

Is there a communication problem?

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Lack of communication is a fil rouge that characterizes almost all the conferences devoted to climate change, even if the space devoted to climate and climate studies is probably larger and surely not lower than that devoted to other disciplines (astronomy, particle physics, bioengineering). Meteorology, moreover, is often present on the media, in particular for weather forecasts and for the widespread interest and curiosity on severe weather events. Starting from this point, communication in climatology and meteorology is analysed. It is shown that one of the aspects that differentiate atmospheric sciences from other scientific disciplines is the relatively large number of people involved in communication and, in some cases, this can produce a negative competition among communicators, that can fall in “the freakiest the best” trap to earn audience. In some cases, this trap produced even direct negative effects for atmospheric communicators (weather forecasters in the specifics), jeopardized and substituted by speakers with lower scientific preparation but higher video appeal (the curse of the “short and sexy” approach). Another possible and more dangerous effect of the excess of communication without a goal, in particular dealing with climate change effects, is the so called “Titanic syndrome”, that is, the perception induced in people that nothing can be done and the only wise thing to do is that to open the last champagne bottles (i.e. Earth resources) before of the end.

There are not fixed rules to escape from “the freakiest the best” trap or from the “Titanic syndrome”, but a few hints can be issued: the first is that to ask to ourselves the reason why we want to communicate; the second is that to bring the target of our communication (e.g., common people, stake holders, decision makers, etc.) at the core of our information activity (what we give them in terms of information should give them the possibility to take decisions or in general to act). An important role for the correctness of communication can even be played by Meteorological Societies. In fact, even if for sure there is no authority principle in science, authority can nevertheless be in principle scientific.