

Call for Participation

Communicating the Climate

How to communicate scholarly findings on climate and weather in a controversial time

Rachel Carson Center, Munich, on 18 August 2017

This short workshop engages with the questions surrounding climate science communication, from a social science and humanities' perspective. The aim is to learn from each other how to communicate climate social science, and climate humanities, findings most effectively, and how to make this important work salient in the wider world. A corollary aim is the exchange of expertise between graduate students in different disciplines, and encouraging an honest reflection on their own preconceptions and aims (and each other's).

Rationale

Anthropogenic climate change, or *global warming*—as it was referred to before U.S. Republican spin doctor Frank Luntz had his say—, has been a dominant force on the global agenda for several decades (yet not so dominant as many might wish). Often, the first assumptions about anthropogenic climate change are that it concerns a physical process. The climate scientist has become a champion of the environmental movement, and in most countries there is a loud cry for 'more climate science.'

While the role of the climate scientist in the debate about anthropogenic climate change is a rather clear one—although there certainly are debates to what extent a scientist should be an activist—, the role of the scholar is rather murky. As decades of climate science have passed, what should have been obvious from the beginning has become increasingly prominent (and dire): tackling anthropogenic climate change was never going to be straightforward, and it was never purely a scientific, political, or economic question. These issues cut to the heart of what it means to be human, what should be the aim of society at large, what rights people in the (less-) developed world should have, how we experience weather, and how we make sense of climate. As Mike Hulme has stated "Climate is an idea that carries a much richer tradition of meaning than is captured by the unimaginative convention that defines climate as being 'the average course or condition of the weather at a place usually over a period of years as exhibited by temperature, wind velocity and precipitation' [which is often seen as the textbook definition, red]." (Hulme, 2009, 4). Additionally, there are important questions about the role of the history of climate and climate science, and its ability to communicate anthropogenic climate change. Does knowing more about the history of climate provide us with useful tools to communicate climate issues, or does it provide climate skeptics with more ammunition to claim that 'the climate is perpetually changing anyway'?

How to deal with anthropogenic climate change is an inherently human question, and if we want to reach a durable 'solution', it calls for a deep understanding of people's life worlds and imaginations. At the same time, it seems that many of the interpretive and social sciences have had, and still have, issues categorizing their response to climate change. What role is there to play, and how, for these academic disciplines. In this workshop, we will discuss these issues, and try find a voice for our little niches of academic research, for our conceptions of climate, and for our concerns about climate science.



Submissions

The [Rachel Carson Center](#), [Deutsches Museum](#), and the Marie Curie Innovative Training Network Environmental Humanities for a Concerned Europe ([ENHANCE](#)) would like to invite early career researchers from a wide range of backgrounds to submit applications. Applications from the social sciences and the humanities, ranging from philosophy, to history, political sciences or literary studies, are specifically encouraged, but full consideration will be given to applicants from a natural science perspective.

The central question for this workshop revolves around the relevance of climate research from a social sciences and humanities perspective. How can scholars, and especially early-stage researchers, working on climate-related issues make their research as relevant as possible – beyond scholarly publications?

The following questions will be central to the workshop:

- How do we effectively communicate climate science, climate change, really any matter so vague and abstract as ‘climate’?
- How do we engage with the climate science from a humanities perspective? How do we navigate the (sometimes self-imposed) divide between the natural sciences and the humanities/social sciences?
- Above all, how can we communicate our work in such a way that it may actually make a difference?

Workshop

This short workshop will be a full day, starting at 09:00 am on 18 August. During the day, food and drinks will be provided, as will some drinks at the end.

One potential aim of this workshop is to publish a working paper series in the *Perspectives*-series of the Rachel Carson Center. These booklets have a wide reach, and typically publish thematic pieces of 2000–3000 words.

Selection Process

Places for participants are limited, so recruitment will be by refereed selection. Applicants are expected to have some experience working on climate-related issues, but experience with anthropogenic climate change as a research topic is not a selection criterion. Motivation to work in an interdisciplinary setting is also a plus.

Required documents for application are a CV (max. 3 pages) & a 300-word letter of motivation for your experience with climate communication as well as areas that you identify as working well and/or needing improvement.

Please send these documents in a single PDF file (not exceeding 5 MB) by email to jeroen.oomen@rcc.lmu.de before 15 June 2017.

Successful applicants will hear back by 1 July.



Invited Experts

Christoph Baumberger

Senior Research Assistant at the Environmental Philosophy Group at ETH Zurich, Switzerland

Dania Achermann

Postdoctoral Fellow in the group Shaping Cultures of Prediction: Knowledge, Authority, and the Construction of Climate Change at Aarhus University, Denmark

Costs

The workshop is free of charge, including lunch and coffee breaks.

Please arrange your own transport to and from Munich (Munich is easily reached through its international airport, or well-connected long-distance train station). Please also organize your own accommodation, however, if you need assistance, please talk to the conveners and they will try to assist you in your search.

Contact

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact:

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Bibliography

- Hulme, Mike. *Why We Disagree About Climate Change: Understanding Controversy, Inaction and Opportunity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

