

Interactive comment on “The role of climate scientists in the post-factual society” by Erlend M. Knudsen and Oria J. de Bolsée

Salmon (Referee)

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This is an interesting paper, telling an important story about the activities of (some number of?) young climate scientists in the lead up to the COP meeting in Paris. There are, however, some problematic aspects to the paper – I think it’s trying to be more ambitious than it needs to be, and leans too heavily on data that’s not representative of either the public, or the followers of the Pole to Paris journey that is the centrepiece of the manuscript. The second half of the paper was, to me, far more interesting – which focused more on the experience of the authors and situated this journey as one of a number of outreach initiatives about climate change that they’re involved in. I would recommend reframing the paper in this context – as a case study of the experience of young climate scientists at this particular (and very important) time in history. In that

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context, the bike ride, the march for science and the other outreach activities all tell a collective story – most importantly, that of the emerging climate scientists in this day and age (and possible changes to their training). The role of the scientist, in the field of climate change, has changed substantially over the last few decades and this narrative is a fantastic opportunity to showcase what a modern, engaged, climate scientist might look like. It draws on experiences and offers useful recommendations as well as being situated in the relevant literature (although there is an opportunity to draw on this more, I appreciate this in only a short paper).

I have provided some feedback directly on a PDF of this document that I am happy for the authors to see but it is quite specific – if my recommendations above are considered, then many of those comments will likely become redundant.

I wish the authors all the best with the publication of this manuscript, which portrays an important aspect of being a climate scientist that is rarely documented outside of social media, and even more rarely examined critically. Were there an opportunity to expand on the length of this paper (which I don't necessarily encourage), then I would also like to see greater reflection on how the initiatives could be improved, and how the authors would learn from their experiences, were a similar opportunity to arise.

In terms of the specific questions posed by the journal: 1. Does the paper address relevant scientific questions within the scope of GC? Yes

2. Does the paper present novel concepts, ideas, tools, or data? Yes

3. Are the scientific methods and assumptions valid and clearly outlined? Not entirely

4. Are the results sufficient to support the interpretations and conclusions? Not entirely – although a reframing of the argument would remedy this. The data presented is unfortunately not that compelling, which is often the case with outreach evaluation exercises (and not necessarily the fault of the authors).

5. Do the authors give proper credit to related work and clearly indicate their own

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new/original contribution? To an extent, yes

6. Does the title clearly reflect the contents of the paper? No – the current title, “The role of climate scientists in the post-factual society” implies a greater discussion and consideration of the role of the climate scientist, rather than a report on the outreach these particular scientists did. As suggested above, I am recommending a re-framing of the piece that would potentially mean the title could remain the same. I really like the title, and the aspiration of the paper to explore/ argue that the “scientific community was not prepared for the intense politicization of climate change” (para 2), but I don’t think the paper in its current form lives up to these. Furthermore, considering “post-factual society” is a phrase used in the title, little time is given to defining or exploring this important concept.

7. Does the abstract provide a concise and complete summary? Broadly, yes. As above – I’d love to see the title and abstract stay the same, and the content be adapted to deliver on these.

8. Is the overall presentation well structured and clear? Adequate

9. Is the language fluent and precise? Some areas need tightening up or a proof-read, as identified in my comments on the PDF

10. Are the number and quality of references appropriate? The number is appropriate but the breadth could be expanded – the majority of these references come from physical/ climate science/communication journals. Considering the focus of this article, I would expect to see a few more references from the field of Public Engagement with Science, especially related to dialogue and two-way interaction, which is referred to several times.

Please also note the supplement to this comment:

<https://www.geosci-commun-discuss.net/gc-2018-16/gc-2018-16-RC1-supplement.pdf>

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