Using LCT to analyse different understandings about climate change

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LCT Roundtable

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2

Research questions

•Q: Why do people talk about climate change in different ways?

   A: *Because they have different legitimation codes and constellations.*

•Q: How might these insights be used to improve climate change comms & engagement?

   A: *Match the message and the messenger to the codes and constellations.*
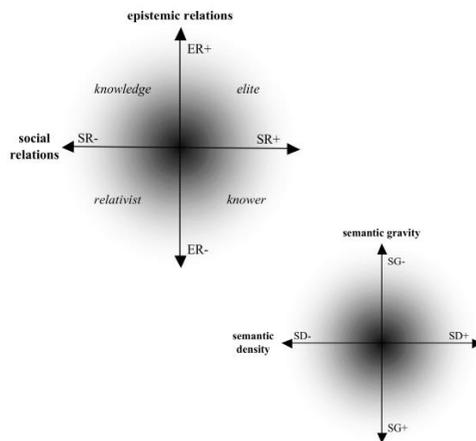
3

LCT

• Specialisation

• Semantics

• Constellations

4

2

West Liverpool Rotary Club

Rotary

- Binary world of 'good' and 'bad', 'us' and 'them'
- The Problem: "who cares?" about (physical) climate change: what implications for our agency and duty to act **+** simple, concrete, local, context-dependent
- The Solutions: what we should do as 'good citizens', what our trusted sources say we should do **+** simple, concrete, local
- Constellations: binary, axiological.

6

Rotary – The Problem

- **Binaries** of natural vs human-induced; hoax vs problem; believe or not
- **Agency**: who is capable of changing the climate
- Axiology & context-dependency: **which parties** are responsible for causing climate change?
- What our **trusted sources** say about climate change
- **Simple & concrete** causation and impacts
- Rejecting or downplaying impacts in the **distant future**

7

Rotary – The Problem

1 David: Isn't the earth hotter, it's like a greenhouse?

2 Joe: Yeah but it's,

3 Jock: Can I ask, can I ask one question? Is the Earth getting closer to the sun or not. I think it is, yeah. I mean that's that's the scientific, finding isn't it, the Earth is getting closer to the sun. So if it's getting closer to the sun should the climate change?

4 Joe: I mean that's 20,000 or how,.. how long ago was the last ice age? The Earth was icy, right?

5 Jock: Yeah.

6 Joe: And it's only happened because it got closer to the sun. And that's how it got warm.

7 Jock: I think it was because some bloke farted.

8 Joe: Hey?

9 Jock: (hmph half laugh)

10 Joe: Yeah, or something happened that is beyond our control! And what's happening is still beyond our control. We might stop one degree every bloody half a million years that's about it.

8

Rotary – The Solutions

- **People**: agency, the right type of knower, solutions associated with 'us' and 'them', fairness & responsibility

- **Simple, local & tangible**: current/tangible problems, "do your bit"/"do the right thing", climate change a 'tame' problem with simple & painless solutions

- **Not carbon tax!**

9

Rotary – How they know

- Lived experience, or 'what I've seen'
- Profession-based knowledge, or 'what I know through what I've done'
- Trusted sources, or 'who I trust'
- Personal attributes and identity, or 'who I am'
- "I don't know"

10

Rotary – Constellations

- **Binary:** one 'good' and one 'bad' constellation

- **Good** = personal, subjective, about beliefs and significant others *(knower code)* + concrete, local, simple and everyday *(prosaic code)*

- **Bad** = the opposite: about science and facts, associated with 'them', concepts that are abstract, intangible, global and complex.

11

Rotary – Shifting constellations

- Climate change sometimes in 'good' constellation, sometimes in 'bad' – depends on **codes**:

- Shifts to 'good' constellation when:
  - **Knower code** (about agency, 'us', group support/approval in small private groups)
  - **Prosaic code**

12

Rotary – importance of codes & constellations

- Usually: nothing happens unless it matches the codes & constellations
- When it does: perceived as a glitch/anomaly

Examples when ↑ER, ↓SR:

- tried to engage with it but could not adjudicate between their different opinions; or

- rapidly turned the conversation back towards a knower code; or

- treated it as symptomatic of someone being different to the rest of the group.

13

Rotary – 'simple' / 'complex'

- Epistemologically simple (SD-)

- Axiologically complex (SD+)

→ axiologically complex worldview: maintain constellations and their +ve and -ve charging

14

Think tanks

15

Think tanks

- "ideology" and "evidence"
  - *~ social relations and epistemic relations*

16

Think tanks – The Problem

Physical climate change:
- Acceptance of mainstream climate science *(knowledge code)*
- Engaged with abstract, technical, scientific concepts: degrees warming, CO_2 ppm *(rhizomatic code)*

CC debate:
- All about people, social relations *(knower code)*
- Complex, multi-factorial reasons for why the issue is so challenging, incl abstract concepts eg psychology, "tribal" nature, "organised system of denial" *(rhizomatic code)*

CC as a 'wicked' problem *(rhizomatic code)*

17

Think tanks – The Solutions

- Different types of solutions to address different aspects of the 'wicked' problem
- These are governed by different codes
- **Code shifting** between:
  - knower, knowledge & elite codes
  - rhizomatic & prosaic codes.

18

Think tanks – Constellations

- Three constellations

- based on political ideology (*knower code; rhizomatic code*)

- divided on the basis of preferred degree of government intervention.

19

Think tanks – Common ground

Common ground tended to be found when:
- Fits within multiple constellations
- When ER+: prosaic code – specific evidence, something specific to agree on
- When SR+: rhizomatic code

Common ground tended to disintegrate when:
- SR+: prosaic code – making ideological (*knower code*) differences explicit.

20

Rotary & Think tanks

- **Rotary**: (nearly all) *knower code* and *prosaic code*.

- **Think tanks**: (nearly all) *rhizomatic code*, with shifting between *knower/knowledge/elite* code.

  If too far into *knower code* → bring it back to the *knowledge code* of climate science.

21

Rotary & Think tanks

Different types of knower:

- **Rotary**: "common sense", having the right "mentality" inculcated from childhood, taking cue from what we did in the "old days", inhabit a moral universe.
  → The ideal knower is a 'good citizen'.

- **Think tanks**: formalised theory, political ideology provides a "significant other"
  → The ideal knower integrates "ideology" and "evidence", ie elite code.

22

Research applications

- 'Translation' vs 'transformation'
- The message matters, and the messenger matters
- The challenge: beyond 'simple & painless'
- *Code clash + constellation clash*

23

Reflections, lessons learnt

Simplicity the wrong side of complexity is worthless,
Simplicity the right side of complexity is priceless.

- the goal is *simplicity the right side of complexity*
  – like Rainbow Chen's PhD one-liner
- it's hard work & messy work to get there…
- and I'm a social sciences novice, lack of skills, knowledge & experience.

24

Reflections, lessons learnt

Chen & Maton steps

- Allow the data to 'speak': inductive coding
- 'Cooking' the raw data: add LCT concepts, avoid "peppering"

25

Reflections, lessons learnt

- Analyse one first (Rotary), then the other (think tanks) – "or else your brain will explode"
- Writing as part of the analysis process
- Last semester: "gym work"
- Too micro, also need to look macro
- Revelation: themes and subheadings = pre-LCT concepts! (personal, simple, local, tangible…)

26

Reflections, lessons learnt

- "Who cares who said what?": not case studies
- "Who cares what they said?": the content matter isn't that important
- → what type of thesis am I writing?: LCT
- → BUT don't tar all with the same brush
- "Kill your darlings" (or at least induced coma til post-PhD)
- LCT, without SFL
- Developing L2 now: earlier better?

Reflections, lessons learnt

Trust:

- trust LCT
- "trust the process": LCT analysis and writing
- trust Karl + learning all the time (eg not elite code but code shifting)

"Theory provides portability"

28