

Developing Narratives and Explaining Carbon Pricing

Carbon Pricing Communications Training

Session 3



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What is a narrative?

- An explanation that contains identifiable actors, actions, threats, rewards or outcomes.
- Complex narratives also include motivations, and morals grounded in shared values.



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What are keywords (frames)?

- Words (or combinations of words) that embody wider meaning, especially related to values and identity.
- Keywords enable people to quickly evaluate the relevance of an issue to their own worldview.

Group work | Narratives, Keywords and Frames

10 minutes

Listen to the following video

- What are the keywords, narratives and frames in this speech ?
- What are the ways that this politician speaks to the values of her audience?



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Margaret Thatcher



Case study: Canada



- 2008 - Quebec and British Columbia introduce Carbon Taxes
- 2018 – the Federal government passes a law requiring all provinces to adopt a carbon pricing policy.

Case study: Canadian Narrative Design 2011 - 2018



The four segments

Base

Supportive of carbon pricing and action on climate change

Opponents

Rejecting carbon pricing and climate action

Swing

Moderate but weak support but open to change

Disengaged

Not expressing interest or opinions on the topics.

Case study: Canadian Narrative Design

Attitudes survey	2011, 2014, 2017 n=1,200
Attitudes survey	2018, n=2250
3 Focus Groups	New Brunswick (English, French)
4 Focus Groups	East, Prairies, Quebec, Atlantic
Narrative testing	Ontario n=850
Narratives surveys	2 x National, n=1200, New Brunswick

Case study: Canadian Narrative Design

Overall support for carbon pricing (EcoAnalytics, October 2017)

Level of support	%
Strong support	16%
Moderate support	37%
Moderate opposed	21%
Strongly opposed	24%

Case study: Canadian Narrative Design

Support by rural/urban

Level of support	%	Rural	Urban
Strong support	16%	12	20
Moderate support	37%	34	40
Moderate opposed	21%	21	19
Strongly opposed	24%	30	19

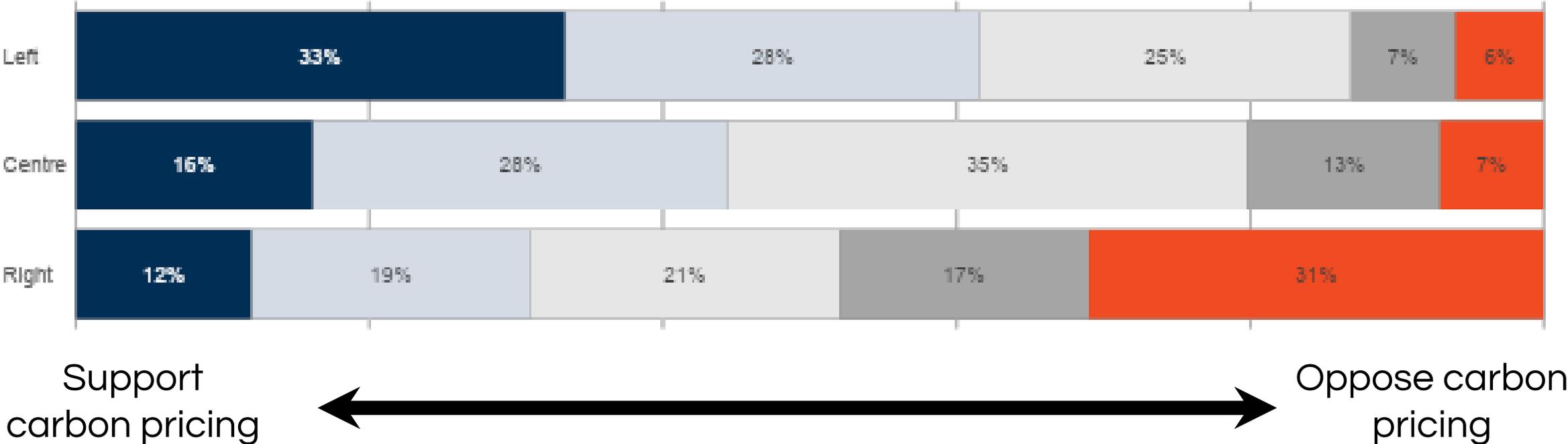
Case study: Canadian Narrative Design

Support by province

Level of support	%	Western	Prairies	Quebec	Atlantic
Strong support	16%	20	15	16	10
Moderate support	37%	42	33	36	38
Moderate opposed	21%	17	19	22	15
Strongly opposed	24%	18	33	25	33

Case study: Canadian Narrative Design

Support by voting preference (Abacus Data, 2018)



Exercise | Values-driven communications

Listen to the following narratives. From what we have learned about Canadian values and concerns:

What do you think were the most effective narratives?

Place these narratives in a rank with the most successful one at the top.

The most effective narratives are those that reached swing audiences, encouraged base supporters but did not anger opponents.



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Fair/unfair

//

Carbon pricing is a **fair** way to **share** responsibility for the carbon pollution that causes climate change and to **reward** the companies that are most efficient and pollute the least. It's not **fair** that heavy energy users can **dump** their carbon pollution in the air **we all breathe**. Polluters should be held accountable and should pay for the pollution that they force all of us to live with.

//

Makes sense

// Carbon pricing **makes sense**. It makes businesses that produce the most pollution pay more. It rewards businesses that are efficient and use energy well by paying less. It is **flexible** and allows businesses to invest in the best solutions at the lowest possible cost. And it unleashes the creativity of business to develop new technologies. //



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Personal responsibility

// We should all take **personal responsibility** for reducing pollution. We try to do the right thing by recycling or buying environmentally friendly products. A carbon tax is one way to make sure we all show the **same level** of responsibility for reducing the pollution we put into our air. //



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Market failure

// There has been a real **market failure** around carbon pollution. We need to put a price on carbon because this sends **a market signal** to consumers and energy users that they should shift to alternatives. //



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Hidden costs

// The **prices we pay** for natural gas and gasoline **do not cover all the costs** we pay for: the flooding from extreme weather, the power outages that make our lives inconvenient, and the heat waves making smog worse and people sick. Putting a price on carbon is a way to make sure that these forms of energy reflect their **real costs.** //



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Put Canada first

// Canada is part of a **global transition**, building a low-polluting energy system to fuel our economy. This provides an **opportunity** for us. With a strong cap and trade system in place, Canadian businesses can gain experience and **market advantage** in less polluting technologies. Acting now puts Canada ahead. //

Poll

5 minutes

- Which of these narratives was most successful?
- Which of these narratives was least successful?



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The “optimal” narrative

// Carbon pricing is a **fair** way to **share** responsibility for the carbon pollution that causes climate change and to **reward** the companies that are most efficient and pollute the least. It's not **fair** that heavy energy users can **dump** their carbon pollution in the air **we all breathe**. Polluters should be held accountable and should pay for the pollution that they force all of us to live with. //

#2 with
very
concerned

#1 with
somewhat
concerned

#1 with
centre-
right

Case study: Canadian Narrative Design

Survey findings

Fair/unfair	Successful
Makes sense	Successful
Personal responsibility	Successful
Market failure	Only liked by base
Hidden costs	Widely rejected
Put Canada first	Widely rejected

Group work | Language, Keywords and Narratives

20 minutes

Learning from the Canadian example, the speech by Margaret Thatcher, and the discussion about the concerns and values of people in the general public:

Identify language, keywords and a narrative around carbon pricing that would speak to the national values and concerns in your country and build public support.



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Three big questions

1.

Do we talk about climate change?

2.

How do we talk about how the policy works?

3.

How do we talk about what the revenue does?

Group work | Describing carbon pricing

5 minutes

On Mural:

- Write down the main elements in describing carbon pricing



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1. Do we talk about climate change?

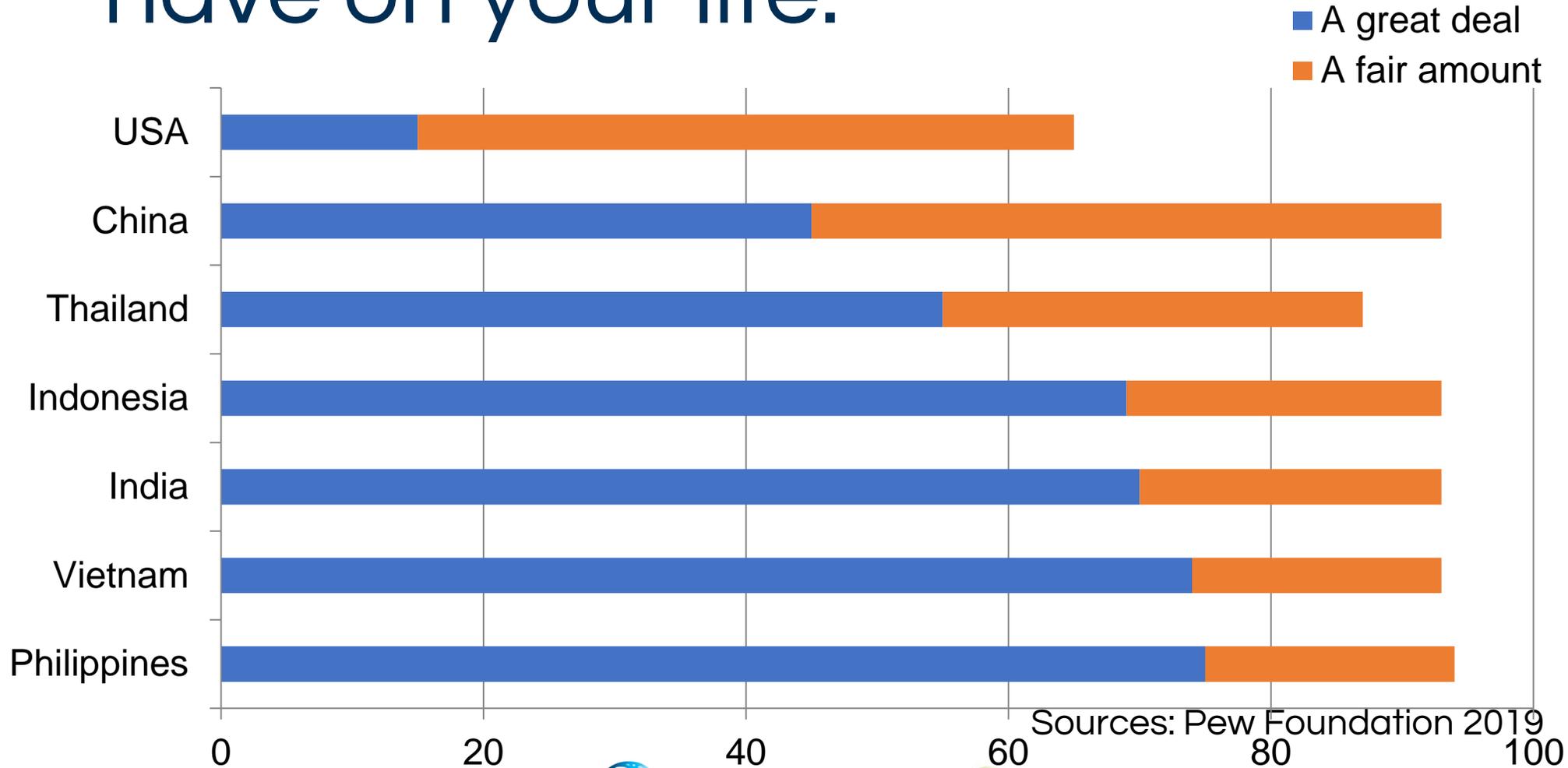
Foreground

- Climate change is the reason for the policy
- Most people say they are concerned about climate change
- We need to increase awareness of climate change and understanding of policy responses

Background

- Other concerns provide stronger narratives
- Attitudes to climate change are socially divided
- Most people say that cost of living is more important than climate change

How much impact will climate change have on your life:



Alternative narratives

Health – especially the impacts of air pollution

Economic opportunities in new energy technologies

Reducing waste

National leadership

Self reliance / independence – reducing dependence on imported fuels

Focus on what revenue will be spent on

Or another value from the last session?

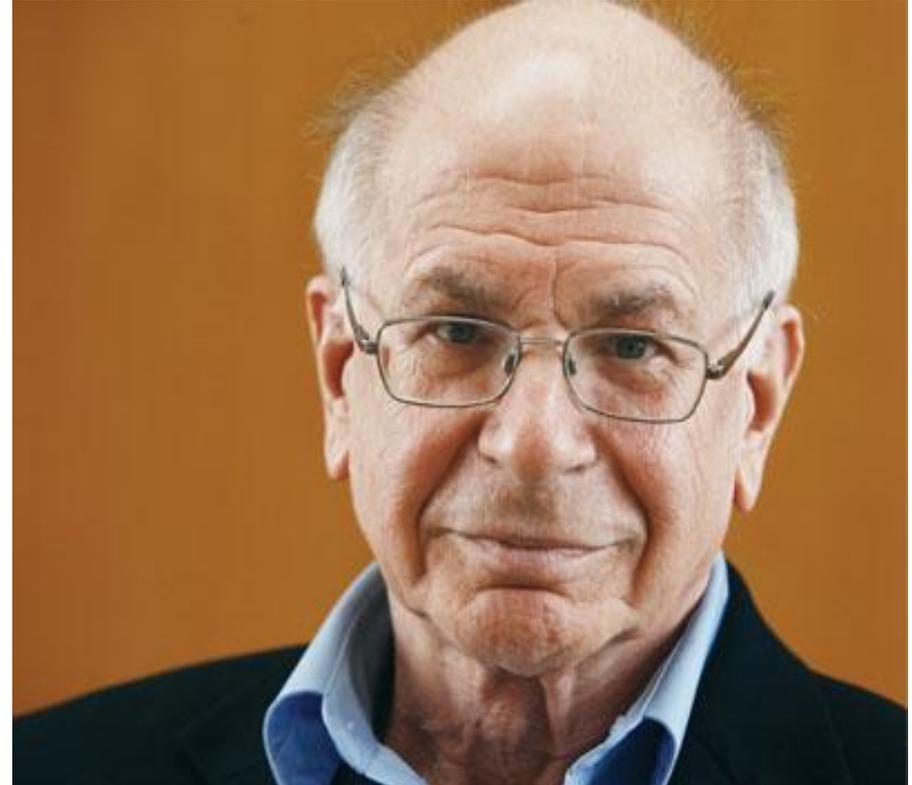
Talking about the cost

There is a tendency to explain carbon pricing in terms of economic theory

Is this effective?

Talking about the cost: prof. Daniel Kahnemann

“Economists think about what people ought to do. Psychologists watch what they actually do.”



Talking about the cost: Daniel Kahnemann

1. People are somewhat willing to pay a short-term cost for an uncertain short-term benefit.
2. They are less willing to pay a short-term cost for a certain long-term benefit.
3. They are still less willing to pay a short-term cost to avoid a certain long-term cost.
4. They are least willing to pay a certain short-term cost to avoid an uncertain long-term cost.

From: Kahneman, Tversky, Slovic: "Judgement Under Uncertainty: Heuristics and Biases" (1982)



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Opposition to carbon pricing focuses on the cost

Rival narratives on carbon pricing
Ontario, Canada.

1. Promoting rising rebates
2. Promoting rising costs



2. How do we talk about the mechanism?

Foreground

- People need to know how it works
- The mechanism is the point of the policy
- People can see that it is a simple and effective policy

Background

- People care most about what it does
- Talking about pricing and tax makes people think of “costs” not benefits
- People don’t trust economists or finance

How do we label the mechanism (in the case of a carbon tax)?

Not a “tax”

- Taxes are not popular
- The “tax” frame is damaging for support

A tax

- Be honest and authentic
- Opponents will call it a tax and control the framing



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Simple terminology

Technical term	Simplified form
Prescriptive regulations	Government rules deciding what people can and cannot do
Aggregate outcomes	Benefit the greater good
Revenue recycling	Using the carbon price revenue to reduce other taxes
Social cost of carbon	The cost of damage that results from emissions



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3. How do we explain how the revenue is used?

Foreground

- People care most about what the revenue does.
- Talking about spending reduces concerns about what it costs
- People do not trust government to spend it wisely

Background

- The price is the real point of the policy, not the revenue
- Government should have flexibility to allocate the revenue as they need

Visible use of revenues

“Clear evidence of how the money was spent ensured the political future of cap-and-trade, so the face of cap and trade was clean buses and trucks, electric cars, low carbon transit – solutions that made a visible difference especially in low-income communities”

- Stanley Young, Communications Director, California Air Resources Board



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Group work | Talking to your target audience (if time)

10 minutes

Considering your target audiences.

When presenting carbon pricing will you:

- Talk about reducing climate change *or* talk about other issues and benefits?
- Talk about how it works (the mechanism) *or* what it will do (the results)?
- Talk about the cost *or* talk about the use of the revenue?



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Questions?

