

How Do We Want to Respond to the Climate Crisis

A Public Deliberation of Four Different Approaches

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Outline of Deliberation

Opening process:

- Context of the issue
- Overview and Ground rules for effective deliberation
- Practice in taking different perspectives
- Overview of the issue book and approaches
- Relevance of the issue to each of us

Deliberating each approach

****Break****

Deliberating among all the approaches

Closing Process:

- Assess completeness of deliberation
- Identify decisions reached
- Sharing final thoughts and learnings
- Planning follow up

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Background

Steadily we are hearing that life as we have known it is rapidly changing and becoming unsustainable. This information is coming through movies like *The Inconvenient Truth*, *What a Way to Go* or *The 11th Hour*, many books or from regular daily news of storms, drought, terrorism, food water and fuel shortages, rolling blackouts and pandemics. This information stimulates many different views and perspectives of how to respond which are being considered privately, or spoken of only in small like-minded groups. Although there is a lot of public concern and genuine desire to make a difference, much of this concern remains in isolated pockets. Much time is wasted due to fighting over ideologies. Each perspective has very different and very valid information that needs to be considered to see the whole picture. Each has different choices of actions associated with it that make sense when we see the assumptions they are based on. In addition, each approach has different costs, consequences and trade offs that need to be understood and weighed out. Through giving these open minded consideration, we are more likely to see and move beyond our preferred bias, and be able to identify an effective combination of actions we are willing to live with and support—from policy directions to voluntary changes, that help us develop inclusive approaches and comprehensive actions .

It is important for people wanting to initiate change regarding this topic to understand these differing perspectives as they occur within us and between us. This may help in understanding what kind of relationship we want to have with others, especially those who may think differently than we do. Otherwise, we may set off unexpected responses and chain reactivity. If we attempt to jump to action planning, without considering and including these underlying differences, we may just increase frustration, waste time and incur sabotage. Therefore it is important to take time to deliberate the question “*how do we want to respond to the planetary /local crisis*” .

** Deliberation is something we do individually when we make choices whether about where to take the family vacation or buying a fridge. We consider options, weigh them out, and arrive at a decision we can live with. A Public Deliberation is structured to support the public to make considered choices about complex public issues. If well designed it brings people’s best selves forward so they can generate the quality of consideration so necessary for comprehensive decision making and coordinating actions. This process can be used to assist decision making for any complex public issue from. This process is designed based on research of adult learning and development, and behavioural and complexity science and TIP The Integral Process for Working on Complex Issues. See <http://global-arina.org/researchprojects/TIP.html>.*

Deliberative forums can be conducted in a variety of ways. A common design is for people to gather for about three hours and talk in break out groups of, ideally, about ten people with a moderator and note taker. Each group is given a brief booklet outlining four common perspectives of how to respond to this crisis. The goal is to use the insights and information developed through the deliberation. People can use this new knowledge to arrive at well-considered, shared understandings that will inform their decisions and actions.

Approach 1:

The best thing to do is put first things first: do whatever it takes for *our area* of the world to sustain itself so we can fend off looming impacts.

Assumptions underlying this approach

The state of the world is becoming threatening very fast. The only place we can actually do anything to protect ourselves now and to ensure survival of civilization in the future is to become self sufficient in small local areas. Globally, we need to define what our carrying capacity is and live within that means. When things become tougher in the world, our quality of life in this area will become more desirable. Locally, if too many people move here, we may become unsustainable. *Protecting our area* may become necessary before we lose everything.

Actions that would make sense based on these assumptions:

1. Set up seed saving, local food growing and storing processes, and alternative housing as quickly as possible
2. Rally people and defend our water rights, loudly and now!
3. Limit the population coming into our areas by not approving development permits.
4. For one day, let's think of ourselves as separate from the province, from Canada, and the world and see if we can operate.
5. Quit pretending we can impact huge global factors, and concentrate on our local scale where we, right here, have control over things.

Possible reactions to this approach that can be anticipated

1. "Planned orderly changes are necessary to avoid mayhem (e.g. food distribution, water regulations, building codes)"
2. "The potential justification of secret gorilla type hoarding and defending is scary"
3. "We need to be open and caring of everyone, not just those who already live here or who are able to grow their own gardens or build efficient shelters"
4. "Why waste time going backward to old technologies when we could go forward with proven new technologies"
5. "I am barely surviving now, let alone taking on the hysteria of some supposed crisis".

If this was the only approach we took, what trade offs or consequences would we need to consider?

- There would be even greater challenges to our survival if we disconnected from outside medical support, technological innovations, economic relief funds etc., even if we know the drastic changes coming will force us to compete for them or cut us off entirely.
- How would we ever decide who is the "us" we are protecting and who is the "them" we are protecting ourselves against, and once on this path, how far do we think we would go with this protectionism?

Approach 2:

The best thing to do is demand elected officials and organizations take responsibility for creating a better future, locally and globally.

Assumptions underlying this approach:

Citizens need to demand strong leadership to fix this situation and provide a centralized authority to coordinate change. Over the years, we have developed structures and policies so that life can proceed in an orderly fashion. We often take these for granted but now we need to rely on that system to create stable change. Most people do not understand issues such as climate change, water or fossil fuel shortage, so policy backed up by sanctions is required for individual and organizational conformity. Renegade reactivity needs to be controlled as it leads to violence. It is important to have good plans in place beforehand so we all know what we are supposed to do and prevent bad behaviour.

Actions that would make sense based on these assumptions:

1. Demand that government subsidize green practises: e.g. low flow toilets, water conservation, dense zoning, alternate fuel sources, and vote for new taxes to enable these.
2. Immigration policies at local levels, not just national, should be developed to regulate 'environmental' refugees
3. Governments should punish, and people should boycott, polluting corporations and reward green companies
4. Health authorities should develop and broadcast emergency procedures in case of power outages, pandemics etc
5. Vote for increased taxes to cover cost of operating public institutions due to increasing costs of fossil fuels, food etc.

Possible reactions to this approach that can be anticipated

1. "No one is going to tell me what to do with my water, my house and my lawn".
2. "Government leaders don't even know these issues exist and bureaucracy is too slow".
3. "Whole communities, locally and globally need to make plans, not just single leaders".
4. "I am not making ends meet now and just cannot take a tax hike".
5. "New directions will come from small skilled teams of innovators and entrepreneurs, not from government"

If this were the only approach we took, what trade offs or consequences would we need to consider?

- Even if people really want public leaders to take charge they may sabotage policy if they are not involved in understanding the need and setting standards for what 'good' policies are.
- Government leaders are not likely to take the risk of enforcing standards that might be unpopular in the short term, even if the long-term situation requires this.

Approach 3:

The best thing to do is to use our creativity, ingenuity and technical capacities to create a new future.

Assumptions underlying this approach

Information Technology in 20 years will enable us to change the issues which plague us such as fossil fuel shortage, pollution, health care and poverty etc. For example, we have tons of solar energy (10,000 times more than required to meet all our needs on the planet) but we need to capture it through nano technologies. Also, with new technology, health care will be able to model, simulate, and reprogram disease and aging processes. In ten years, these technologies will be 1,000 times more powerful than they are today and available globally and cheaply. Every challenge is an opportunity and we can move much more quickly if we just get some smart people to be in places of influence to set up good strategies so technologies can be put in place to create these outcomes.

Actions that make sense based on these assumptions:

1. Vote for new taxes which support technological research and inspirational programs promoting environmental solutions at the national, provincial and local level.
2. Meet with savvy thinkers to plan how to bypass the slow moving public processes and promote attractive 'green' business options.
3. Use multi media to create motivating educational presentations and chill out the 'ain't it awful,' doom and gloom message.
4. Set up school programs in which students get awards for having the most 'green' actions in their homes.
5. Use web cams, ipods and virtual meeting places for innovation sharing and futurist thinking.

Possible reactions to this approach that can be anticipated

1. "Our hope lies in caring, humane solutions, not technological ones."
2. "We have to define some moral criteria to control the use or abuse of technology."
3. "I don't even understand the words or how to use these things so it doesn't help me."
4. "Technology can't be trusted. It fixes one thing without seeing that it is damaging" something else; look at the food shortage due to switching crops to biofuel
5. "The human species and its technologies should just die off so that other species have an opportunity to survive"

If this were the only approach we took, what trade offs or consequences would we need to consider?

- We need to research the outcomes of some technological fixes to know if they cause more damage, even if it will demand a lot of extra time to educate ourselves.
- We need to rely on technological expertise of others even if they have different and often conflicting messages. We don't know if the competition distorts or promotes the innovations we need.

Approach 4:

The best thing to do is work together in a conscious manner in order to learn to build a more caring and sustainable world.

Assumptions underlying this approach:

All of nature and humans are completely connected and we cannot damage any one part without harming the whole. Through increasing our sensitivity and reaching out to include each other we can be united in making a healthier planet and healthier communities. We need to go inside ourselves more to understand our motives, find our strength and clarify our wisdom. From that place we will be more peaceful, more relational and less likely to harm others or the environment. We can show that we care for others and the environment by consuming less. By supporting others to be equal and find democratic methods of participating in their future, we will all be able to build a humane future. We can transform ourselves from being destroyers to co-creators.

Actions that would make sense based on these assumptions:

1. Develop forums where people feel safe to really share their feeling about the world condition
2. Develop peaceful protest marches re directing war money to much needed social and environmental programs
3. Create local and global art shows to inspire celebration and stimulate positive change
4. Realize the power and impact of intentional thinking on creating outcomes
5. Teach inner capacities of openness and meditation in order to find a source of wisdom

Possible reactions to this approach which can be anticipated

1. "I don't feel comfortable with this touchy feely narcissistic type of stuff."
2. "This kind of gathering takes far too long and never ends up in anyone 'doing' anything effective."
3. "At the end of the day our governments are run on majority rules."
4. "There is no source of higher wisdom out there that is going to guide us."
5. "None of these actions have anything to do with reversing climate change problems, or figuring out what to do when places are flooded, overrun with migration, run out of food, or become a desert."

If this were the only approach we took, what trade offs or consequences would we need to consider:

- Unintentionally we may be leaving people out who aren't interested in, or don't know how, to do this kind of interaction, even if we believe everyone really needs to be involved.
- We need to include the institutionalized status quo systems in our conversations so we do not end up being powerless to really make big changes, even if this would mean having some different qualities of discussions.

Designing the ‘Meta’ Approach

1. Each approach is considered, seeing the validity by stepping inside it, understanding the assumptions it is based on and the actions that make sense based on those assumptions. Costs and consequences are discussed for each.
2. Then all the approaches are considered together. This gives a whole picture of how the diverse group /community is viewing this issue, an overview that needs to be seen to inform comprehensive actions.
3. Having carefully considered all these aspects a “meta” approach can then be designed. These will include the actions of the different views that make the most sense and that the group is willing to live having anticipated the reactions, and surfaced the costs and consequences, of several perspectives.