

METAPHORS in the CLIMATE DEBATE

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INTRODUCTION

Research Question

How does the meaning of metaphors used in the climate change debate change over time and across genres?

Dataset & Method

News and scientific articles published between 2005 and 2012 and containing either “carbon footprint” or “tipping point” were collected via the LexisNexis database (news) and Web of Knowledge database (science). Articles were systematically coded using Atlas.ti software to categorize the linguistic and discursive features of each use of the metaphors. A diachronic and cross-genre comparison was then conducted.

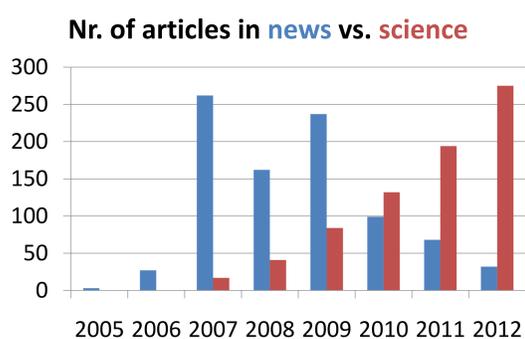
Relevance

Climate change is a complex social issue involving a wide range of actors, values, and perspectives; looking at the use of metaphor in the climate debate provides insight onto the evolving nature of actors’ priorities and knowledge about the topic.

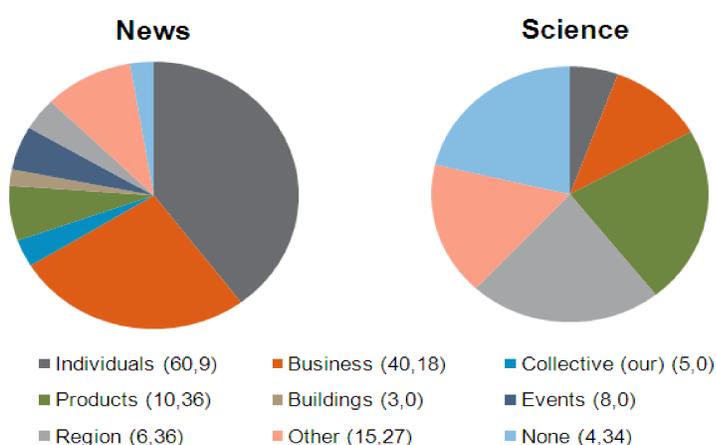
CARBON FOOTPRINT

“the amount of carbon dioxide a person, organization, building, etc produces, used as a measure of their effect on the environment” (MacMillan)

- First in business communication in 1990s
- Grew out of “environmental footprint;” related to “carbon” compounds, eg. Carbon indulgence



Result of coding: Scale of footprint

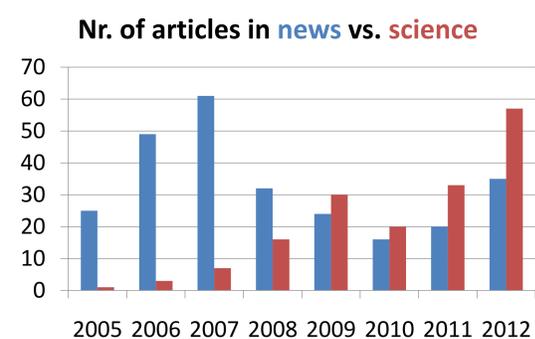


TIPPING POINT

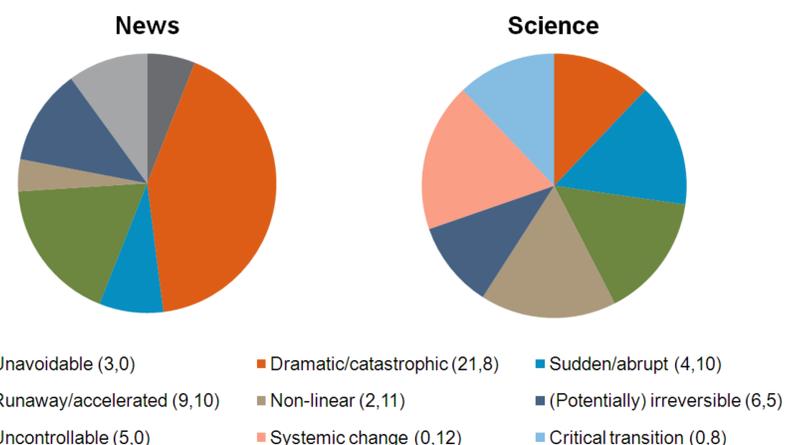


“a time when important things start happening in a situation, especially things that you cannot change” (MacMillan online)

“the point at which a series of small changes or incidents becomes significant enough to cause a larger, more important change” (Oxford online)



Result of coding: Type of change



RESULTS & CONCLUSION

- Meaning of TP and CF relatively stable over time.
- Meaning and use of TP and CF varies across genres.
- Presence of TP and CF has decreased in news since 2007; continues to increase in science.
- Findings will be published as two exploratory studies.