

radley yeldar.

Water – how to make people value something they take for granted.

September 15, 2020

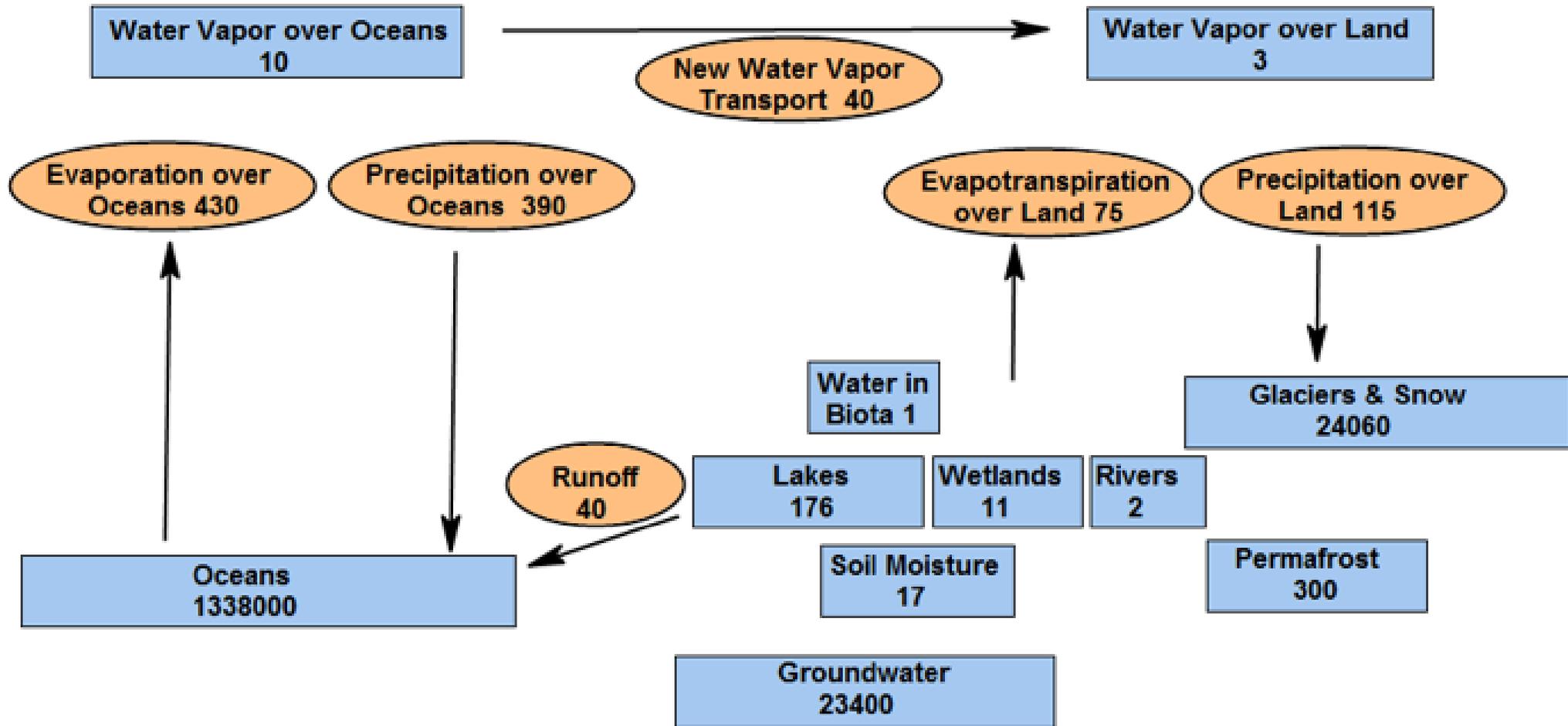
To communicate the value of water in the UK – you need to communicate the sustainability issues and that's a challenge.

It's the “wrong” kind of problem
for people – it's complex and
abstract





The Global Water Cycle - Storage & Fluxes



Legend:

Water Storage
in Gt

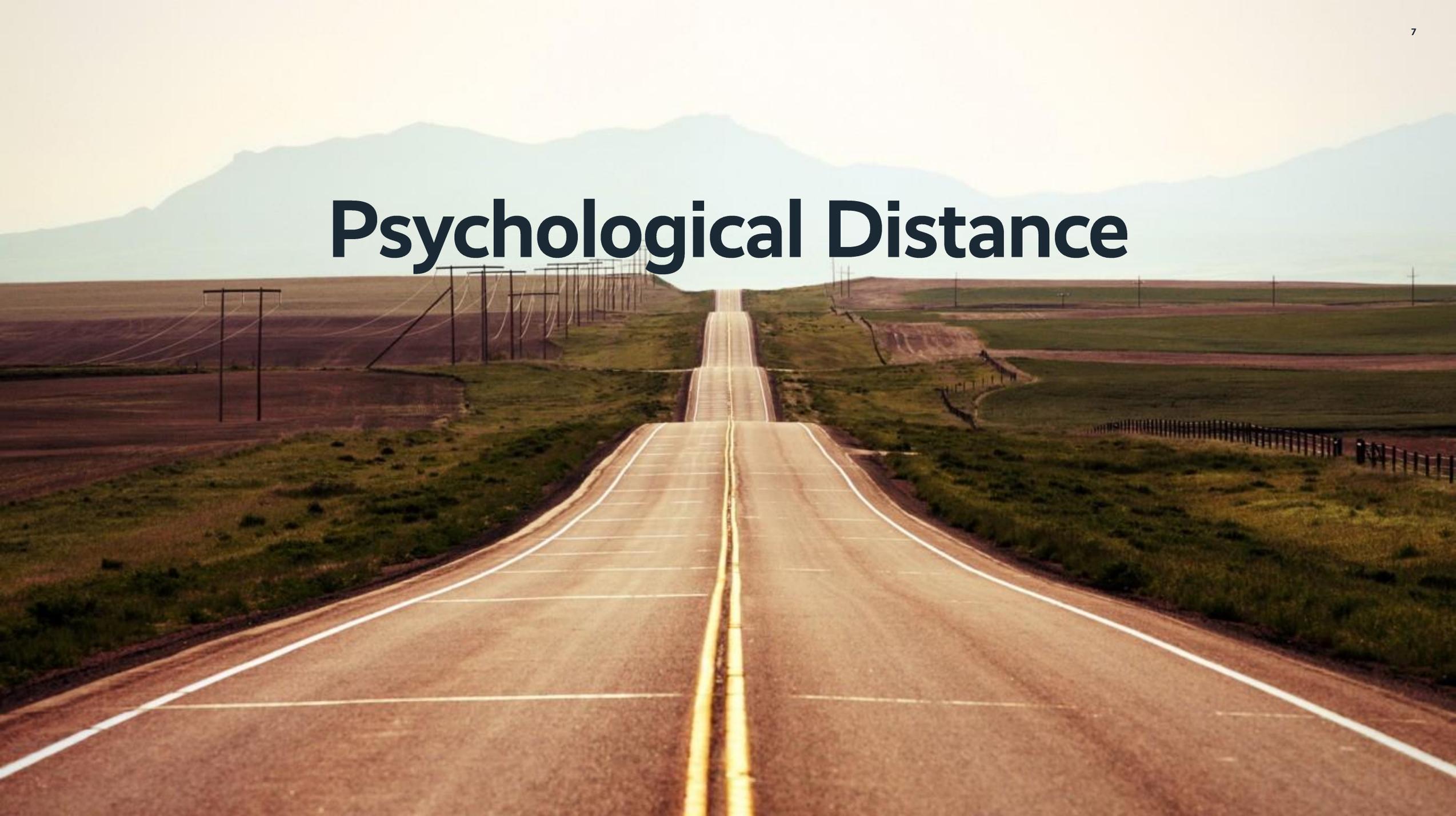
Annual Water Flux
in Gt/Year

Data Sources: Smil, 2008, Oki & Kanae, 2006,
Dai & Trenberth, 2002

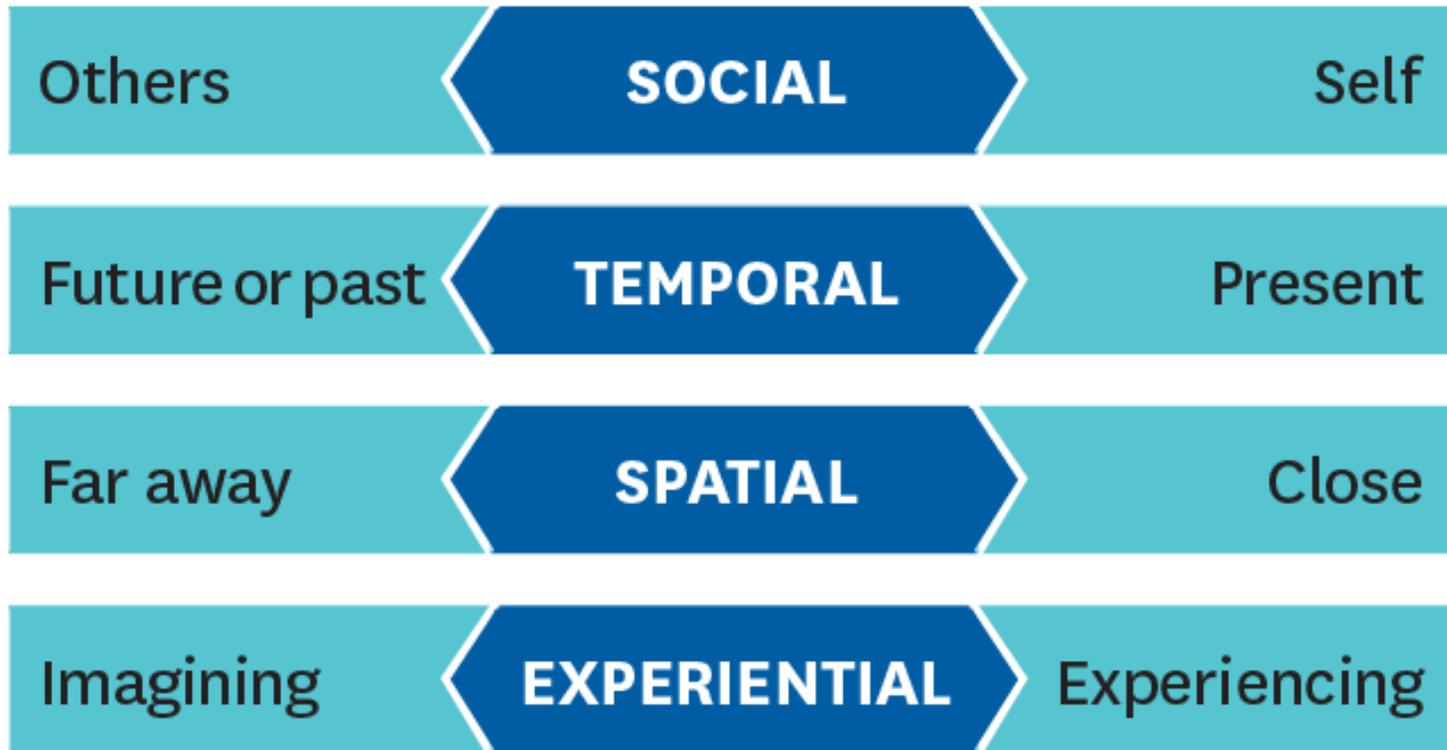
It's all seems a long way off for
many audiences

2

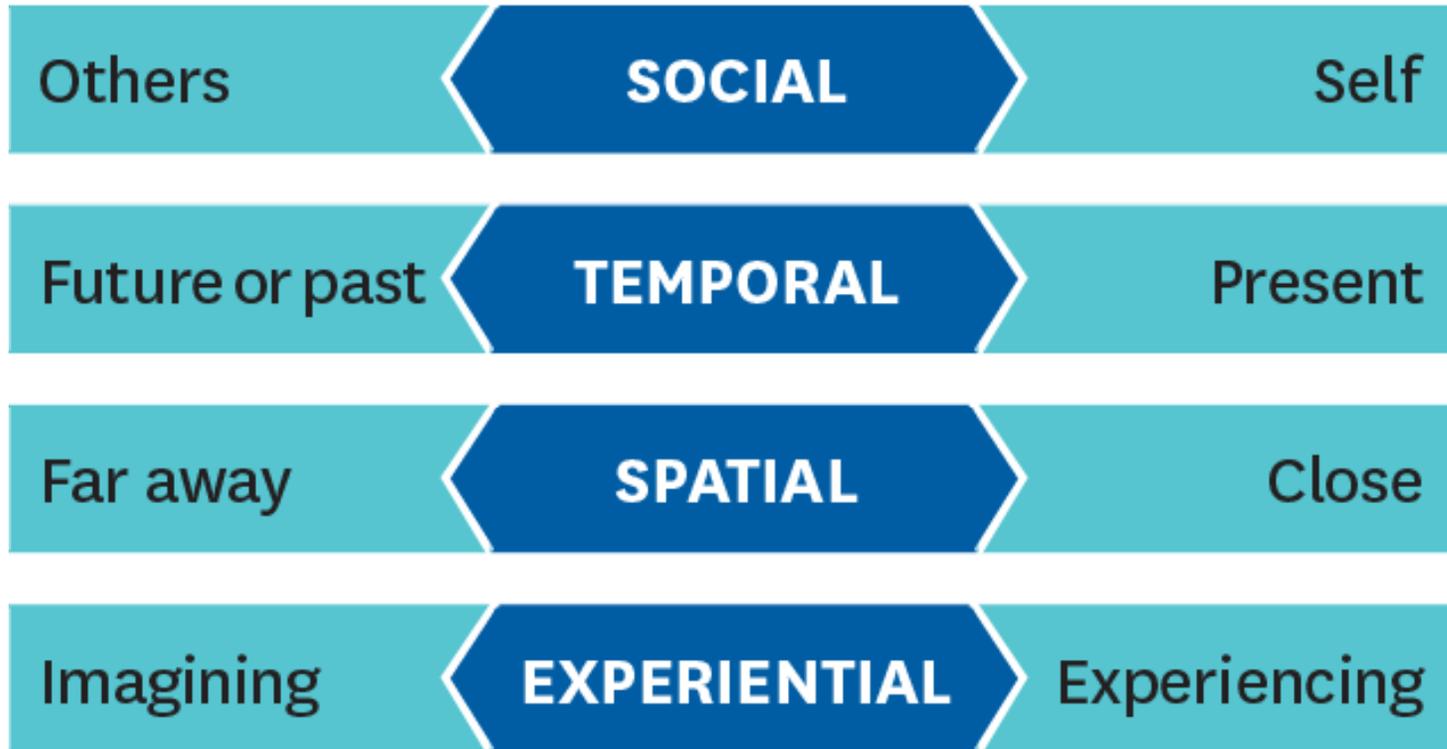
Psychological Distance

A long, straight asphalt road with a yellow double line down the center and white edge lines stretches from the foreground into the distance. The road is flanked by green grassy fields. In the background, there are rolling hills and a range of mountains under a clear sky. Utility poles with power lines are visible on the left side of the road.

Types of psychological distance



Types of psychological distance



It's happening to people I don't identify with...

...at some point in the future...

...somewhere else...

...and I've never experienced anything like it.

They haven't experienced the sharp end of water sustainability issues – and we prefer experience over analysis

3

“damage at the zip-code level as measured by FEMA was positively associated with stronger climate change beliefs even three or four years after the extreme flooding event our study examined”

“A number of studies also find that individuals are more likely to report weather conditions such as drought and extreme heat affected their acceptance of global warming when such conditions were occurring in their region.”

“Our primary finding is that individuals who live in counties that experience drought have a higher tendency to make behavioral changes to conserve water and make small financial investments to conserve water”

Elizabeth A Albright, Deserai Crow. Beliefs about climate change in the aftermath of extreme flooding. Christopher P. Borick and Barry G. Rabe Personal Experience, Extreme Weather Events, and Perceptions of Climate Change Bryce Haninibal, Lyndsay Samson & Kent E. Portney The effect of local water scarcity and drought on water conservation behaviors

JARGON!

4

precipitation, sublimation, ground-water discharge, embodied carbon, water insecurity, mitigation, adaption, 100-year-flood, aquatic ecosystem, atmospheric water, bioaccumulation, biota, combination sewers, consumptive use, depletion, discharge, effluent, environmental assessment, eutrophication, evapotranspiration, flood fringe, flow augmentation, hydrologic, inflow, leaching, parts-per-million, receiving waters, runoff, saltwater intrusion, sewerage, streamflow, suspended solids, sustainable development, transpiration, turbidity, urban runoff, wet deposition, aquifer, backflow, blackwater, desalination, divertible resource, dryland salinity, natural capital

There is an intention-action gap
with almost all 'virtuous'
behaviours

5

-
- **A recent survey found 60% said they were prepared to pay more for an eco-friendly product or service, but only 4% applied this thinking to energy. Only 1 in 10 said they wouldn't consider switching to a green energy supplier, but only 15% actually used green energy***
 - **Research has shown gaps between stated intention and action when it comes to sustainability in everything from clothing, to FMCG products, appliances and small electronic goods, utilities, finances, home improvements**
 - **Part of it is probably due to people (even subconsciously) wanting to appear 'good' in surveys but there are other barriers too – more sustainable products and services can be more expensive, harder to access and in some cases are perceived as worse/less effective**

What you can do about it.

1

**Root it in an understanding
of your audience**

**Understand their concerns,
identity and what
influences them**

**Depict people like them in
your communications and
make the desired behaviour
seem *normal* for them**

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Bring it closer to home

**You can reduce the
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(experiential is harder)

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Keep it simple and be creativity

Try to be specific- If you want people to act target one issue and behaviour at a time (ideally when it will be salient/relevant)

Ditch the jargon and apply real creativity- the right behaviour needs to be as easy and attractive as possible

What that looks like in practice

From this

A stereotypical communication about sustainable energy which does nothing to make the benefits less abstract and psychologically distant.



To this

Printed with a weeks worth of local pollution, it would put the problem right in peoples hands.

This kind of ink already exists so all you need to do is find the right printer and make the messaging specific and relevant.



From this

Most people don't consciously waste food, or think of themselves as wasting food (even though they do), so simply asking them to waste less won't change anything. And neither will using awkward puns.



The World Inc
Sponsored · 🌐

“Don't be a lemon, don't waste food”

Make sure you don't waste your food
Millions of tonnes of food gets wasted every year – the majority of which could've been eaten. It's costing millions and it's bad for environment!
theworldinc.com

200 Likes 25 Comments 109 Shares

Like Comments Share

To this

But direct interventions that make it easy for people to save food are proven to work.

Instead of trying to tackle a massive, abstract and remote issue make it simple and relevant.

The image displays two social media posts from 'The World Inc.' illustrating simple interventions to reduce food waste. The top post features a pink background with the text 'THIS COULD SAVE THE WORLD' and an image of a wooden pasta measurer. The bottom post features a green background with the same text and an image of a piece of aluminum tinfoil. Both posts include the text 'This could save the world!' and 'More and more people are using [intervention] to cut their food waste. Find out how you can waste less food and save the world.' along with engagement metrics (200 Likes, 25 Comments, 109 Shares) and the website 'theworldinc.com'.

The World Inc.
Sponsored · 🌐

THIS COULD SAVE THE WORLD

This could save the world!
More and more people are using pasta measurers to cut their food waste. Find out how you can waste less food and save the world.
theworldinc.com

200 Likes · 25 Comments · 109 Shares

Like · Comments · Share

The World Inc.
Sponsored · 🌐

THIS COULD SAVE THE WORLD

This could save the world!
Increasingly, people are using tinfoil to save their leftovers and cut their food waste. Find out how you can waste less food and save the world.
theworldinc.com

200 Likes · 25 Comments · 109 Shares

From this

The people that want to 'go green' probably aren't the problem, people whose behaviour does need to change are not going to be persuaded by stock sustainability.



To this

People might not care about recycling but studies show they don't like the idea of sending things to landfill.

Something like this closes the gap between disposal behaviour and its real world impact and is proven to work.



From this

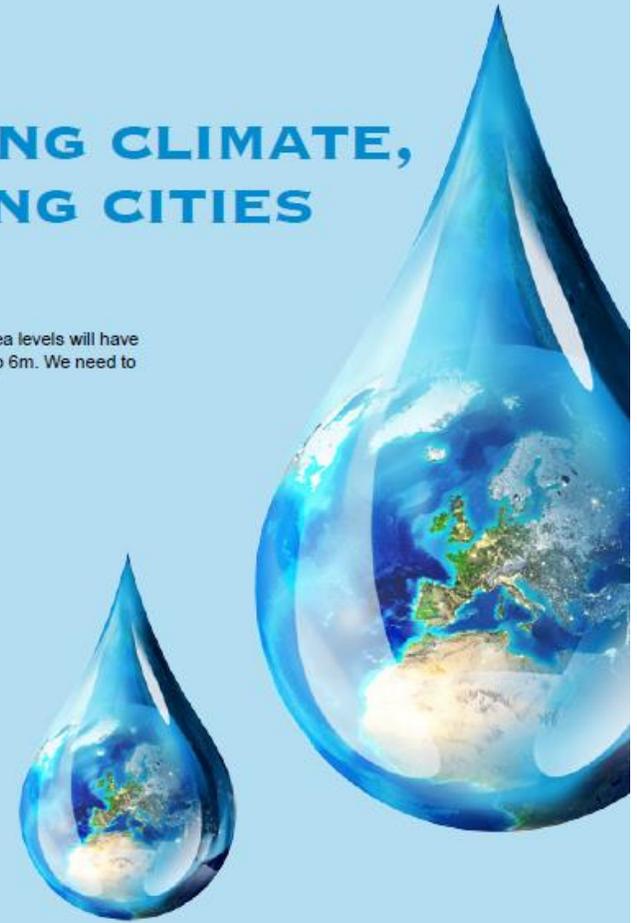
Generic communications covering the impact of climate change on cities featuring some top sustainability clichés.



CHANGING CLIMATE, CHANGING CITIES

The world is in crisis. By 2050, sea levels will have risen 4 ft. By 2100, they will be up 6m. We need to take action.

WWW.THEWORLDINC.COM



To this

Simple and direct, something like this would bring the issue home to people*.



* We originally presented these examples in Copenhagen using plausible examples from that city, I have no idea where the sea level will be at on 10 Downing Street in 2050.

radley yeldar.

Thank you!

Any questions?

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