

Revue française des sciences de l'information et de la communication

18 | 2019

L'animation comme industrie culturelle ? Concevoir et produire le dessin animé

Dossiers RFSIC à paraître

N° 21 | Environment, Nature and Communication in the Anthropocene Era

Special Issue Editors: Céline Pascual Espuny et Andrea Catellani | December 2020

Inscribed in the international public space since the 1970s, the environment is today the source of many communication practices in our societies. It covers a broad and matrix-like discursive perimeter, where notions such as ecology, ecological transition, sustainable development, corporate social responsibility (CSR, which includes an environmental dimension), Anthropocene, and even collapse, reflect physical, economic, political, scientific, but also cultural and symbolic realities that are related but different. These realities are largely present in the field of communication, public and private, professional, expert or lay, strategic or spontaneous. Communication practices are not only an expression but also a vector and a factor in the construction of the cultural presence of nature and the environment, and of the transformations of this presence. Our images of nature, the environment and ecology are (also) communicative and trivial “beings”, caught in the constant interaction between science, art, economics, politics, spirituality, society - and personal, more or less mediatized, sensitive experience (that of “mega-fires” and extreme weather events, for example).

At a time when pressures are coordinated and overlapping, whether anthropogenic, climatic, biological, social, political, economic or moral,

communication practices play a key role. They are called upon from all sides, invoked to raise awareness, and considered necessary in the emergence of participatory and co-constructed mechanisms. However, these practices - particularly in the area of organizational and strategic communication - are still the victims of suspicions of manipulation and “greenwashing” practiced in the previous decade and still latent and resurgent. Media information on the environment at a time of anthropogenic challenges is caught in the tensions between different economic, political, moral and societal imperatives, in a context of societies that are often themselves in contradiction between different values, and between values and practices (“values-action gap”). For some time now, the Internet has been the meeting place for different communication (and societal) projects, for awareness raising, polemics and sometimes contradictory mobilizations.

In view of these constraints and tensions, what can information and communication sciences say today, in a critical and scientific way, about this polymorphous reality constituted by environmental communication practices? How are the links between Nature and Ecology grasped, as soon as the practice of communication is practiced? Does environmental communication present a different profile within the vast field of objects analysed by information and communication sciences, given their particularly “trivial” nature as places of intersection of all tensions, expectations and disappointments?

In this issue we will focus in particular on scientific contributions that propose an analysis of the specificities of so-called environmental communication, based on a solid methodology and anchored in information and communication sciences. The aim is explicitly to collect the most recent points of view and results in order to make them visible and show the solidification of a real research sector, which tends to go beyond the dispersion of individual contributions to aim at a form of institutionalization, for example in the form of an association of researchers (IECA), sections in the major international associations (ICA, IAMCR), and in France with a GER (study and research group “Communication, environment, science and society”) within the French society of information-communication (SFSIC).

This issue aims to be open to the different trends and theoretical and methodological approaches of information-communication researchers dealing with environmental themes related to communication. Contributions may be integrated into one or more of the following areas, or be of a cross-cutting nature.

Controversies, polemics and media forms

Environmental issues are at the origin of tensions, polemics and debates, which are expressed, among other things, in the media and in the different spheres of the social-digital media, but also in more “physical” events, movements and confrontations. The challenges of climate change, pollution, biodiversity and the habitability of the planet, and their variations on local and territorial issues, are giving rise to the voices (and images) of many actors in the age of digitization. This axis aims to collect the contributions of researchers who observe and analyse, with different methodologies and approaches, these controversies and other forms of polemics and agonistic issues, in order to understand their communicational dimension.

Social and environmental actors: companies, activists, associations, governments, etc.

This axis focuses on the analysis of the communication practices of different actors who enter the public sphere with an agenda of claiming, transforming or protecting interests and/or values in relation to environmental issues. Companies and the economic world speak out in the form of discourses of responsibility (CSR-CSR, discourse on the construction of shared value, “green” communication and advertising, corporate activism), to show their alignment with social norms and trends, or to protect their economic model. NGOs and associations, activist movements, “influencers” and whistle-blowers, for their part, pursue projects of social and cultural transformation. Governments and public entities also intervene, between awareness-raising and institutional and public communication issues. The list, which is not exhaustive, should also include scientists, caught between the need for objectivity and the urgency of commitment, organizations such as churches and religious and spiritual groups, think tanks and the world of politics and political communication.

Popularization of science and its challenges

How to communicate environmental science, for example on the destruction of life and biodiversity and climate change? How does scientific knowledge enter the public arena, what dynamics and distortions, what challenges to the “authority” of science? The models of popularisation and “popular science” - for example, the deficit model - are coming under tension in the face of the challenges of “post-normal” and participatory “science”, and in the face of the scale of “Anthropocenic” dynamics and trends (climate change, for example) that transcend the distinctions between different disciplines and discourses and tend to create short circuits between descriptive-analytical and normative-engaged regimes. From this point of view, the notion of expertise is also to be questioned, in its forms and appearances.

Media, journalism, mediatization of the environment

Researchers in information-communication have long, in the French-speaking world as elsewhere, investigated the ways in which the environment “comes to the media”. This presence is sometimes fluctuating, event-focused, sometimes partisan, in a context of technological and economic difficulties and changes in journalism in the digital age and tensions around truth and “information disorder” (the “fake news”, loss of confidence in the media, changes in information consumption). The aim of this section is to show the latest advances and results of this research, in order to explore the (often different depending on the country) ways in which the environment can be “put into information”. The axis is also open to research on the presence of environmental issues in media

cultures in general, the audio-visual sector, and their interaction with the logic of cultural industries and the cultural consumption practices of individuals.

The living, its representation and its communication

The Anthropocene and the culture of the beginning of the 21st century see a change in the image of the “natural” world. The social sciences have shown the cultural and situated nature of the categorizations of beings and the relations between natural and cultural, between man and animal or plant. Scientific and philosophical discourses, such as those on anti-speciesism or on the intelligence of plants, percolate through literature and the press, interacting with the search for new forms of relationship (and resonance, to quote a title by Hartmut Rosa) with the living world and creation. This axis aims to question the mutations and reconfigurations of the cultural forms that frame the relationship between man and the living, seen from a communicational point of view.

Communication and ecological transition, between criticism and instrumentalization

At the time of the “ecological transition”, communication (as a persuasive signifying action that transforms mentalities and behaviours) finds itself in an ambiguous position of “pharmakon”: at the same time, decried as a source of manipulation (for example, in the case of “strategies of doubt”, climate denials and fake news) and invoked as a necessary lever to bring about a more sustainable society (in connection with other marketing or psychological means such as “nudging”). This position deserves a question: how to interpret critically and ethically this “role” as an instrument of transition? How to deconstruct and identify the risks, limits and problems of this posture? On another level, what are the latest advances in the search for forms of communication that are engaging, transformative, and capable of empowering people in the face of necessary changes? How can communication contribute to changing attitudes and behaviours in the face of the “dragons of inaction” (Gifford 2011) that prevent behaviour change?

Environmental discourse and narratives

In the Anthropocene era, “facing Gaia” (to use a title by Bruno Latour), our societies are crossed by different discursive forms, which represent attempts to synthesize a complex and heterogeneous reality. This is the very nature of narrative mimesis, as Paul Ricoeur pointed out, but it is also the effort of meta-narratives and, more generally, of the great discourses that are organized around values and interests. This axis aims to attract researchers who are interested in the analysis of the “discursive formations” that appear today in the face of Anthropocenic challenges and concerns, and which manifest different and sometimes opposing accents, axiological universes and narrative structures. One need only think here of the discourses on degrowth, on voluntary and happy simplicity, collapse, ecomodernism, sustainable development. Formulas and visions circulate, carried by different actors with different logics and interests;

these formations take shape in the media, in speeches, initiatives and actions. Information-communication approaches, for example narratological, rhetorical and critical, have here a space to express their analysis of this co-presence and tension between different discourses.

Calendar

- Issue published in No. 20, December 2020.
- Articles are expected for the last week of July
- Back to authors: last week of October
- Return of final articles: last week of November

Proposals for articles (between 30,000 and 40,000 characters including spaces, bibliography and footnotes) should be sent to: Céline Pascual Espuny, [celine.pascual\(at\)univ-amu.fr](mailto:celine.pascual(at)univ-amu.fr), and Andrea Catellani, [andrea.catellani\(at\)uclouvain.be](mailto:andrea.catellani(at)uclouvain.be).

The guide for writing articles can be consulted at the following link: <https://journals.openedition.org/rfsic/401>.

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