Political Correctness, Brexit, Trump and Campaigns

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Rejection of ‘Political Correctness’ played a role in the vote for Brexit and Trump in 2016 but what does it mean for campaigners and ‘progressives’ who are often perceived as standard-bearers for ‘PC’?

Commentators argue over what Political Correctness is but academic research shows it comes in several different forms, including ‘authoritarian’ and ‘egalitarian’ (see below). As mentioned in The Values Story of the Brexit Split Part 1 it seems to me that in values terms, ‘political correctness’ occurs when one values group projects it’s own values at others who do not share them, along with exhortation or censure in a do /say this – don’t do /say that – think this/ don’t think that way.

Any such projection is designed to be, and if it’s not designed to be it will be anyway taken as, intrusive and controlling at best, and at worst, intrusive, controlling and critical of the target ‘as a person’. In grand terms you could call it an attempt at ‘values hegemony’, and likely to cause rejection and resentment which can generate a backlash escalating into a ‘culture war’.

Whether that becomes visible as a focused public debate or just smoulders as a resentment depends on the opportunity for it to become organised (as elections and referenda can do). Who ‘wins’ depends on numbers, activation and who controls ‘levers of power’ and influence. But as a rule, I’d advise against them as a campaign strategy: NGOs would do well to find alternatives to ‘PC’ as a route to change.

In the backwash from the Trump election and the continuing agonies of ‘Brexit’, the dynamics of ‘culture clashes’ have been much discussed. Recent books include National Populism by Roger Eatwell and Matthew Goodwin (2018, about the UK), and Cultural Evolution (2018 with a global perspective and a US slant), the latest values magnum opus by Ron Inglehart of the World Values Survey (his book Cultural Backlash with Pippa Norris is out next year). Both are worth reading and I’ll return to the wider values issues raised by Brexit in particular in a subsequent blog but in this post shares my personal perspective on ‘political correctness’. I’m no expert and would welcome comments (see end of post or contact me here).

Politically Incorrect Trump

Shortly before Donald Trump was elected, Aaron Blake wrote in the Washington Post:

*If there is one unifying principle the defines Donald Trump's campaign for president -- besides, perhaps, winning and being classy -- it is that political correctness is bad.*
After Trump got elected, Spencer Greenberg a US political-social analyst at Clearer Thinking correlated 138 variables with voting for Trump, and found that rejection of ‘Political Correctness’ (PC) came second after political affiliation in explaining how likely someone was to vote for him (study here).

EU FU - PC ? Depends who you were at the time (June 2016, Wells next the Sea)

Copied by Nigel Farage and Arron Banks in Leave.EU, Trump gamed political correctness to signal values- and interest-alignment with an audience. It sucked media attention away from topics he didn’t want to debate, and onto his ground. Overtly flouting or attacking PC-ness helped Trump frame and control the debate, aided and abetted by the outraged response of ethically-minded ‘progressive’ media, politicians and supporters. It focussed attention in a similar way to Lynton Crosby’s shock ‘dead dog’ tactic. It appeared to validate the populist proposition that he was ‘on the side of the people’ against an ‘elite’ because those who denounced him most strongly could be relied upon to turn out to be well-educated, and with better job prospects than most of his base.

Getting people to agree with you by revealing that a problem is caused by an already-unpopular opponent is a tactic that many issue campaigns have used. It eventually turned around McDonalds on health and environmental campaigns on otherwise esoteric and easily ignored issues such as the fate of rainforests and factory farming. But for Trump and Leave.EU it worked as a magical simplifier, relegating to the side-lines the ‘serious issues agenda’ which would face any President when elected to run the US as a country, and drowning out the details of the UK’s EU relationships in a chorus of values-dog whistles on immigration and ‘control’.

No Longer Insurgents

Normally these are insurgent tactics of guerilla underdog groups, and one reason the ‘progressives’ reacted so naively to them may be that for reasons of history, they still think of themselves as the insurgents. It may seem axiomatic for example that any cause group on the side of ‘minorities’ fits this bill. Yet by 2016 the Pioneer values group, which skewed to
not voting for Brexit or Trump, was now the largest (eclipsing Settlers and Prospectors and loosely equivalent to Inglehart’s ‘post materailists’) in both countries.

A strategic dilemma that Pioneer-dominated cause groups now face is how to adapt their strategies to reflect the fact that although they are still often dwarfed by opponents (eg Greenpeace v oil companies) their ideas have become mainstream, particularly among many political and highly educated ‘elites’ doing well in the information or knowledge economy. In short, Trump and Brexit turned ‘inter-sectionality’ on its head. More of that in a subsequent blog.

**PC Was Unpopular**

Whether by accident or design, the brilliance of the attack by on political correctness by Trump and the pro-Brexit camp was that it was already unpopular, and that dislike even reached across into the enemy camp.

In the US, from the right, a 2017 Cato Institute survey found 71% of Americans agreed that ‘political correctness has done more to silence important discussions our society needs to have’ as opposed to ‘political correctness does more to help people avoid offending others’ (28%). But a 2016 study by the liberal-leaning Pew Foundation found a similar result. Most Americans (59%) said “too many people are easily offended these days over the language that others use” but only 39% agreed “people need to be more careful about the language they use to avoid offending people with different backgrounds.”

Cato showed 58% of Americans agreed that ‘The political climate these days prevents me from saying things I believe because others might find them offensive’. Some advocates of political correctness might have seen that as a success but 70% agreed, as Donald Trump said, that America has a ‘big problem’ with Political Correctness. (Find the full very detailed survey which also covers symbolic actions like flag-burning, [here](#))
The Cato survey and others show that Americans are divided over ‘PC’ attempts to restrict speech by their views of its motivation, their perception of the effects it has on themselves and others, and what any legal restrictions on ‘hate speech’ might achieve. On most measures Democrats take a more positive view of PCness than Republicans, as do blacks as opposed to whites, with Latinos sometimes closer to Republicans but it is a fine-grained response across many measures.

Far more blacks than whites say people should be careful not to offend others

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Notes: Whites and blacks include only those who are not Hispanic; Hispanics are of any race. No answer responses not shown. Source: Survey conducted June 7-July 5, 2016.

Pew also reported ‘substantial partisan, racial and gender differences’: 78% of Republicans said too many people were easily offended, and only 21% that ‘people should be more careful to avoid offending others’. 61% of Democrats, thought people should be more careful while just 37% thought ‘people these days are too easily offended’. 83% of Trump supporters but only 13% of Clinton supporters felt too many people are easily offended. Black people and women erred towards not giving offence more than Whites or males, with Hispanics in between, older people more concerned about offence than younger ones, and college graduates more concerned than non-graduates.
The UK

PC is not quite such a hot issue in the UK. ‘Hate speech’ is arguably more curtailed in the UK than in the US and it is not such a political divider. At any event there are fewer UK surveys.

A 2007 Ipsos survey asked if ‘Political correctness has gone too far?’, and found 85% agreed, and only 8% disagreed. In 2018 Prospect and YouGov commissioned a bigger study, which used a similar statement to Pew. It found 67% of Britons believed ‘too many people are too easily offended these days over the language that others use,’ while only 33% took the view that care with language is needed ‘to avoid offending people with different backgrounds.’

Prospect reported that British Conservatives ‘look a lot like Republicans’: ‘79 per cent of Tories take the “too easily offended” line, as do 79 per cent of “Leavers”’. But ‘unlike in the US, majorities of generally more liberal groups are also on the “too easily offended” side—Labour voters (57 per cent) and “Remainers” (58 per cent).’

As in the Cato study, Prospect found younger people were less worried about offence than older ones. It also noted a Manchester University study which found that ‘primed’ with the thought ‘being positive about diversity was a “politically correct” attitude’, people became ‘somewhat less likely to be warm about [London’s] multiculturalism’, suggesting ‘that “PC” has some charge as an anti-liberal message’. It also reported that:

‘Focus groups for the think tank Demos found that talk of PC reliably “incensed participants.” They talked of the country being run by too many “do-gooders,” of feeling unable to “stand up” and state their views plainly for fear of being judged, and of feeling like “they are standing on eggshells.”’

But these were white males over 55: a demographic skewed towards Settlers and Golden Dreamer Prospectors.

Leaders

The Prospect - YouGov survey also asked about leadership style. Given a choice of a politician who “spoke bluntly, without worrying about who they offend” and one who “spoke carefully” to avoid “unnecessarily offending people”, 45% expressed a preference for the former, and 38% the latter. EU Remainers split 53% to 33% for the plain speaker but among Leavers it was 62% to 24%.
There are multiple reasons why this might be the case but it has strikingly similar echoes to findings from the US on differences among Trump and Clinton voters on ‘fake news’ and ‘alternative facts’. Elizabeth Segran found ‘Clinton supporters generally value truth and accuracy, while Trump supporters care about authenticity’.

Compared to Pioneers and to an extent Prospector Now People, Settlers and Golden Dreamer Prospectors have a much stronger inclination to seek certainty rather than complexity, and less appetite for novelty and experiment. In times of stress and perceived rapid cultural change, Settlers in particular will also seek a strong leader (Karen Stenner’s ‘authoritarian response’ or reflex – see The Values Story of the Brexit Split (Part 1) slides 44-60). These reflexes may add to the more widely shared weariness with political ‘spin’ and obsfuscation as an additional reason to seek ‘more authentic’ political leaders.

**PC Splits Pioneers**

Pioneers are themselves split over elements of ‘PCness’, particularly over freedom of speech (ie the Values Modes within Pioneers differ in their ‘instinctive’ priorities).

After the Referendum and the Trump election, Harvard researcher Moira Weigel wrote a great account of the development of political correctness ‘Political correctness: how the right invented a phantom enemy’ in The Guardian. She explained that an early example of the current ‘rightwing’ critique of political correctness at US Universities was Richard Bernstein’s 1990 “The Rising Hegemony of the Politically Correct” in the New York Times. At this point it was clearly about attitudes and not just language.

“Biodegradable garbage bags get the PC seal of approval” wrote Bernstein, “Exxon does not.” Such critiques posed a dilemma for ‘progressives’ pitting their Pioneer or ‘post material’ causes such as environmentalism, against their strong reflex in favour of freedom of speech.
Different Forms of Political Correctness

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x_fBYROA7Hk

In 2017 Christine Brophy and Jordan Peterson of Toronto University (see their video here) reported that they had separated two different forms or ‘personalities’ of political correctness: Egalitiarian and Authoritarian. To do so they use a scale of 192 factors related to language, beliefs, and emotions. Both showed a high ‘offence sensitivity’ and (in personality terms) an aversion to ‘disgust’, which they attributed to ‘agreeableneness’ derived from (maternal) compassion.

Their results have been summarised like this:

PC Egalitarians

- Believe cultural forces are responsible for group differences
- Think differences among groups arise from societal injustice
- Support policies and ideas that prop up historically disadvantaged groups
- Show high emotional response to discriminating language
- Have a higher vocabulary and openness to new experiences
- Are likely to identify with historically disadvantaged groups
- Desire a more diverse, democratic governance

PC Authoritarians

- Believe biological forces are responsible for group differences
- Demonstrate a lower vocabulary and more likely to be religious
- Support censorship of offensive material and harsher punitive justice
- Express a general desire to achieve security for people in distress
- Show a higher need for order, and a higher sensitivity to disgust
- Are likely to report a mood or anxiety disorder in themselves or family

Authoritarians, says Brophy, are often assumed to be Conservative but in fact are motivated to pass on strict cultural norms and are intolerant of anything which is not a ‘black and white’ distinction. This description is very similar to Settlers. PC Egalitarians in contrast, are ‘classic Liberals’, and often create post-hoc justifications because they feel the need to help the helpless and disadvantaged, treating adults as children because compassion springs from the unbreakable mother-child bond. That sounds like Pioneers but they too can become authoritarian, only authoritarian ethicals.

Both right and left wing Authoritarian groups, says Peterson, desire homogeniety but whereas the right wing seek to achieve it through exclusion and purity, the left seek it through inclusion and eqality.

On the basis of statistical analysis, Brophy and Peterson argue that PC-ness is a ‘real thing’.

So what might PC look like in motivational values terms?
**PC Across Motivational Values**

What now follows is my personal take on the history of ‘PC’ related to **CDSM** (Cultural Dynamics) Motivational Values (download the slides here). It also draws on the studies mentioned earlier.

https://www.slideshare.net/tochrisrose/a-possible-history-of-political-correctness-in-values-terms

While CDSM do not have any survey data based on asking direct questions about political correctness, a number of the of their Attribute statements relate to aspects of the ‘PC issue’.

These ‘Attributes’ are plotted on the Cultural Dynamics ‘values Map’:

And for reference, the positions of the Values Modes:
Some Attributes relevant to political correctness:
Setting aside earlier usages, ‘political correctness’ started life in early-mid C20th authoritarian regimes (Nazis, Communists) as an exploitation of Settler and Golden Dreamer values (such as power over others). Two relevant Attributes from the CDSM (British) Values Map are ‘Power’ and ‘Conformity’, measured by testing the statements:

**Conformity = Rules + Propriety**

‘They believe that people should do what they are told. They think people should follow rules at all times, even when no-one is watching. It is important to them always to behave properly. They want to avoid doing anything people would say is wrong’.

**Power = Material Wealth + Control Others**

‘It is important for them to be rich. They want to have lots of money and expensive things. It is important for them to be in charge and tell others what to do. They want people to do what they tell them’.

(I am presenting these as indicative, not as ‘explanations’ of the Nazi state or various authoritarian Communist states. For example, CDSM has also correlated values measurements with the ‘dark triad’ of narcissism, machiavellinism and psycopathy – to discuss, contact Pat Dade. See also Inglehart’s book *Cultural Evolution*).
This plays no direct role in the current ‘PC Wars’ but is the historical reference point used by 1960s radicals to refer to ‘Political Correctness’ in an ironic put-down of over-zealous, over-doctrinaire or self-righteous fellow travelers.

As described in political histories of ‘PC’, from the 1960s-1980s use of the term remained largely confined to ‘leftish’ radical thinkers and movements. This included as a joke by various left-wing political intellectuals, and within feminism (such as over a dispute about BDSM and sexuality, featuring an early use of organizing around [against] PC in a 1982 “Speakout on Politically Incorrect Sex” in New York). These relatively esoteric uses of PC gradually gained more attention as the term was applied to counter discrimination on grounds of race, gender and sexuality but were initially driven by Pioneer-centred values such as Creativity, Conscience and Self-Choice. CDSM measures them with these statements (genderzied in the surveys):
Creativity: ‘Thinking up new ideas and being creative is important to him. He likes doing things his own original way’.

Conscience: ‘I believe that, to be a decent human being, I should follow my conscience regardless of the law. I think that nothing is more immoral than blind obedience’.

Self-choice: ‘It is important to him to make his own decisions about what he does. He likes to be free to plan and choose his activities for himself’.

Stage 3 saw activation of further Pioneer centred values in more organized advocacy and campaigns which set out to challenge homophobia, racism and other discrimination or repression: the emergence of the ‘isms’. Being ‘PC’ now became a positive requirement.

Motivated by values such as Justice, Benevolence, Open-ness, Caring and Universalism, mainly Pioneer activists started directing messages about how they should talk and act at ‘non PC’ people. By this time, Settlers were starting to feel a minority in their own land, which indeed, numerically, they had become.
In 1973 Britain was mainly a Settler society. By 2016 the Settlers were a minority of 25%. So when Pioneers started to advocate and campaign for minority rights for ethnic groups and other minorities, Settlers who have a strong attachment to familiar culture, gradually began to feel excluded and forgotten. It set the context for a clash of values over the 2016 Referendum. See also ‘Values Story of the Brexit Split, Part 1’.

Over the next decades, Pioneer-led campaigns brought about changes in laws, for instance on ‘gay marriage’, partly made possible by shifting psycho-demographics (ie more Pioneers, more Now People Prospectors).

CDSM test statements:

**Benevolence:** = **Caring** + **Loyalty**

‘It’s very important to them to help people around them. They want to care for other people. It is important to them to be loyal to their friends. They want to devote themselves to people close to them’.

**Caring:** ‘It is very important to him to help people around him. He wants to care for other people.’

**Openness:** ‘It is important for him to listen to people who are different than himself. Even if he disagrees with the other person, he still wants to understand them.’

**Justice:** ‘He thinks it is important that every person in the world be treated equally. He wants justice for everybody, even people he doesn’t know.’

**Universalism:** Justice + Openness + Nature
‘They think it is important that every person in the world be treated equally. They want justice for everybody, even people they don’t know. It is important for them to listen to people who are different than themselves. Even if they disagree with the other person, they still want to understand them. They strongly believe that people should care for nature. Looking after the environment is important to them’.

A debate now began within Pioneers, between the ethical warriors (such as the Concerned Ethicals who seek ethical clarity), and the Flexible Individualists who are strongly driven by self-reflexivity and freedom of expression.

CDSM’s Attribute ‘Free’, tests agreement with this statement:

**Free:** I want complete openness and freedom for the whole of society, so that everyone can express themselves. I really enjoy the feeling of walking around with no clothes on.

Well at least the first part applies ... although Arron Banks does describe his experiences of swimming naked with Nigel Farage, in *The Bad Boys of Brexit*.

As champions of free expression, Libertarian intellectuals (probably all Pioneers) denounced suppression of free-speech on ethical grounds as illiberal. For example, says Weigel, Allan Bloom’s attack on “cultural relativism” in *The Closing of the American Mind*, Roger Kimball in April 1990 in *The New Criterion* (Tenured Radicals: How Politics Has Corrupted our Higher
Education), and Dinesh D’Souza in June 1991 with *Illiberal Education: the Politics of Race and Sex on Campus*, attacking “liberal fascism”.

Politicians and neocon political backers exploited this intellectual dilemma and gave it political form. They appealed to the fears of Settlers which included a perceived threat to their way of life and identity, and to Golden Dreamer Prospectors who in particular feared a loss of the prospects of success in a zero-sum world in which more ‘rights’ for others meant less for them.

As well as Conformity and Power mentioned earlier, CDSM Attributes relevant to the mobilisation of the GD-Settler base include Material Wealth and Patriarchy:

**Material Wealth:** ‘It is important for him to be rich. He wants to have lots of money and expensive things.’

**Patriarchy:** ‘For me, a man’s place is at work and a woman’s place is in the home. I believe men are naturally superior to women.’

A succession of right-wing politicians -some ‘true’ liberatarians of various stripes, others not – have subsequently used ‘Political Correctness’ as a ‘dog-whistle’ to appeal to a mixture of fearful, angry, bewildered and resentful people, especially Settlers and Golden Dreamers, by identifying an ‘enemy within’ which is changing our world (ie our country) for the worst.
The values antagonism this sets up is escalated when ‘right-wing’ authoritarianism clashes with ‘left-wing’ authoritarian PCness. Rather than an ideological left-right difference this is perhaps more accurately described as Golden Dreamer-Brave New World authoritarianism, versus Concerned Ethical authoritarianism. With its unmet need for ethical clarity, the CE Values Mode is attracted to seek and promote ethical multipliers such as intersectionality.

[Golden Dreamers and Brave New Worlds are two adjacent Prospector and Settler Values Modes, primarily driven by unmet needs for esteem of others (GD) and identity (BNW)].

As Pat Dade says, these “dogmatic stances” are two forms of “absolutism”: "My or the highway".

What started as egalitarian PCness tolerant of difference (Transcender Values Mode) has become more authoritarian, trying to suppress ‘wrong’ terms of speech or behaviour. The GD/BNW (aka right wing) and CE (aka left wing) PCness are trying to suppress expression of each other’s values (as Brophy and Peterson observed, both seeking homogeneity but different of types).

It seems to me that the net effect of the campaigns run in the 2016 US election and the 2016 EU Referendum in the UK was to activate this divide (see Brexit blog part 1), hence the role that ‘isms’ and ‘PCness’ played in the post-match political analysis.

Stage 4 – activation of divide: EU Referendum & US election, 2016

(a) Trump and Leave campaigns ratchet up division by gaming free-speech, and playing GD/Settler values against Pioneer PC egalitarianism

It should be noted that the drive of Pioneers to self expression made it much easier for the Trump and Leave campaigns to game the system, both by splitting the ‘Pioneer vote’ (some
liberatrians voted against EU membership because they believed strongly in ‘freer trade’ or because they saw it as government oppression) and, distracting the Remain camp by creating a side-debate over whether or not Leavers should be ‘allowed’ to make ‘racist’ remarks, for example around immigration.

As many commentators have said, Donald Trump took this to new heights by deliberately dismissing ‘PCness’, and co-opting the position of disadvantaged minority, now oppressed by a ‘PC-elite’. Trump and his imitators ‘flipped’ the role of the offended, for example by not just demanding freedom to give-offence but also a counter-right not to be offended by contrary expressions of values, such as flag-burning, ‘kneeling’ protests by American footballers against racism, or the ‘mixed marriage’ of Miss Piggy and Kermit The Frog in The Muppets (subsequently termed ‘Populist Correctness’).

Trump super-charged the emotional profile of his campaign by overtly nodding to values which previous right-wing American Presidential candidates had kept covert or eschewed. For example the CDSM Attributes ‘Two classes’ and ‘Unobliged’:

**Two classes:** ‘I believe that people can be divided into two classes – the weak and the strong. I think that issues of societal advantage or disadvantage are spurious.’

**Unobliged:** ‘I feel that people who meet with misfortune have brought it on themselves. I see no reason why rich people should feel obliged to help poor people.’
Loss of Moderation

In addition, in both the 2016 EU referendum and the 2016 US election, as well as in the 2017 UK General Election, the much increased role of social media sidelined the former role of press, tv and radio in providing a ‘moderating’ function. With the media no longer able to control the ‘news agenda’ but committed to chasing social media for ‘news’, ‘debates’ became polarised and brittle as politicians gained airtime or column inches in proportion to the differences of their views. Attention focused on the extremes, and Pioneers who had enjoyed greater influence in many media organisations, lost some of that influence.

In 2016 and 2017 US and UK ‘progressives’ were been left in a state of PTSD, and at the extremes the opposing forms of authoritarian political correctness denounced one another.
By 2018, mainstream politics had moved on, leaving a tail of persistent but mainly intra-Pioneer debates about free speech and political correctness. At least in rhetoric, Theresa May’s government became more interventionist and attentive, if only in a fumbling, groping way, to the Settler (and especially white) minority than previous recent governments had been. In particular it alluded to the need to listen to those social parts of the UK population suffering deprivation or lack of opportunity, which were seen to have voted Brexit (termed ‘Somewheres’ by David Goodhart). The broad support for Metoo# and in the UK, for achieving as opposed to just legislating for more equal pay for women, showed that despite the ‘retro’ signal sent by electing Trump and opting for Brexit, Pioneer-led values slowly continued to normalise.
This has left us with a confusing array of types of PCness and an ongoing multi-cornered values war in which parties compete to gain legitimacy as the truly oppressed.

Conclusions

Some have argued that the term ‘political correctness’ is so debased that it means nothing, or more often, is now a confection created for political ends. They say that despite all the attacks on ‘PC’ nobody actually espouses it. A few brave souls do still lay claim to it as upholding important moral and ethical principles.

In campaign terms I would argue that it definitely does mean something: intrusive values projection. This is not an inevitability arising from an inescapable ‘debate of ideas’ or ‘struggle of interests’ because an alternative is available, at least to Pioneers bent on spreading their ideas to Prospectors and Settlers. [In countries with a large majority of Settlers or Prospectors you may also find values-projection from those groups to one another or to Pioneers – I will discuss that in another blog]. This means campaigns can be designed to avoid it, and they should be, wherever possible.

The CDSM values model has two dynamics (see more in my book What Makes People Tick’). This is why CDSM call their company ‘Cultural Dynamics’.

In one, people may move between values sets of Settler to Prospector to Pioneer as and if they meet their ‘unmet needs’ (the so-called ‘transitions’ – see ‘101’ slides at Brexit Part 1).
In the other, change in the form of adopting a new behaviour or attitude, starts with the Pioneers and if it looks successful (eg by being adopted by people already regarded as successful), it may be taken up by the Prospectors through *emulation*. If it becomes sufficiently widely adopted, it defines a new ‘normal’, at which point Settlers adopt it in order to stay in step with what constitutes being ‘normal’ (a strong Settler driver): in other words it spreads to Settlers as ‘norming’.

**Social Change Dynamic**

*New ideas and behaviours move the opposite way –from Pioneers> Prospectors > Settlers*

Above: normal spread or contagion of new ideas or behaviours across values groups (see slide 12 from Brexit Part 1) – by emulation and norming.

The default reason Pioneers are the instigators of new things is (a) because they have a greater sense of self-agency and uncommitted psychological space to ‘explore’, and (b) because they are not restrained by a risk-minimizing desire to avoid change, as Settlers tend to be, and not so held back by a need to avoid the risk of failure in eyes of others, as the success-oriented Prospectors are.

There are many examples of this process happening. *What Makes People Tick’ took the politically inconsequential example of a fashion for decoration of wellington boots at Glastonbury Festival. Another is the spread of rooftop solar pv in the UK, which I will discuss in a subsequent blog. Key to the contagion is that people adopt the new behaviour or idea for their own reasons (values).*

[I’m often asked (by Pioneers) if it can apply to ideas as well as behaviours but the two are closely linked. Many ‘ideas’, especially socially disputed ones which therefore ‘matter’ in
campaigns, come with embedded assumptions about desirable or undesirable behaviours. And as people rationalize their own behaviours as ‘making sense’, behaviour generates ideas in the shape of ‘opinions’ - see this on VBCOP.

This implies campaigners at least recognizing and accepting values diversity, along with other forms of ‘diversity’. It may also require reaching across values divides to build movements or alliances with people unlike yourselves (I will give an example in a subsequent blog) and politically, building on the common interest, rather than ‘identity politics’.

Attempts to short-circuit the emulation-norming process (above) are likely to come unstuck in the long-term, and may exacerbate values cleavages which can be opened by accident or by deliberate gaming of values differences for political ends. Political correctness is just the most obvious example of approaches that run this risk. More conventional campaigns can also do so, often without their proponents realizing it.

Ends

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