transcends Julie Doyle's analyses of media products and art exhibitions.

Doyle is a Reader in Media Studies at the University of Brighton, Faculty of Arts – a senior academic with a distinguished international reputation. She co-founded the Science and Environment Communication Section of the European Communication and Research Education Association (ECREA) and is a founding member on the Board of Directors of the International Environmental Communication Association (IECA).¹ For a number of years she was also a local volunteer for Greenpeace (pp. 1, 5), and the book is written from the perspective of an activist, who is trying to find “a new visual language for climate change” (p. 154). Doyle's goal is to find ways to convince the public that climate change is a serious problem and that it requires action:

We need to understand how knowledge of climate change has been shaped historically by scientists, environmentalists and the mass media in order to better address the current gaps between our knowledge and our actions. (p. 3)

While emphasizing that she shares concern about the environment, she is critical of the way the messages are mediated:

Book review: Mediating Climate Change

A central argument in this book is that one of the difficulties in engaging people with climate change is due to its historical framing as an environmental issue, which has led to a separation of humans and culture from the environment. (p. 3)

In her book she analyses climate change communication as it appears in many different contexts and in different types of media, using a number of theoretical perspectives and methodologies. In short:

1. She analyses the way climate change has been visualized by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), BBC television documentaries, and Greenpeace in the following time slots: 1990-1995, 1995-1997, 1997-2001, 2001-2007. The beginning and the end of each timeslot is marked by an important event such as the publication of new reports from the IPCC or the establishment of the Kyoto Protocol.
2. She then goes on to analyze the activities and communication from social movements, represented by Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD), Friends of the Earth International (FoEI), and Camp for Climate Action (CCA).
3. This is followed by analyses of how journalists covered the UN's COP15 Climate Conference in Copenhagen in 2009. The news outlets used for these content analyses are the British newspapers: *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Mail*, *The Times*, *The Guardian*, and *The Independent*.
4. The livestock sector is important because it contributes heavily to greenhouse gas emissions, and Doyle analyzes how this is made visible in campaign material from civil society groups and individual contributions like Paul McCartney's "Meat Free Monday", Peta2's "Meat's Not Green", and Friends of the Earth UK's "The Food Chain Campaign".
5. The final analysis in the book is based on Doyle's visits to two of Cape Farewell's art-work exhibitions in London: *Earth: Art of a Changing World* at the Royal Academy of Arts (2009-10) and *Unfold* at Kings Place Gallery (2010).

As already mentioned, Doyle has a strong personal engagement in the issues she writes about and she is especially explicit about her own perspective in chapter 6: "Sustainable Consumption?: Reframing Meat and Dairy Consumption in the Politics of Climate Change".

Doyle insists that "climate change needs to be made culturally meaningful and relevant to people's everyday lives" (p. 142), and from this perspective it is clearly relevant to analyze campaigns related to our consumption of meat and dairy, because they aim at changing one of our most basic everyday activities – eating. Chapter 6 starts with a critical discussion of the ideology of consumerism based on Zygmunt Bauman, Pierre Bourdieu, Jeremy Gilbert, Karl Marx, and others. Doyle then analyzes and discusses the different campaigns. The text is divided into sections with headlines that emphasizes important points related to sustainable consumption, e.g.: "Go vegan, fight climate change", "Changing individual con-

sumer behavior though education”, “Activating an ethical individualist self” and “Regulating unsustainable food farming practices”.

From Doyle’s perspective, “all three campaigns offer significant contributions to cultural understanding of climate change, by making it meaningful at the level of everyday food consumption” (p. 141), however none of the campaigns are really good. They all have their limitations: The *Meat’s Not Green* campaign demonstrates a lack of basic understanding of why people might be eating meat or dairy “despite being aware of the cruelty issue” (p.141). The *Meat Free Monday* campaign “does not really question an existing sense of self, thus it may not translate into more radical behavioral changes, particularly in relation to middle-class consumerist lifestyle” (p.141). And the *Food Chain Campaign* don’t discuss “consumer habits, nor the symbolic nature of food” (p. 141). Doyle discusses the three campaigns in light of consumerism theories and concludes the chapter with a paragraph in which she “advocate a vegan diet, given that dairy cows are a significant component in the global livestock sector” (p. 144).

According to Doyle, an ideological conflict between individualism and social responsibility within “contemporary neoliberal society” (p. 8) is part of the problem, and politicians use the IPCC reports more or less manipulatively to support their own ideologies (p. 19). The conflict between spokespeople for the liberal individualists and the socially responsible collectivists is played out in the media. Unfortunately, the media and the public have misinterpreted the uncertainties related to climate science, which has made it “easier for powerful corporations to undermine the credibility of climate science though PR and advertising” (p. 18). The two conflicting parties frame climate change in different ways:

[It] is variously framed though appeals to discourses of justice, faith, scientific certainty, ethics, emotion and morality to engage people on climate change and promote positive action. At the same time, discourses of scientific uncertainty, neoliberalism, (ir)rationality, individualism and anti-environmentalism have been used to promote inaction (p. 158).

The persuasive intention is clearly expressed in the book. Doyle implies throughout that she and many others who are concerned about climate changes *know* what is best for the global society. Unfortunately, there are audiences that do not have the same correct understanding of the problems, partly because they are misled by the public discourse. This can be changed through rhetorical means, because communicative processes actively constitute our knowledge and understanding (p. 2). Through a range of discursive and social practices can climate change become culturally meaningful (p. 158), and if people know and understand how the problem is relevant for their everyday lives, then it is assumed that this knowledge and understanding will have an impact on how they act (p. 2). With Doyle’s own words: “Framing climate change as a humanitarian and social justice issue constitutes a moral imperative to act” (p. 6).

Among the solutions that Doyle describes (p. 30) is a change in the way we conceive environment. In the Western world, for centuries we have conceptualized nature as some-

thing that humans could use and change as we wanted. When climate change is illustrated with pictures of melting icebergs and threatened polar bears it communicates to the audiences that environment is out in the nature – distinct from human culture, norms, and values. Instead, we as people should be seen as part of the environmental ecosystem.

Transparency is another solution suggested by Doyle. Scientists must publicly acknowledge uncertainties in their research findings, so that the public can have more reflective communication. Also, there ought to be a better understanding of the power relations involved in the classical philosophical distinctions between nature and culture; subject and object; self and other. If we follow these guidelines, we may, according to Doyle, be able to have a more:

[...] ethical and productive engagement with the issue of climate change that is attentive to a range of different perspectives, but one that ultimately acknowledges the human costs and global inequities of climate change, and uses these as a the basis for ethical action (p. 30).

Media that are edited in accordance with journalism standards are criticized by Doyle for their lack of support for the goals of the environmentalists. Traditionally, professional journalists tend to think that they have a moral imperative to support democracy in various ways, including independence from special interests, an open dialog, fair representation of all major stakeholders in society, balanced and critical investigations of claims. However, in line with some other media scholars, Doyle finds this attitude problematic. Referring to Boykoff and Boykoff (2004) she talks about the “balance of bias” when the “small minority of climate skeptics (often funded by powerful industry lobbies) have historically been given equal coverage as climate scientists” (p. 28).

With my own background in journalism, I recognize Doyle’s critique as being in line with the criticism that the profession faces from professional communicators employed by big corporations, politicians, and interest groups. They all want the journalistic media to advance their specific point of view and don’t like to be questioned. And they all critique the media for giving the opponents too much space. In general, they believe that *if* the media were more positive towards *them* and less positive towards the other actors engaged in discussing the societal agenda, *then* they could persuade the audience to behave their way. The game is interesting to observe, but I am grateful that we still have independent, professional media that create forums for open debates and ask critical questions to all – including the climate scientists.

For that same reason I warmly recommend the book. The many different perspectives on one topic make the book very useful in teaching. Firstly, because it demonstrates that even if society has one shared agenda, the actors in the media eco system each add their own perspective to the communication process and no single actor has the power to control the message. This is good from a democratic perspective. Secondly, the collection of analyses draws on many different theories and research techniques that students can discuss and be inspired by, including theories from cultural and media studies, cultural geog-

raphy, and social science. And hopefully it will provoke students to engage in a productive and highly relevant discussion about the many different aspects of mass communication.

What some people may find missing and others find refreshing is the fact that there are no tables with numbers. Not even the framing analyses are documented in the form of data tables.

Notes

- 1 "Dr. Julie Doyle", Retrived October 15, 2013, from <http://arts.brighton.ac.uk/staff/julie-doyle>

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