

HOT UNDER THE COLLAR

Workshop for Crisis Forum

York St John University

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Balance of probabilities

- What crisis? There is no significant climate change, it's a blip, or it's not anthropogenic.
- On economic or religious grounds, ignore or welcome the problem; business as usual.
- Human ingenuity will overcome this problem.
- Let's pin our hopes on individual and government actions.
- Damage limitation.
- The apocalypse is upon us.

Expecting significant adversities

- Hotter climate in southern and parts of northern hemisphere.
- Rising sea levels, flooding.
- Increasing extreme weather events.
- Droughts, crop failures, food shortages, disease.
- Increasing competition for resources, conflict, violence.
- Significant northward migration.
- Overcrowding hotspots, e.g. UK.

Possible reactions to UK climate change

- First, the changing shape of the UK - flooding.
- Political decisions on immigration and border controls.
- Technological and design adaptations.
- Altruistic hospitality vs xenophobic territoriality; multicultural tensions.
- Optimal population considerations.
- Gradual positive adaptation vs violence.

Best case:friendly adaptation

- Negative predictions proved wrong; new mitigating factors come into play.
- Possible slow and non-conflictual adaptations.
- Natural fall in populations and increasing community cohesion.
- Humanitarian generosity and solidarity.
- Long-term evolutionary adaptations.

Worst case: conflict and suffering

- Climate changes themselves causing UK problems - resources, health, standard of living.
- Increasing rich-poor gap; gated communities; private security; mistrust and vigilantism.
- Direct suffering from violence, and indirect suffering, e.g. PTSD etc.
- Vulnerability of the very young and old, disabled and disadvantaged.
- 'Life boat ethics' takes over.

Religious, cultural and political attitudes in operation

- Fundamentalist religion may welcome 'end times'
- Moderate religions encourage altruism
- Cultural groups - retreat or integrate
- Radical greens envisage biodiverse paradise
- Free marketeers see new markets
- Anti-government mistrust on e.g. population policy
- Make or break opportunities for convergent co-operation/new eco-mindedness

Sources/Reading

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