

**Now You See It,  
Now You Don't**

# The Psychological Framing of Radical Emission Reductions

'Radical' means *root*. The root cause of emissions is fossil fuels.

Control the supply of fossil fuels ...

... and we *automatically* control the emissions which occur when those fuels are burnt somewhere down the line.

To turn down a sprinkler, do you block up the holes - or simply turn off the tap a bit?

Cap & Share [1] delivers radical reductions by looking upstream

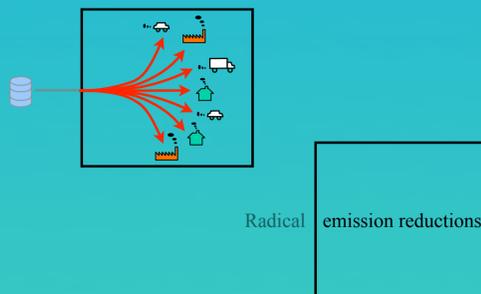
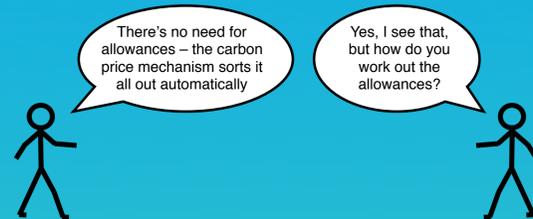
But Cap & Share often encounters blocks to understanding

Blocks are often the result of 'framing' which rules things out

But frames also smuggle 'Trojan Horse' assumptions in

Looking at frames uncovers assumptions which can then be examined

Doing this for global governance may lead to new - radical - ways forward



Frames (often unconsciously) impede discussion, or even comprehension, of concepts 'outside the frame'. A frame focussing on emissions themselves will block consideration of 'upstream' approaches. And frames in conventional politics / economics all too often exclude 'radical' ideas.



People sometimes think of upstream and downstream approaches in terms of taxes and rations respectively. In each case we use the more concrete concept as a tool to get a cognitive hold on the more abstract one. But the result is that framing assumptions can then lead to faulty reasoning [2].

### Rations frame

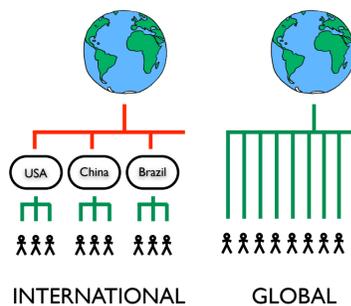
there is a temporary crisis; rations are mandatory and not negotiable; they are limited to what is available; rations are equal (exceptions, based on need, are few if any); rations are free, issued as of right; taboos against stealing rations are strong, with disapproval (or prohibition) of trading.

### Taxes frame

taxes are permanent or long-lived; taxes are imposed by a government only; taxes are mandatory, but the level of taxation is subject to debate; taxes are variable (with some rationale) between individuals; taxes are regarded with cynicism, and taboos against avoiding tax are weak.

### Do we need international agreements?

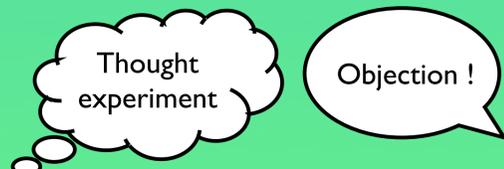
The *international* approach combines actions taken by sovereign nations, according to an agreed formula. Of course, agreeing the formula is where negotiations break down.



A *global* scheme would be simpler. Cap & Share (for example) can operate as a single global scheme, with a worldwide system of fossil fuel extraction permits, and with the resulting revenue returned to the (world) population. This bypasses nations, except perhaps as a vehicle for transmitting the funds to their populations.

**It's global warming, not international warming!**

Imagine a global scheme to keep fossil fuels in the ground: a Global Climate Trust [1], run perhaps by the UN, operating a global Cap & Share system. What better symbol could there be of our collective efforts to solve our common problems?



Objectors to this idea might question the legitimacy of such a Trust. Inside the 'world consists of nations' frame, legitimacy can only come from the support of national governments [3]. But what of other frames?

### Cap & Share

Fossil fuel companies buy permits to cover the carbon content of the fuel they supply. The permits are in limited supply (this is the Cap) and are expensive, so the fossil fuel companies pass on this cost. The mark-up then flows through the economy like a carbon tax. However, the money raised by the permits is 'recycled' back to the population, with equal shares for all adults (this is the Share).

It's our money, because we own the system. The 'carbon cash-back' payments compensate us for higher prices. In fact if you have a lower carbon footprint than average, then you'll come out ahead.

Cap & Share is simple and transparent; fair; cheap and fast to implement; effective and efficient [4]. It is the simplest and least intrusive way of achieving reductions in carbon emissions (even radical ones), with minimal interference in existing economic and governmental systems.

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### References

- [1] Davey, Brian, ed. (2010). *Sharing for Survival*. Dublin: Feasta.
- [2] Matthews, Laurence (2010). 'Upstream, Downstream', *Climate Policy* 10 (4), 477-480
- [3] Goldin, Ian. (2013). *Divided Nations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- [4] Douthwaite, Richard and Fallon, Gillian, eds. (2010). *Fleeing Vesuvius*. Dublin: Feasta.