

The Nexus of Science and Story: Connecting Scientist's Data and Citizen's Testimonials of Climate Change

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The Climate Communication Gap

Climate change represents a unique challenge in the interaction between global trends and local impacts. Arguably, the difficulty in making definite causal links between one and the other has contributed significantly to the slow acceptance of climate change despite decades of overwhelming scientific evidence as to the basic science of the greenhouse effect.

Climate change is also acknowledged to be a process that will have significant potential for strong feedbacks, such as between polar ice melting resulting in changes in albedo and further melting, or between warming oceans and further CO2 release from the ocean itself. This 'second order effect' introduces further uncertainties, even as it exacerbates the damage that warming can cause.

As a result, debate over scientific results among scientists, and even more between scientists and the media, may be fuelled by uncertainty in what is simply the magnitude of climate change impacts, not the fundamental process itself. This story of variability is further compounded by local variability and or geographically specific effects that can alter the perception – and the reality – of a steadily changing climate.

The Map of Stories Project

Maps of climate change have been built to give scientists a global perspective of changes in variables such as mean seasonal temperature, mean precipitation, and sea level rise. Concurrently, popular media and testimonials document impacts of climate change on people and solutions emerging from government and community responses.

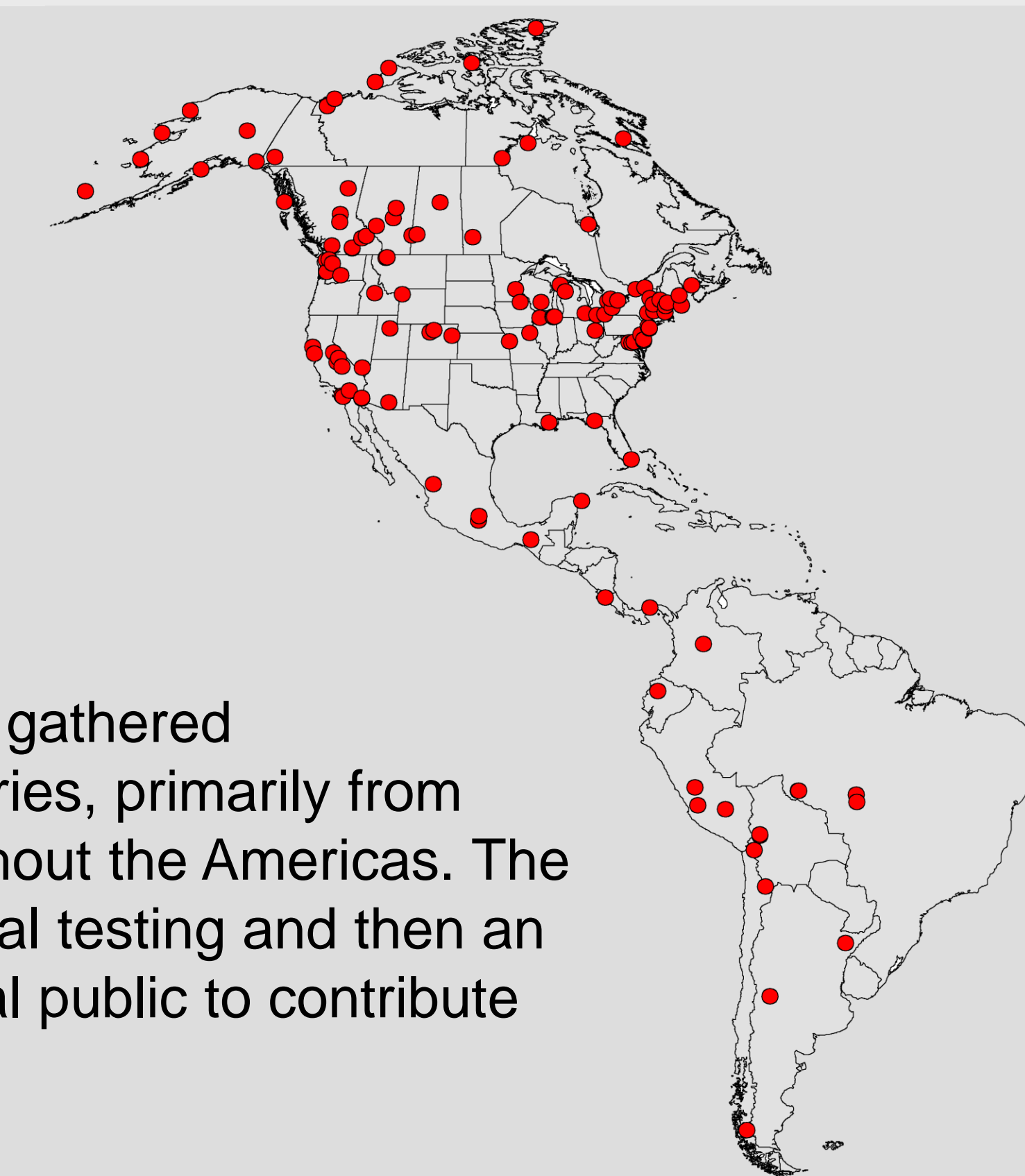
However, these two important sets of data—scientific and popular media—have remained separate and each largely unused by the other. In addition, limited research has been conducted to explore the interconnection of climate stories from testimonial or general media sources, or local perception of climate change, with historical trends in regional climate data.

The Map of Stories Working Group seeks to merge the scientific and popular media information with a website that functions as a communication tool to document the scientific and perceived impacts of climate change. The website is meant as a resource for NGOs, governments, journalists, citizens and researchers to put local events into perspective, and evaluate the need to implement adaptation strategies.

MapOfStories.org / ClimaScopio.org

Contributing Stories

The goal of our work is to develop a user-friendly, robust web platform to allow interactive data gathering from media sources and citizen's testimonials



At this stage, we have gathered approximately 300 stories, primarily from media sources throughout the Americas. The next step will be internal testing and then an invitation to the general public to contribute stories.

Validating Stories

It is clear that more often than not, climate trends are only one of many contributors to perceived climate change impacts. Our approach is not to censor journalistic articles or citizen's testimonials, but simply provide relevant references and climate data for each submission.