

Beyond Copenhagen



Before



After

There's a play by Michael Frayn called Copenhagen. Its major themes include radical scientific uncertainty and a terrible destructive power being unleashed that could destroy quite a lot of human civilisation.

It wasn't about the climate negotiations in December 2009 that are the current focus of attention of the world's climateriat, but maybe someone should write a play about them. I suggest a tragedy, then a farce.

As the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) meeting at Copenhagen draws closer, more and more attention will be paid to it, both by its advocates and critics. I suspect both groupings will be in danger of thinking of it as the ball at which Cinderella (the solutions) will turn up incognito and have Prince Charming fall in love with her. Throw in a fairy godmother (I believe the technical term is "*deus ex machina*") and business gets the long loud signal that it's been asking for. Governments get to brandish their problem-solving credentials. The poor get the development aid and atmospheric pollution rights they are entitled to. And a squadron of the Danish Air Force's Red Pigs will do a fly-past in salute.

Sure, maybe the whole circus will have to sit in semi-permanent session, or the thousands of negotiators and lobbyists and hacks will schlepp off to Bonn, but there is almost certainly going to be a Deal. Even with a new American President, a new UK government (mebbe), and a new EU president, a Deal Will Be Made. There'll be too many eyes on the game for anyone to want to be labelled as the wrecker.

But in those circumstances, the Deal will probably be weak. LCD won't just stand for lowest common denominator, it'll also stand for lousy climate deal.

No matter what, it will become harder to push the kind of radical emissions reductions/sink protections on climate change, because the Deal will be the only show in town with anything approaching democratic legitimacy. The world's denialists, coal lobbies, knuckle-draggers, knuckle-heads, volcano-nutters, China-baiters will all be trying to stop their own countries' legislatures signing it. Greens will be wanting to criticise the Deal as too weak but still wanting it to be ratified. That's where the NGO energy will go, because it offers the best chance of lobbying ministers and appearing important to NGOs core constituency (guilt-ridden ignorant middle-class people). Kyoto the Sequel, anyone?

And if the recent Nature article predicting a temporary decrease in global average temperature due to ocean currents is correct, then energy will also be diverted to convincing people that Dangerous Anthropogenic Interference is even happening. What interesting times we live in.

Further Reading

Copenhagen by Michael Frayn

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Copenhagen_\(play\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Copenhagen_(play))

Advancing Decadal-Scale Climate Prediction in the North Atlantic Sector: *Nature*, 453, 84-88.

Keenlyside, N.S., M. Latif, J. Jungclaus, L. Kornbluh, and E. Roeckner (2008)

<http://www.nature.com/climate/2008/0805/full/453043a.html#B2>

Copenhagen Climate Council

<http://copenhagenclimatecouncil.com/>