

Evolving activist approaches to climate change: strategies for communication and public engagement

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Activist approaches to climate change have evolved significantly in recent years, particularly in their strategies for communication and public engagement. At the core of these strategies lies an understanding that to mobilise action and foster hope, it is essential to connect with individuals on an emotional level, while also providing clear, actionable paths forward (Feldman & Hart, 2016; Issa & Kingsmith, 2024). This expanded discussion delves into how activist approaches contribute to effective communication, drawing on the themes of climate hope and resilience.

Activists have long recognized that narratives of doom and gloom, while highlighting the urgency of the climate crisis, often lead to feelings of eco-anxiety, environmental melancholia, and paralysis among the public (Head, 2018; Issa et al., 2021; Lertzman, 2015). In response, a shift has occurred towards more hopeful and empowering messaging. This approach aligns with the psychological understanding that people are more likely to engage in positive action when they feel hopeful and when they see tangible ways to contribute to change (Kingsmith, 2024; Marlon et al., 2019). Activist groups, therefore, focus on storytelling that showcases success stories of climate action, community resilience, and transformative change (De Meyer et al., 2021). These stories not only inspire but also demonstrate that action is possible and effective.

Collaboration between activists and scientists has also enhanced the effectiveness of climate communication. By grounding their messages in scientific evidence, activists ensure their narratives are credible and informative (Faehnrich et al., 2020; Hoggett & Randall, 2018). This partnership helps demystify complex scientific data, making it accessible and relatable to the general public. It also counters misinformation and provides a solid foundation for advocating for policy changes and sustainable practices.

Activists also play a pivotal role in local and community-based initiatives, demonstrating that change can start on a small scale but have a broad impact (Fernandes-Jesus et al., 2020; Schwartz et al., 2023). Through workshops, educational programs, and community projects, they engage individuals directly, fostering a sense of agency and collective action. These grassroots efforts highlight the power of local solutions in addressing global challenges, reinforcing the message that every action counts.

In conclusion, activist approaches to communicating climate hope are multifaceted and dynamic. By combining emotional engagement, digital innovation, scientific collaboration, and grassroots activism, they create a powerful narrative of hope and action. Drawing from some concrete examples, our research demonstrates how this approach not only counters eco-anxiety but mobilises individuals and communities to be part of the solution, demonstrating the pivotal role of effective communication in the fight against climate change.

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