

Environmental communication

Περιεχόμενα

antonopoulos



550

552

Environmental Communication

Environmental communication is the dissemination of information and the implementation of communication practices that are related to the environment. In the beginning, environmental communication was a narrow area of communication; however, nowadays, it is a broad field that includes research and practices regarding how different actors (e.g., institutions, states, people) interact with regard to topics related to the environment and how cultural products influence society toward environmental issues. As a result, environmental communication is complex, involving verbal, nonverbal, personal, interpersonal, and visual communication.

Due to global environmental issues such as climate change, new communication initiatives to promote environmental policies and affairs have emerged. Groups such as international organizations, states, and the United Nations (UN) use such initiatives in an attempt to change the way individuals think about the environment.

This entry traces the evolution of environmental communication and its subfields of study. In addition, it explores several important environmental problems of today's society and reveals correlations among companies, mass communications, new technologies, and the public.

From the Beginning of Environmental Communication to the Present Day

Environmental communication as a field began in the United States around the 1980s. It is related to rhetorical theory, as the pioneer researchers in the field implemented rhetorical practices to raise environmental awareness and to investigate environmental organizations as well as the tensions surrounding environmental topics such as endangered species, forests, and nature in general.

Many scholars credit Christine Oravec's 1981 article "John Muir, Yosemite, and the Sublime Response: A Study in the Rhetoric of Preservationism" as the first study in the field. Not only did Oravec's study attract the interest of the scientific community, but also it broadened environmental communication as scientists began to examine the role of media products, the consequences of human activities in relation to the environment, and the risks of public health. In addition, studies that focused on the public relations strategies of important environmental events such as the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear disaster were conducted.

Today, the field of environmental communication is recognized by many prominent scholarly journalism and communication associations. One such organization that aims to promote the field of environmental communication is the International Environmental Communication Association, which was founded in 2011. Throughout the world, numerous associations and organizations focus on promoting environmental communication. Even transnational state organizations and nations take actions in favor of the environment and raise awareness about environmental issues. For instance, in 2013, the European Commission released the EU Adaptation Strategy regarding climate change. This strategy provided members of the European Union objectives in order to become more resilient to climate change. Moreover, during the last month of 2015, 196 members of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change agreed to accept the so-called Paris Agreement. Its main goal was to address global warming by limiting global temperature rise to 1.5 °C above preindustrial levels. Although the agreement has been characterized as a breakthrough for environmental issues, to date, there is no clear evidence of its success. Lastly, at the end of 2015, the General Assembly of the UN adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with some of the 17 sustainable development goals aimed at improving the environment.

Environmental Communication Subfields