

Climate Labs: The “Backstage” Of Climate Change

Fabio Cian

My outreach project at the RCC aims to show how climate science is carried out. **Climate Labs** is a global photo-documentary project aiming to document the most important climate science laboratories in the world. Its goal is to raise awareness on climate science, climate change, and the related environmental and social changes through a visual narrative showing how science is made. Working at the intersection of science and art, it brings climate science and climate change closer to the larger public at a time when these themes are often under attack by populism, unreliable information, or simply lack of action.

Climate Labs focuses on the most scientifically advanced countries, e.g. the United States and Europe, where technology and resources are impressive and where climate science has a long and fascinating history. However, it also covers developing countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, where climate science has recently become extremely advanced and where climate change is an important issue to millions of vulnerable people.

The documentation started at the Earth Institute of Columbia University in the city of New York—an institute that has played an central role in the history of climate science and geoscience in general—where there are important laboratories and the biggest repository in the world of ocean sediment cores. It continued to the National Autonomous University of Mexico, in Mexico City, to the Climate Observatory on the top of Monte Cimone in the Italian Apennines, and to the middle of the Brazilian Amazon forest. In the next months, documentation will continue in the arctic region, in Asia, and in Africa.

The ultimate goal is to uncover, by means of visual and written storytelling, what is behind the numbers, plots, models, and maps that are shown in the climate change debate. The evidence of how and where the science is made and who is working on it will connect the viewer/reader to a world that is very often unknown and not understood. Showing these peculiar places and the bizarre activities carried out in climate labs will make climate science more tangible and real. It will change the image of plots of increasing CO₂ emissions or maps of above-average temperatures, to images of real people performing rigorous activities to produce the science needed to create these materials.