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SPRINGBOARD COMMENTARY

Review of commentary: no climate change salience in Lofoten fisheries? A comment on understanding the need for adaptation in natural resource dependent communities

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This commentary disputes the empirical findings of the original paper only at the margins. The difference between this author and Dannevig and Hovelsrud is largely a disciplinary difference between two modes of explanation: anthropological and psychological.

Both papers recognize an attenuated expression of concern about climate adaptation among fishermen in Lofoten, relative to municipal officers and farmers. Dannevig and Hovelsrud attribute this to the fishermen's strongly individualist identity, which leads them to downplay scientific arguments about the anthropogenic nature of climate change that threatens their way of life. While they acknowledge changing weather patterns, they express confidence about their ability to deal with these within the existing range of their adaptive behaviors.

On the other hand, Bercht argues that the fishermen not only recognize climate change as a threat, but also express "concern about adaptive response." Although she immediately goes on to concede "yet their threat appraisals and emotional reactions are not instantly obvious."

Thus far, it is hard to slide a piece of paper between the two sets of findings. Both suggest that fishermen in Lofoten do not publicly exhibit as high a level of concern about climate change and its impacts on them as one might expect. Bercht, however, dismisses the anthropological argument from identity in favor of psychological explanations based on "mental barriers:" specifically Festinger's (1957) idea of cognitive dissonance and amygdala-driven fear. She writes, "these interviewees cannot bear to tackle the impacts of climate change because they feel upset and frightened." In other words, they are faced with what elsewhere I have described as "uncomfortable knowledge" (Rayner 2012).

However, the explanations are not necessarily in contradiction. The present author gives an account of individual mental and neurological responses to a threat leading to functional denial. Dannevig and Hovelsrud identify the social processes by which a threat is identified or

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not identified, both as salient and recognizable within a particular organizational context. Indeed, Bercht provides a list of reasons for inaction that cultural theorists would instantly identify with atomized individualistic forms of social organization: I quote: "For example, a lack of perceived behavioral control ("I'm only one person, what can I do?"), social comparison ("Why should I act if they won't act?"), or tokenism ("I'm a member of the Fishermen's Association, so I've done my part.") enhance climate inaction."

It is unfortunate that Bercht, in seeking to promote the psychological over the cultural explanation, parrots an outdated and inaccurate caricature of cultural theory as static, circular, and simplistic, that has long since been repudiated (e.g., Thompson 1996). The irony is even deeper in that cultural theory's originator, Mary Douglas, is one of the forerunners of the emergent interdisciplinary field focused on how people exclude uncomfortable knowledge (e.g., Gross and McGoey 2015). Similarly, Douglas's framework is the basis for the field of cultural cognition, which identifies the phenomenon of "cognitive dualism" when imperatives of identity protection, such as that described by Dannevig and Hovelsrud, come into conflict with the scientific and practical knowledge that people use in their everyday lives (Kahan 2016).

It is disappointing that the social sciences seem obsessed with the search for contested and competing explanations of phenomena, rather than seeking to understand how different disciplinary perspectives can be combined to provide us with richer understandings than those obtainable from single disciplines.

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