

Abstract

The climate change skepticism has been becoming a more and more distinct and apparently increasing social phenomenon. To date, western scholars have described the different forms it can take and the factors supporting its increase. In the recent years, we've been observing some signs of a similar trend in the Czech Republic because the number of people who find the anthropogenic climate changes significant has been decreasing and the proportion of the “skeptical population” has been growing.

Although in the first part of this paper I present an overview of data concerning the “public climate change skepticism” (available poll data), its primary focus is on the research of activities carried out by individuals and groups that relativize the importance of climate changes constantly, publically and in a more or less organized manner. In such case we can talk about a certain form of a countermovement against the environmentalism and the mainstream climatology.

This paper draws mainly from a qualitative study conducted between 2011 and 2014 by means of semi-structured interviews with active Czech climate change skeptics. The goal of the study was to describe the strategies of climate change skeptics actions in the changing political and discursive environment, the forms of their organization and the framing of the climate changes as well as the related stakeholders.

The main finding is that the active Czech climate change skepticism went through periods of changing intensity and dynamics between 2007 and 2014. It probably reached its peak from 2007 to 2008 when its organizational platform was constituted by think-tanks with a market-based approach towards the environment, and the most important climate change skeptics from abroad were coming to Prague in order to present their opinions. From around 2011, the climate change skepticism however started to disappear from the agenda of the main think-tanks and fragmented in a number of smaller associations, distinct individuals and in the virtual space.

The climate change skeptics present their arguments in a strongly expertizing manner, which gives food for thoughts about the potential of a deeper mobilization of this countermovement. On one hand, a strong expertization makes politization more difficult, on the other hand it reinforces the impression of controversy and the differences of opinion in the scientific community, which helps to postpone decisions and encourage inactivity in the climate change issues. The expertization (not necessarily professionalization) is thus an efficient strategy of deproblematization of the phenomenon that environmental movements and climatologists find significant.

On the whole, the impact of climate change skeptics can be called “unobviousness of an anthropogenic hypothesis“. While before 2007 the primary “interpreters” of the climate change were experts from this field (climatologists), as the opposition of the climate change skeptics has mobilized, the spectrum of speakers has widened. The climatologists and environmental activists then started to feel a stronger need not only to explain the topic of anthropogenic changes but also to defend and prove its relevance.