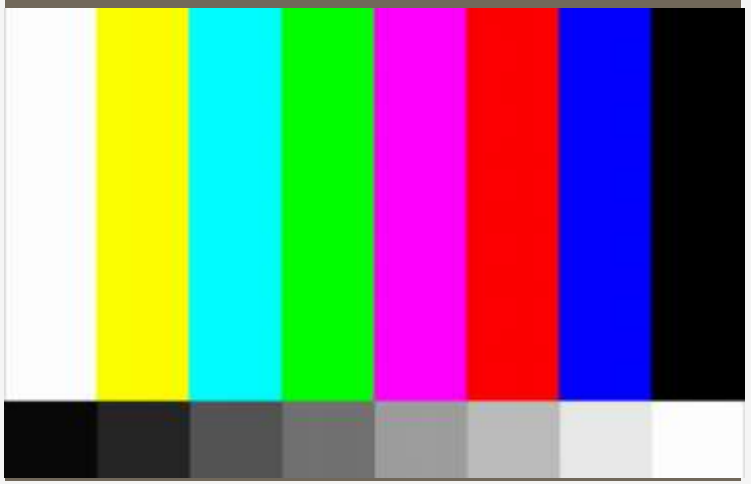
HOT SCIENCE GLOBAL CITIZENS

CLIMATE CHANGE, MUSEUMS, ACTION.



Museums as Media: What kind of media?

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HOT SCIENCE GLOBAL CITIZENS SYMPOSIUM
SYDNEY, MAY 5 2011

- Public understandings of climate change science
- How different types of media engage, present and communicate climate change
- Museums and science centres as media

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- Surveys on climate change conducted in Australia and worldwide [2007-2010].
- Scholarly literature on climate change in the media.
- Social media and web 2.0 in museums and science centres.

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- Mobilize the proposition that citizens' media and participatory communication models may be useful to conceptualize 'museums as media' from a different perspective.

- “Our world, our old world that we have inhabited for the last 12,000 years, has ended, even if no newspaper in North America or Europe has yet printed its scientific obituary” (Mike Davis, 2008).

- “the future is already here, it is just not very evenly distributed” (William Gibson, 1999).

“If community media is the answer, what is the question?”

Alfred E. Opubor (2000) in Gumucio-Dagron (2006)

Climate Change in the Media

- The *framing* of climate change in the mass media [broadcast media/TV, newspapers].
- Mass media *frame* and present environmental change and risk in ways that become contested cultural constructs embedded in deep ideological structures. News media map, or frame, certain preferred discourses of environmental risks over others.
- Local news agencies are not generating news not even within theior onw countries. Media pollution. The dissemination of recycled information to passive audiences (viewers/readers) as consumers of information.
- Information model of communication: information transfer vs. communication exchange.
- The media constitute the main source of information and a most determining factor in the degree of awareness, concern and 'conscientisation' by citizens about climate change.

- Failure to understand the causes of climate change makes it hard for some people to connect it to their own lives.
- Failure to understand the solutions (mitigation, adaptation) to climate change also makes it hard for some people to connect it to their own lives.
- The mass media offers few openings for citizens to engage in critical scientific debates and decision that affect their futures (for and against CTS, for example). and are often constructed by policy processes
- "information gap" between global and local levels. There is better information at a global level but much weaker information at a local level, where the actors in adaptation are.
- “learning how to cope with climate change in [one country] isn't transferable to [another] country," (Huq 2006).
- Disseminating information v/s communication of shared knowledge

Climate Change in the Media

International surveys/studies

- **UK Royal Society (2001)** only 39 per cent of 1,001 respondents agreed with the statement “the media present science in a responsible way”.

- **China Daily (2008):** Chinese media rarely report on local climate change issues and activities, and rarely mention local research. View that climate change is primarily the responsibility of the developed world.

- **Latin America (2005-2007):** No more than 1% of news on climate change, and 90% topics: dissemination scientific of data; global governance and events; climate events and disasters.

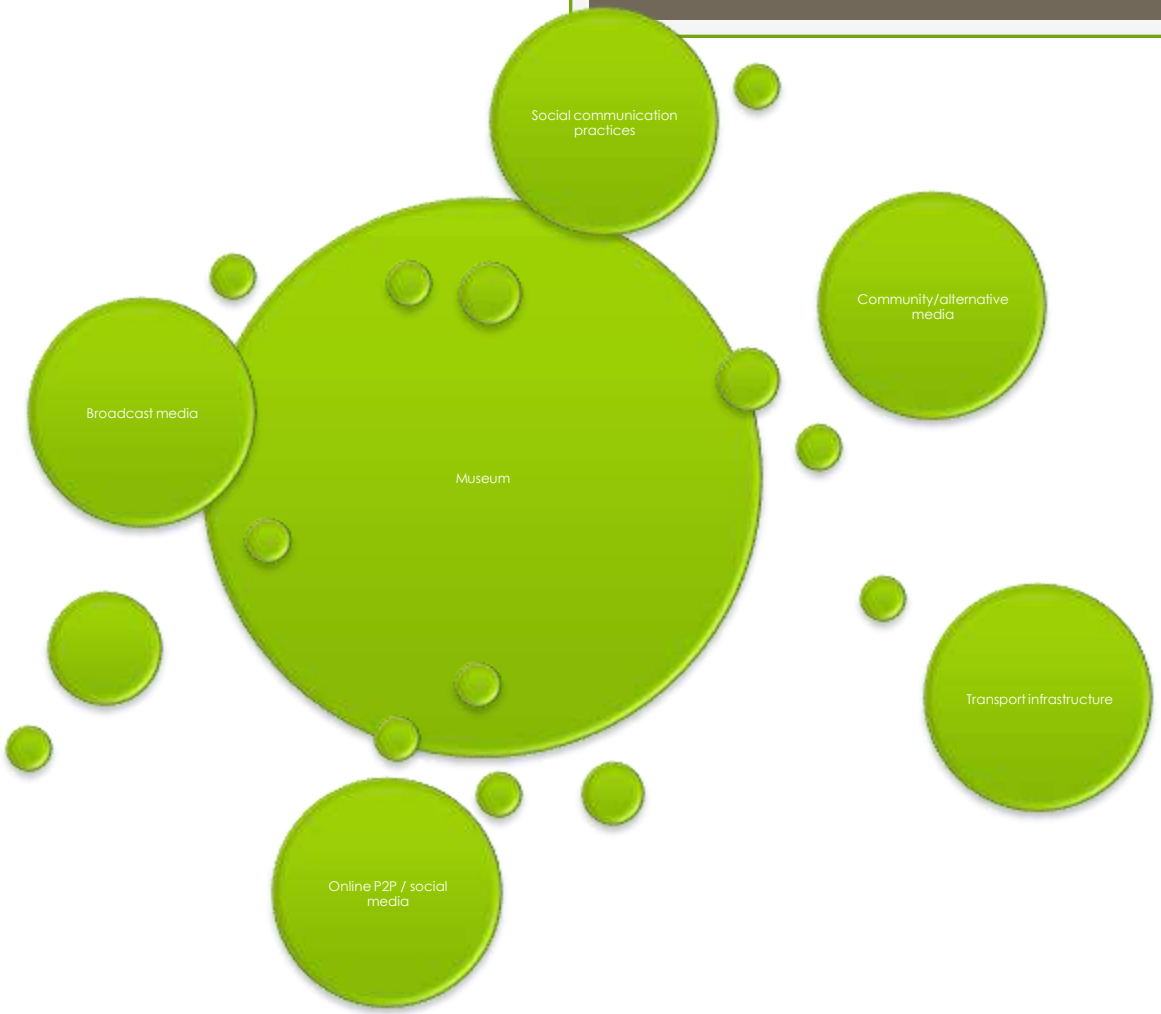
- **CSIRO 2010:** 90% + of Australians believe the climate is changing / 50% = human carbon pollution & 40% = natural variability. 6% deny any climate change at all.

- ***Cancun* UN *Climate Change* Conference (2010)**: Lack of Public Understanding is a Major Obstacle Inhibiting Action on Climate Change; A climate-movement at the ground level is needed to put pressure on politicians; Dealing with Climate Uncertainties requires Political Leadership.

Museums as media

- **Museums and the media: a theoretical and methodological exploration** [Roger Silverstone, 1988]
- **Museum, media, message** [Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, 1995] provides a semiotic approach to understanding the meaning of exhibits as a system of communication or linguistic system
- **Museums as 'media' that articulate 'time and space'** [Sharon MacDonald 1998]
- **Museums, Media and Cultural Theory** [Michelle Henning, 2006] a materialist study of the museum as media-form.
- **Museum as media in a global context** [Miriam Levin, 2006] "What sort of media are we?" distinguish museum from conventional media formats.
- A critique of the museum as broadcast media, moving beyond the superficial understanding of exhibitions/display as communication practice.
- **Museums and [as?] social media**

Communicative Ecologies



Think individual medium not in isolation from other media. Communication takes place within an existing ‘communicative ecology’ specific to each community/group/place… culture …

Museums as citizens' media

- Confusion between participation & access: Claims of participation are often false
  - *Access* - opening microphones (exhibitions) to community members
  - *Participation* - the community has decision-making role (not only on programming)
- Citizenship "as a form of identification"
- Citizens' media are the media citizens use to activate communication processes which shape their local communities" (Rodriguez, 2011: 38-40).
- [move from community & alternative media] Citizens' media define the media processes from their potential to detonate potential processes of social change and allow the transformation of individuals into citizens…
- Museums and "acts of citizenship" (Isin, 2009): *Martín Barbero …sólo podrán "contar" aquellos que pueden "contar". [those that shall count are those who can tell]*
- *Community Media Matters* report (Griffith University, 2007)

Climate Change - Cognitive Justice - Civic Epistemologies

- Cognitive justice (Visvanathan, 2008): dialogue between the different knowledges and perspectives held by scientists and citizens (local and global). Processes of public engagement; and issues of rights, justice and democracy. of the right of different forms of knowledge to coexist without being marginalized by official, state-sponsored forms of knowledge.

- Questioning the nature of expertise, reframing dominant expertise; recognizing new synergies between expert and lay knowledges; the framing of knowledge.

- Civic epistemologies (Jasanoff, 2005, 2010): the 'public understanding of science' framework obliterates lay and other forms of knowledge; it "diminishes civic agency, erases history, neglects culture and privileges people's knowledge of isolated facts (or their ignorance of such facts) over the mastery of more complex frames of meaning

- "climate change produces discordances in established ways of understanding the human place in nature" and that accordingly, "science has helped establish climate change as a global phenomenon, but in the process they detached knowledge from meaning"

Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Climate Change

- A critical analysis of the treatment of traditional and indigenous people in climate change policy documents.
- The IPCC II report summary on climate change impacts makes only scarce mention of indigenous peoples, and then only in polar regions and merely as helpless victims of changes beyond their control. The IPCC III report on mitigation of climate change does not consider the role of indigenous peoples.
- Role of museums and science centres

Museums and [as] social media

- the relationship between social media, cultural institutions and digital participation (Watkins and Russo 2007; Russo et al, 2008).
- question how social media in fact extend and perpetuate dominant ideologies such as consumerism and popular culture, rather than challenge them.
- From groups to audiences to networks
- term participation has been stripped of its political connotations, and this has happened simultaneously to the slippage of the term interactivity (Carpentier, 2007).
- interactivity understood as a responsive activity within programmed boundaries is radically different from interaction, understood as change and negotiation (Lury, 2007)
- social media is a means to an end rather than the end itself
- The Superstruct Game http://archive.superstructgame.net/

Enacting Engagement

- Problem with cultural institutions understanding of *communication* as information dissemination or to enhance organisation visibility, not as a process of strengthening social organisations & networking in support of participation.

- For this to take place, museums ought to move beyond the notion of informing visitors and audiences (the vertical flow of messages) to engage with communicating with visitors (a horizontal process of dialogue and participation).

- In the first instance, messages (such as campaigns, even certain exhibits) only make certain information known; yet do not lead to action unless there is a process of participation.

- raising awareness of the existence of climate change will have little effect if there is no creation of processes for social and behavioural change. Museums must not only inform citizens, but also equip them with the right knowledges and epistemologies to participate in actions and debates around climate change.

- The ACCENT Project [http://www.i-do-climate.eu/]

As way of conclusions

- Museums and science centres have a pivotal role to play in mobilising a political imagination that fosters participation and a diversity of voices in climate change dialogues/debates.
- A move from traditional broadcast communication models to participatory communication.
- Ways of knowing about climate change can't be disembodied and abstract (as often presented by the media), but rich in feeling, in intuition, and connection to larger social, historical and ecological contexts.
- A communication for social change approach underlines that fighting Climate Change needs not only independent reporting and well-informed media, but citizens' media. Not just one-off campaigns but long-term processes. Learning how to cope with climate change in Sydney may not be transferable to another city or rural community in Australia or another country.
- Local media have a crucial role to play beyond disseminating information. This is particularly important when considering the existing information gaps between global and local levels. There is more information on global processes of climate change but much weaker information at a local level, where the actors in climate change adaptation are.

Quotes:

"at every level the greatest obstacle to transforming the world is that we lack the clarity and imagination to conceive that it could be different."

Roberto Unger

"You already know enough. So do I. It is not knowledge we lack.
What is missing is the courage to understand what we know
and to draw conclusions".
Sven Lindqvist

"The goal of forecasting is not to predict the future but to tell you what you need to know to take meaningful action in the present."

Paul Saffo

What is much needed in this tense relation between the science and the politics of climate change is an emphasis on education: on climate change literacies; that is, learning about climate change science, climate change justice and climate change action. And not just transferring new information, but learning to learn about climate change.

A politics of engagement must also include a serious concern for climate change education and literacy, a pedagogy of climate change from primary schools to the education of journalists in tertiary education.

Environmental policy reforms require a political imagination that rests on engagement with civic-driven initiatives for social change and climate change literacy plays a fundamental role.

This is particularly important if we consider that learning how to cope (adapt, mitigate) with climate change in one place is not necessarily transferable to another place where local cultural, economic and environmental contexts might be radically different. In this regard, engaging with local communities is significant because it is in local contexts where adaptation, mitigation and action on climate change actually takes place. Hence, the importance of community media.

Publications

- Salazar J.F (2010) 'MyMuseum: social media and the engagement of the environmental citizen', in F. Cameron and L. Kelly (Eds.) *Hot Topics, Public Culture, Museums*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Scholars Press.

- Salazar, J.F., (2011) (in press) 'The mediations of climate change: museums as citizens' media', in *Museum and Society*, 9(2).

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