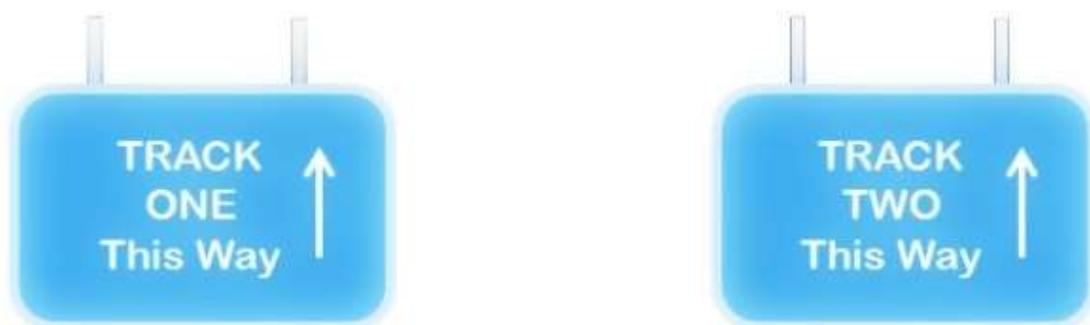


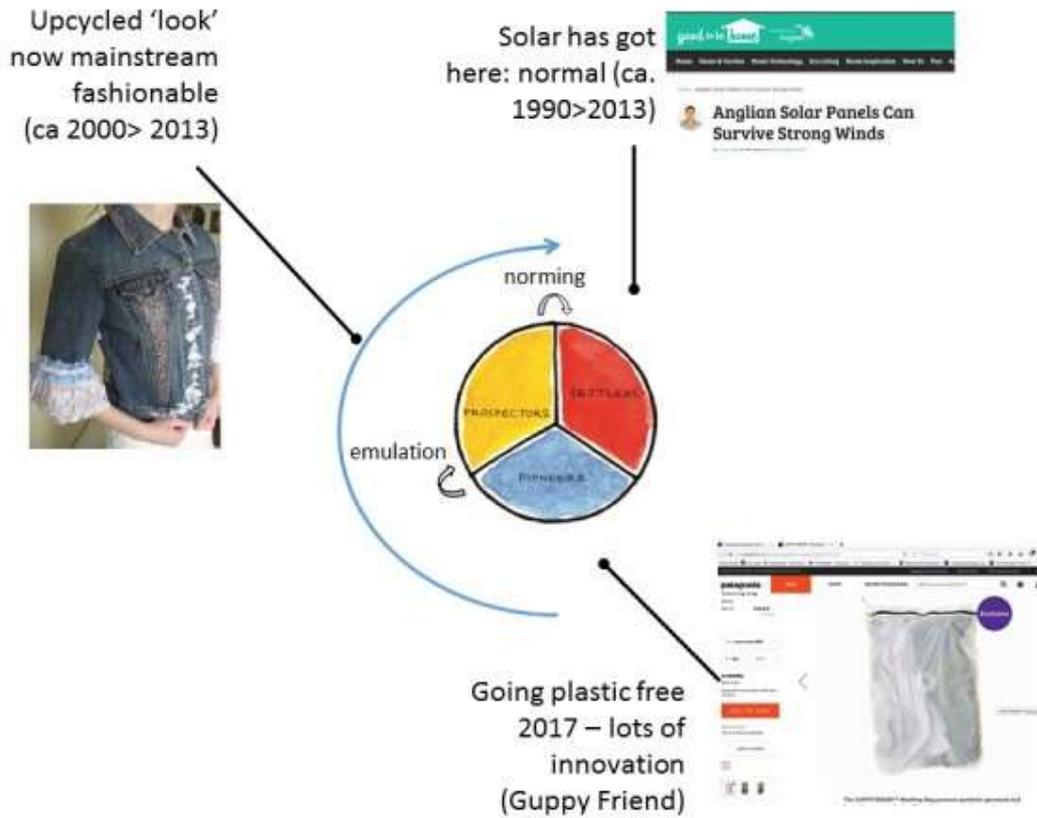
## A Two-Track Tool For Issues Development and Campaign Design

(A Campaign Strategy blog at <http://threeworlds.campaignstrategy.org/?p=1746> 7 December 2017, Chris Rose, [chris@campaignstrategy.co.uk](mailto:chris@campaignstrategy.co.uk))



Campaigners will be very aware that not many people spend much of their time bothering about “issues”. For most people, most of the time, what bothers and pre-occupies campaigners, ‘policy wonks’, political nerds and political scientists, is of little interest to the ‘mainstream’. Some campaign organisations use distinctions like ‘elite’ audiences, often meaning those ‘already in the know’ about the issue, as opposed to ‘public audiences’. And some will have experienced the quixotic way in which, once ‘an issue breaks into the mainstream’, it ceases to become ‘an issue’ (contested, argued about) and becomes ‘normal’, at which point most of us assume we always knew about it.

I’ve been looking at how the ‘plastics issue’ seems to have ‘suddenly’ emerged ‘as if from nowhere’. It’s obviously an ‘environmental’ or ‘sustainability’ issue yet until very recently it’s been a hyper-specialised interest, even for most sustainability professionals. My [last blog featured](#) two new products people can use to stop microplastic (microfibres) draining from their washing machines and getting into drains, sewers, and the sea, where it then enters the food-chain. I showed one of these products, the ‘Guppyfriend’ wash bag being promoted by clothing company Patagonia, to a room full of such professionals on a Cambridge University Masters Course, as an example of an innovation which Pioneers were taking up and Prospectors and Settlers could be expected to follow, (in this case I guess, quickly). I asked for a ‘hands up’: “has anybody heard of it?” Nobody had. Microplastic wasn’t on their radar: it wasn’t in their particular issues silo (though I did notice some people writing it down).

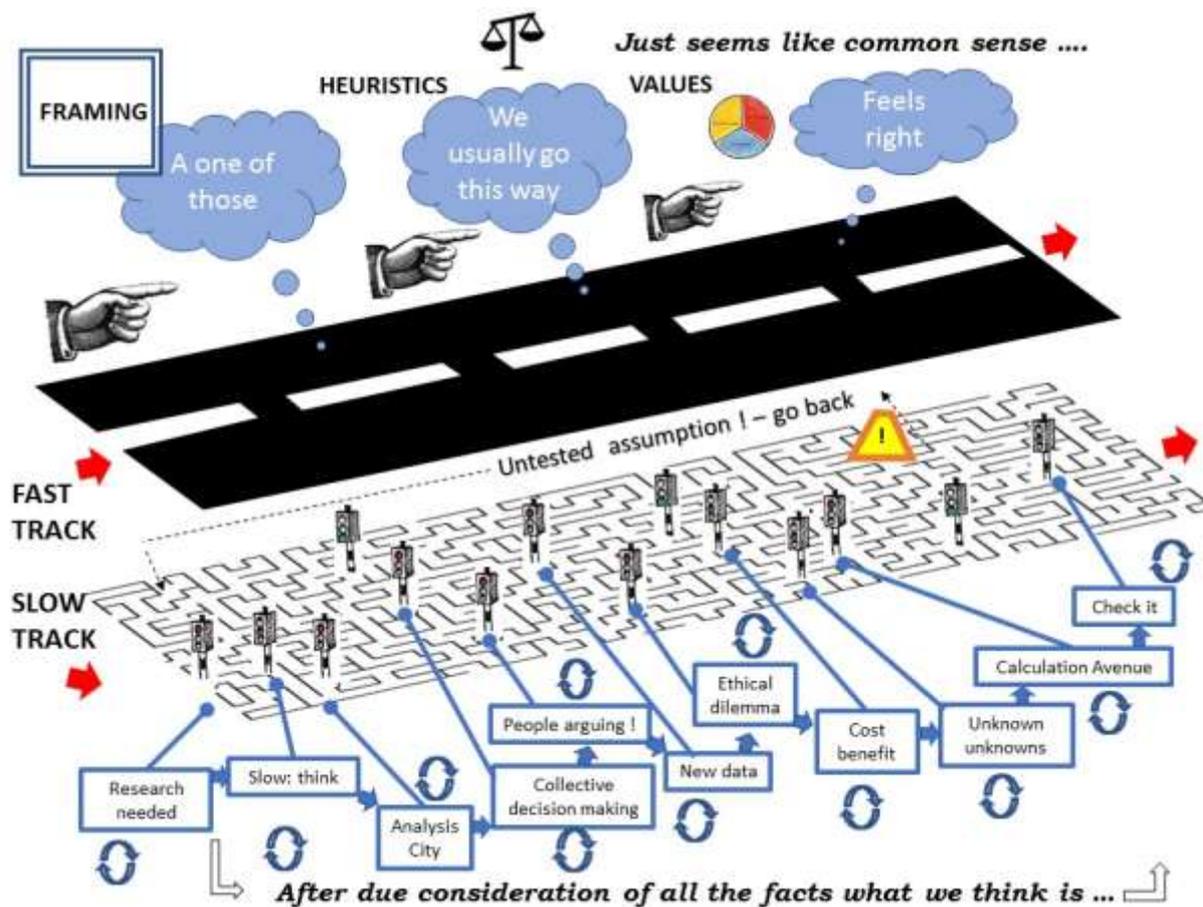


Above: the spread-of-behaviours example slide from a presentation to [CISL](#) courses in November 2017. Illustrates how new behaviours start in Pioneers and if they spread to become 'normal' are next adopted by Prospectors and then Settlers (values groups dynamic). Solar pv/thermal has got 'all the way round', the trend for 'upcycling' clothes is now adopted by Pioneers and Prospectors, and 'going plastic free' is just starting out. It's also an example of an issue breaking from obscurity on Track Two and appearing in Track One, in this case manifest in a new behaviour of buying a washing bag to trap plastic fibres. (For other going-plastic-free examples [see here](#)). A product converts the complex issue into a much simpler choice, enabling participation on Track One terms.

My next blog looks in more detail at the way plastics pollution nearly became a big thing (Track One) almost fifty years ago, then languished in obscurity for thirty years (Track Two), before finally surfacing like a fully-formed whale, gradually breaking from the waves (onto Track One).

This blog proposes a way of thinking about issues in terms of two tracks, which may be applied to any issue.

Here's one visualisation of the Two Tracks.



**Track Two** is defined by careful, often painstaking, deliberate thinking and is obscure to those not involved. It's also not a single track but more a network of tracks or city of connected communities, many obscure to each other. The development of ideas and new behaviours on that track is slow because it depends on analysis, which reveals complexity. Track Two has a potentially infinite 'bandwidth' but no human has the 'Renaissance' capacity to grasp it all. A working assumption at almost every point on Track Two is that "there is more to this than meets the eye". Track Two is the natural home and breeding ground of 'issues'.

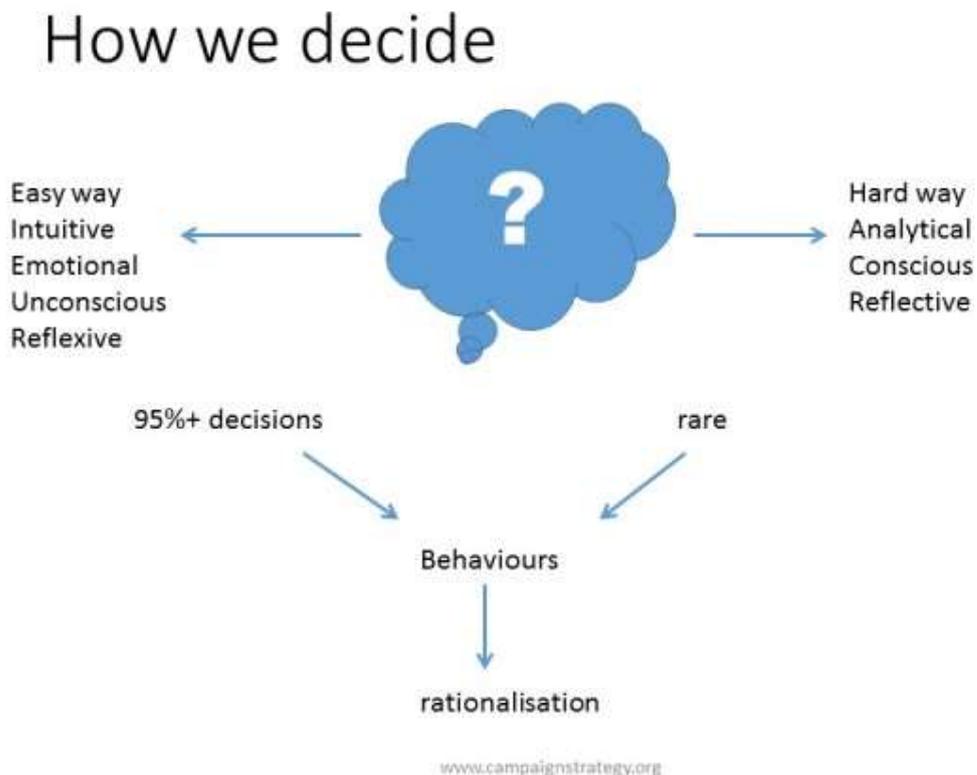
**Track One** is where things can move much faster. Thinking and decision-making here is dominated by unconscious intuition. Behaviour does not have to wait for analysis but is powered by framing, heuristics and values. Track One is mainstream life, and it has far less capacity for complexity than Track Two. Track One errs to simplification. Anything too complicated won't get onto Track One, and anything which becomes too complicated may get diverted off. Track One works on the basis "What You See Is All There Is".

Issues can persist on Track Two almost indefinitely but they will not change the mainstream. Issues gaining promotion to Track One, tend get quickly resolved in Track One terms (ie perceived to be resolved), even if those familiar with them on Track Two, see unfinished business.

The business of campaigns, for otherwise they would generally not be needed, is to get an issue onto Track One, and to do that, they need to be designed in 'Track One' terms. This means campaigners need to understand how Track One works (itself a Track Two task), and planners face the often unpopular task of taking some of the 'issue' as perceived in its full complex glory on Track Two, and finding a way to drive just a bit of it onto Track One, in a way that will produce a useful result. That is campaign strategy.

### A Recap: Two Speed Thinking

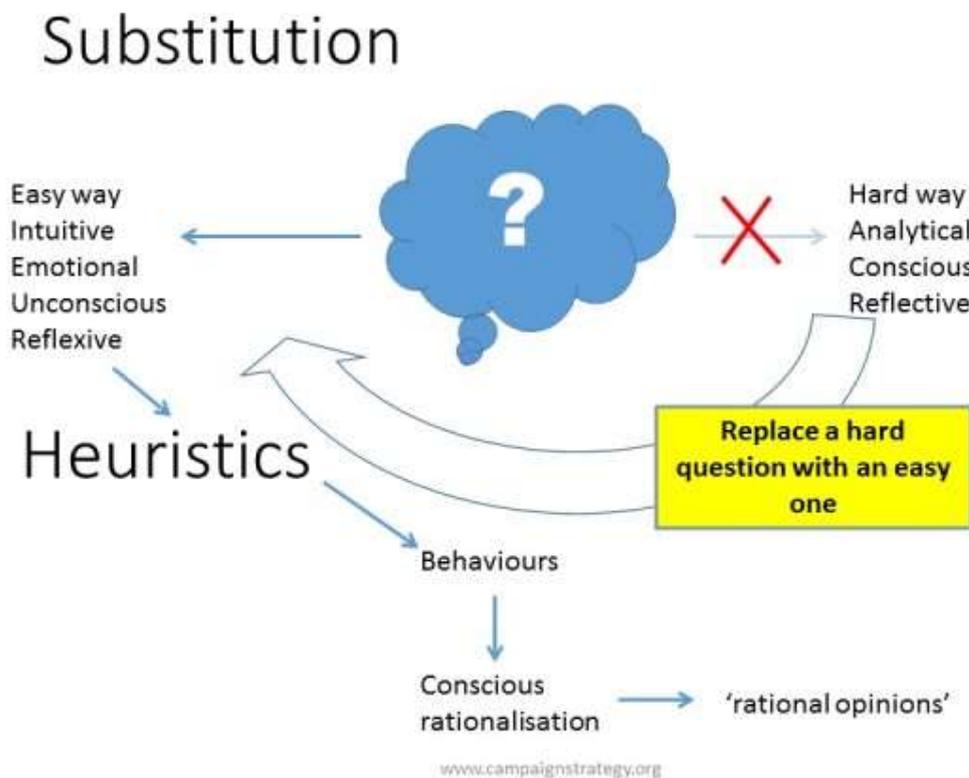
Many readers will recognize that the key difference between Track One and Two is the decision-making divide identified by psychologists Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky.



*Above: Kahneman's System 1 left, and System 2 right.*

Kahneman and Tversky famously showed that we have two modes of thinking: System 1 is the 'intuitive' easy, reflexive, unconscious autopilot which constantly offers us instant

answers that we usually accept. System 2 is the laborious, analytical, reflective process, in which we ‘really think about’ whatever ‘it’ is. System 1 is dominant, shaping the vast majority of our daily decisions, and when confronted by a need to be analytical, if there’s an easier System 1 option on offer, we usually take it. Kahneman calls this ‘substitution’ of System 1 for System 2 and the forms that takes are known as ‘heuristics’ or ‘rules of thumb’, or in posher language, cognitive biases.



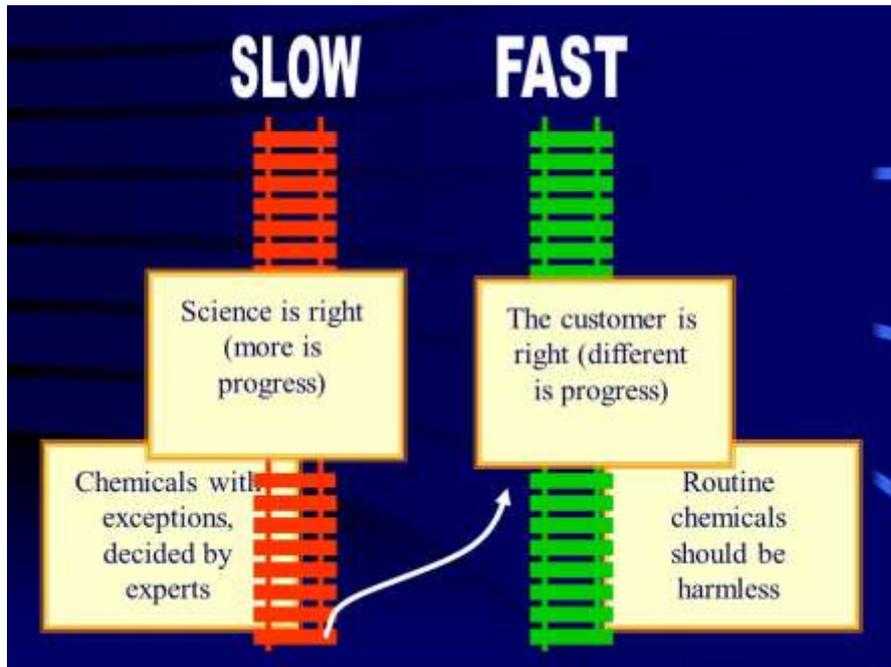
*Above: how substitution works in particular ways which generate testable ‘heuristics’ as studied by Kahneman and other psychologists*

Evolutionary history has provided us with the basic neural wiring of System 1, acting in Kahneman’s words, as a ‘system for jumping to conclusions’. This is why I always try to convince anyone whose project needs to ‘fly’ with anyone outside their specialist community (where System 2 is probably in use), that their communications need to work in System 1 terms. That means using the systematic tools of the unconscious mind, such as [Framing](#), [Heuristics](#) and [Motivational Values](#). If a call to action, problem or solution first requires public explanation, it will probably struggle.

### **An Example**

Below is a slide from a campaign planning presentation for WWF, which is suitably vintage (2003) and so gives nothing away. It proposes reframing an ‘issue’ (hormone-disrupting chemicals affecting health) from being ‘about science’, very System 2, to being about the world of consumer goods and consumer choice (operating on well understood System 1

rules). In the terms of this blog, it amounts to shifting (the public part of) the campaign from Track Two to Track One.



*In 2003 the WWF toxics campaign was operating in the frame (left) of 'science' and bogged down by industry gaming of the science process. This proposed shifting to a faster track (consumer choice) with different 'rules', to get a better outcome.*

Shopping, it need hardly be said, operates almost entirely on a System 1 basis, and that's how advertisers and retailers want to keep it. In this case, shifting from Track Two to Track one involved changing the context or 'battlefield' and thus the actors involved, as well as the proposition (and visuals, engagement and storytelling opportunities etc – see more on this example in my book [How to Win Campaigns](#), Appendix Two).

### **Not Just Individuals**

As cognitive psychologists, the work of Kahneman and Tversky was on the individual human mind. Their ideas were tested and verified with experiments which showed how *individuals* think. Consequently most applications of their work have naturally centred on individual behaviours. For instance in 'behaviour change' campaigns, marketing and advertising.

We tend not to conceive of the two ways of making decisions as applying to 'issues' or to groups of people, whole societies or institutional systems but it seems to me that these have evolved into two quite distinct domains defined by whether System 1 or 2 is dominant, and that the very functioning of those ways of thinking, acts to keep them largely on separate tracks.

My earlier diagram tries to show the fast Track One as like an elevated urban motorway, running above the largely hidden and far more convoluted Track Two.

In this case I've imagined 'traffic' (eg of ideas, behaviours) which progresses towards the same destination in both cases but which flows along far more easily on the upper Track One. Up

there, if it passes the requirements for Track One ‘traffic’, it can move smoothly with little social friction. For something to be flowing along on Track One, it’s normalised and we don’t question it much.

Anything routinely and widely accepted is by definition tootling along on Track One, often being done again and again, with much thought being given to it. Plastics as something useful and essential got up there in the 1960s if not the 1950s, and has been there ever since, which is why we can now make so of it much without anybody really noticing. (Plastic production now exceeds the [weight of all human beings alive](#), every year). That, and the fact that we assume ‘recycling’ makes it ‘ok’. More on that in the next blog.

Down on Track Two, analysis slows things right down. The processes of System 2 thinking put more and more information into play. It has much greater information content than Track One. But establishing what that information *means*, is a long and tedious process with many dead ends and ‘traffic lights’. I’ve just shown a few indicative examples typical of ‘science’ led policy processes but you could do the same thing for development of principles of law, in human rights, or in medicine with its double-blind tests. Almost every step of the way creates a waiting game, as research and testing or just debate and deliberation takes place.

Governments sometimes aspire to ‘evidence-based’ decision making (Track Two) but ‘politics’ and needs of the moment (Track One) often get in the way.

Up on Track One our behaviours and attitudes are largely untroubled by deliberation. The requirements for forward motion simply include, getting ‘waved on’ by the System 1 mental traffic cops of Framing, Heuristics and Values (not necessarily in that order). If something fails those tests, and becomes too confusing or unrewarding or simply has no visibility, it can drop from Track One to Track Two.

Debating the details of any “issue” almost always takes place on Track Two. Getting any significant *change* to the issue almost always requires public support, which in order to create political support (aka political space, political appetite or willingness), almost always has to happen on Track One. So to be successful, campaign design usually needs to project the issue onto Track One.

What defines the difference between Track One and 2 is not information, knowledge, significance or understanding but how communications works. Track One predominantly works on System 1 intuitive communication. Track Two works on System 2 analytical communication.

None of us are purely Track One or Track Two people. These are not tribes but spheres of activity, places we spend time, although some of us spend far more time in One or Two, than others. Sometimes far too much time, as my partner keeps reminding me.

## The 'Traffic Cops' Of Track One



**Framing** involves being recognized as a 'type' of thing, a mental frame whose operating terms are used by the brain to give meaning to information. If information does not fit the frame, the brain discards it and we are not even aware that's happened.

Not everything on the fast Track One is a desirable positive: dominant ideas about what's bad are also there, such as 'pollution' (never good), and this is why the plastics industry has successfully strived to have plastic debris framed as 'litter', and not pollution (see [this blog](#)).

The **Heuristics** traffic cop has a whole Highway Code of rules to deploy, all defined by being accepted by more people than not, such as 'social proof', meaning that if most others seem to be doing it, then it's probably right. The more we saw others using plastic, the more we used it, and the more we used it, the more we accepted (the consistency heuristic) the 'fantastic-plastic' frame that says it's wonderful and harmless [behaviour>opinion].

Motivational **Values** work a bit like a vastly more complex combination of heuristics but they boil down to whether or not something *feels* good or 'right' because it helps us meet our particular set of dominant needs. If I am a Settler, it will feel right if the something ticks a box for safety, security or identity; if a Prospector, it needs to help deliver me esteem of others (eg looking good) or self esteem, and if I'm a Pioneer, it needs to help me innovate, explore new ideas, or be a net benefit in the 'bigger picture'.

### Track Connections

I've shown the two tracks as completely isolated from one another but in reality of course this is not true. Major events which disrupt our behaviours (such as disasters, conflicts) and other things such as unexpected big signals from authority (eg government), from 'celebrity' figures and the media, can also promote 'new issues' onto the fast track but only if they present in simple, tangible forms that can be processed by System 1.

Most of the time though, the 'traffic' from the Track Two world to Track One is information which confirms what is already the conventional wisdom (confirmation bias). Track One is conservative: it sucks up new information which reinforces the dominant perception but ignores what 'doesn't fit'.

System 1 only works on what we already 'know' to be true or right. Amongst it's many other effects, it always prioritises going on doing what we are *already* doing (the commitment, consistency heuristics) and used to doing, over diverting to a new behaviour. The overall result is conservatism: it's a domain of instant autopilot decision-making constituting what's 'mainstream' because others are doing it (social proof), and because it's easier to do so (cognitive ease, requiring least effort).

## Compartmentalisation

To remain 'sane' functioning human beings, we also compartmentalise life to limit the amount of 'System 2' thinking required on a daily basis. Our day job may require us to use System 2, but we look forward to 'switching off' in the evenings. Likewise we are more likely to try new behaviours when on holiday than when at work, and exploring 'new ideas' may be firewalled by reading a few pages of a book before bed or watching the odd documentary.

'Education' and 'training' require System 2 thinking: learning new things is hard, and we need 'time off' from both. Plus when we are very young and most like 'sponges' for new information, we tend to accept what we are told by parents or teachers, and this is an influence of System 1 (the authority heuristic). It gets more exhausting once we are asked to question everything and exhorted to test ideas for ourselves.



*Thinking about it*

Yet society *needs* System 2 thinking. The advancement of knowledge and understanding has long been understood to bring benefits. For instance discovering that fatal diseases are not brought about by upsetting 'the gods' or 'bad humours' in the air but things like bacteria and viruses.

So our social ecosystems have created 'think tanks' and whole domains where System 2 rules, or are supposed to, such as in Science, Medicine and the Law, in which we require testable 'evidence'.

This sort of evidence is not like the 'evidences' provided by advertisers, story-tellers or film-makers. 'Evidences' here mean simply cues, usually visual, which for instance, advertisers know will be immediately taken by our System 1 reflexes to 'prove' something without any analysis being necessary. A shot of an egg frying on a pavement signifies that "it's hot". Amazon informs us that "people like you" also bought x y and z (the similarity and social proof heuristics).

Compartmentalisation helps maintain the distinction between the Two Tracks, with limited interaction and generally, lower participation on the slow Track Two. The consequences

include the scientists struggling to ‘educate the public’ about ‘science’, and the overall primitive understanding of how the political system works, in the US and UK.

In general, although most of us have a fairly good idea what’s happening on Track One, Track Two is largely invisible from Track One. It requires an effort to get into that world.

And if you are a national political leader and need to deal with an entire waterfront of problems from health care to defence and the economy, or the ‘news media’, then a category like ‘pollution’ is likely to end up represented by just the most salient ‘issue’, that most recognized easily by the public, and so that’s the one to ‘focus on’ and act on. (Cognitive scientists studying the workings of System 1 call this ‘[single action bias](#)’).

So far as I know, Daniel Kahneman hasn’t really written much about how his System 1 and 2 manifest themselves at group or institutional level or in relation to social trends and dynamics but he does devote an interesting page or two to organisations (417-8 if you are interested) in [Thinking Fast and Slow](#).

‘Organizations’ he says:

*‘are better than individuals when it comes to avoiding errors, because they naturally think more slowly and have the power to impose orderly procedures. Organizations can institute and enforce the application of useful checklists, as well as more elaborate exercises, such as reference-class forecasting and the premortem. At least in part by a distinctive vocabulary, organizations can also encourage a culture in which people watch out for one another as they approach minefields. Whatever else it produces, an organization is a factory that manufactures judgements and decisions’.*

Which describes the ‘Track Two’ role of campaign groups and policy and research institutes quite well. It’s also one reason why effective campaigns are very hard to run without organizations, and why behind every issue that breaks onto Track One, there’s usually a long tail of activity on Track Two, much of it often by NGOs.

### **Applying Track One and Two To Campaign Design**

It’s true that campaigns can be started with no ‘Track Two’ type input. The advent of social media has made it possible for millions of one-person ‘campaigns’ to be started in Track One terms with a single post, and sometimes by pure serendipity, they spread and become established but only very rarely. Those which do become established, frequently run into subsequent difficulties as the organisers get to know more about the stakeholders, dynamics and details of ‘the issue’.

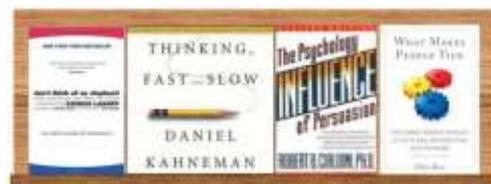


Here's a summary of some of the differences between Track One and Track Two.

	TRACK ONE	TRACK TWO
Dominant decision method (thinking)	Intuitive, automatic, unconscious (System 1)	Analytical, reflective, conscious (System 2)
Operating experience	Easy, natural	Laborious
Speed (ideas, behaviours)	Fast	Slow
Bandwidth/ information capacity	Low	High
Internal commonality of experience	High	Low
Mutual recognition of reference points within Track	High	High in sub-tracks, otherwise low
Visibility track to track	Track Two largely invisible	Track One largely visible
Repetition of processes, behaviours	Default	Unusual
Common descriptive 'handles'	Mainstream, public, popular, normal, general public	Elite, professional, academic, technical, specialist, disciplines
Indicators	Icons, symbols	Footnotes
Information acquisition reflex	Acquired where it confirms existing beliefs	Sought as needed for analysis
Default appraisal perspective	WYSIATI	There's more to this than meets the eye
Internal potential for contagion	High	Low
Lumper/splitter tendency	Lumper	Splitter
Complexity	Reducer	Increaser
Perception tendency	One world	Multiple worlds
Dominant source of individual status	Salience, prominence	Forefront reputation

## Books

And here's a small Track One bookshelf:(left) George Lakoff's primer on framing, Daniel Kahneman's and Robert Cialdini's books on heuristics, all well worth reading although Cialdini's book is a lot easier going than Kahneman's, and (right) my book on motivational values. All three topics are also summarised in [How to Win Campaigns](#).



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