



Western Washington University
Western CEDAR

Salish Sea Ecosystem Conference

2014 Salish Sea Ecosystem Conference
(Seattle, Wash.)

May 1st, 1:30 PM - 3:00 PM

Communicating ocean acidification across barriers: Stories and strategies from a year around the world

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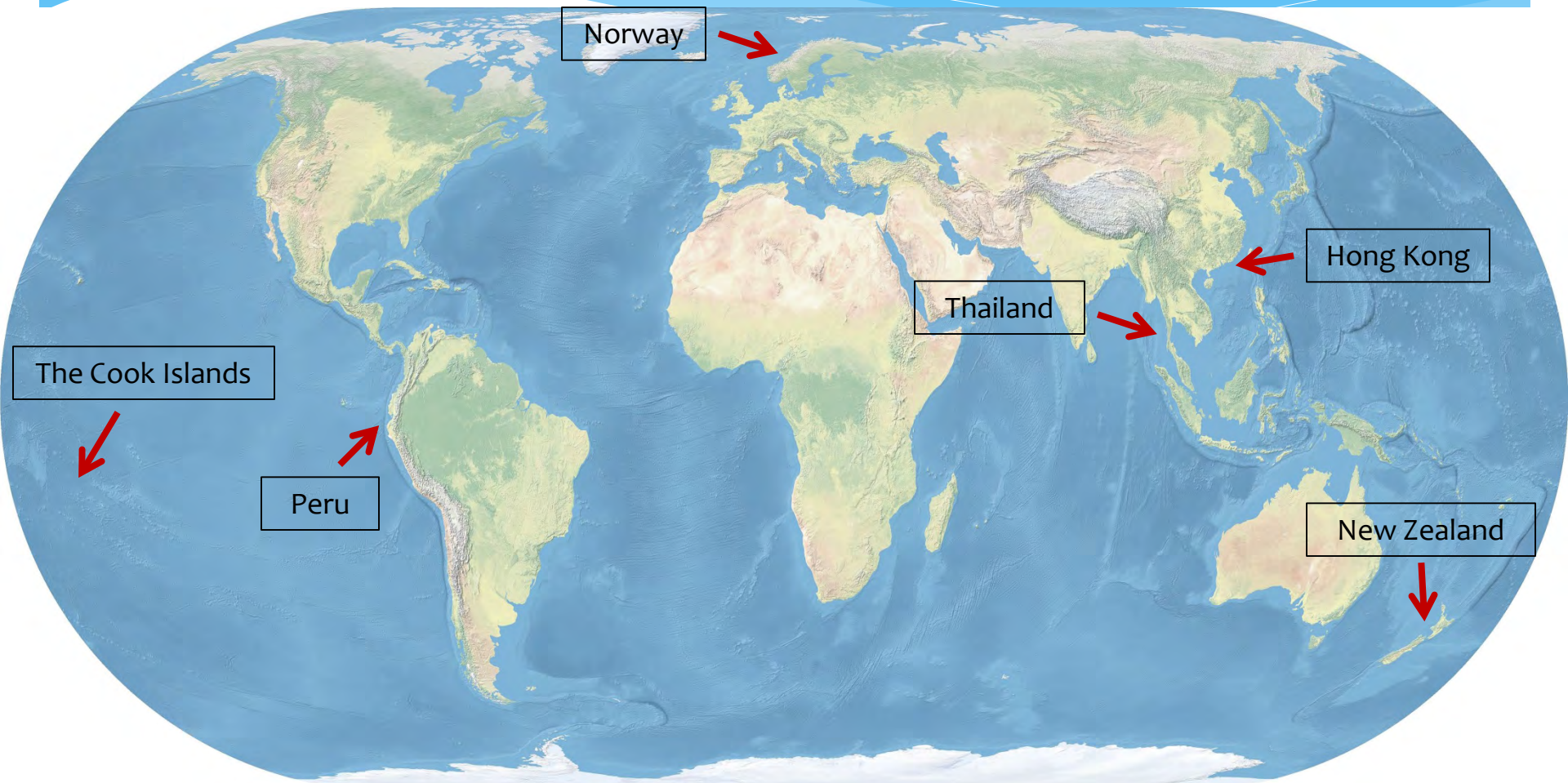
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Communicating ocean acidification around the world: Stories and strategies of using narratives to communicate across barriers

Alexis Valauri-Orton
Global Ocean Health

One year to discover: How will OA affect people around the world?



Before I could ask research questions...

- * No one had heard of OA!
- * I had to communicate the science of OA across
 - * Language barriers
 - * Cultural barriers
 - * Education barriers
- * To some of **the communities that will be most affected by OA**



Make the stakeholders see their stake

- * Understand your audience
 - * What do they care about?
 - * What resources do they work closely with or value highly?
 - * What is their scientific background?
 - * What cultural, social or religious beliefs do they hold?
- * Teach about OA through a cohesive, personalized narrative

An example of a useful narrative

- * The Whiskey Creek/PNW Narrative
 - * Explains the chemistry, physiology and economics of OA in a narrative structure:
 - * Problem: Larval die offs
 - * Investigation: Scientists team up with hatchery managers, discover that OA is causing die offs
 - * Human link: Economies in WA are dependent upon shellfish, OA is affecting these economies
 - * Political action: Stakeholders come together to address the problem
 - * Resolution: Mitigation/adaptation strategies
 - * Tell it like a story!



Aitutaki, the Cook Islands



My audience: Deeply religious, deeply suspicious



- * History of colonization
 - * Suspicious of “outsider” views
- * Deeply Christian
 - * Dominant faiths adhere to old testament views, many believe in the destruction of this Earth for the creation of a Second Earth
- * Poor science education
- * Poor marine management

What is their story? What are their loves and fears?

- * By talking to islanders I learned their stories about:
 - * Shellfish as a threatened, cultural and food icon
 - * Giant clams (Pau'a) – the story of their collapse
 - * Reef tourism as the main source of income
 - * Vulnerability to cyclones
 - * Worry over changing climate, changing planting seasons



Telling the story of ocean acidification, Aitutaki-style

- * Framed it around something identifiable:
 - * “How do we affect coral, and how does coral affect us?”
- * Used local examples and asked the audience questions to involve them in conversation
- * At the church – used biblical quotes to help audience see ties between faith, OA and conservation
- * Used the WA oyster story as a real life example of the problem and its effects on people



How do these things affect each other?

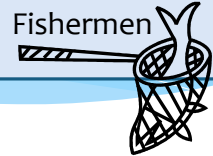


CO₂ from another country

Cyclones



Fishermen



Tourists



Climate Change

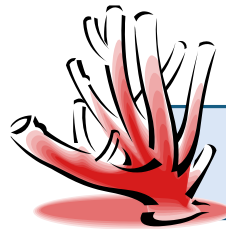


Aitutaki's Economy

Chemicals



Coral Reefs



Hotels



Garbage/Septic Tanks



Sand Mining



Food from the Lagoon



Beaches/Shoreline



Finding and forming your own narratives

- * Listen!
 - * Stakeholders (and students) are everywhere - learn their stories
- * Find your protagonists
 - * Witnesses are powerful storytellers – use their words
- * Tie it all together
 - * Show how stakeholders are connected to the issue
 - * Draw in data and stories from other sources

Make SOLUTIONS part of your narrative

- * There are a LOT of ways to address OA – find an angle that works with your audience
 - * Land-based action
 - * Farmers (nutrient management)
 - * Technology
 - * Industry members (hatcheries, etc)
 - * Civic Engagement
 - * Students, community members (raising awareness, PR campaigns, carbon footprint, etc)
 - * Political action
 - * Blue Ribbon Panel serves as a narrative for one type of political action

Lessons Learned

- * Many people nod and say yes when they don't understand!
 - * Ask your audience to help define the problem with you, don't just explain it
- * It takes just a little bit of jargon to turn off an audience
- * Many people have a poor understanding of the global carbon cycle, ocean circulation and the interactions between land and sea
- * A few short videos help get key science concepts across with minimal teaching time

Thanks!

Further questions comments? E-mail me at
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