

# Beyond climate models: Rethinking how to envision the future with climate change

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Professor Stephen Sheppard will present at the symposium Beyond Climate Models: Rethinking How to Envision the Future with Climate Change Friday, at the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) conference in Vancouver.

"The latest research from the University of British Columbia and around the world strongly suggests that new [visualization](#) media, appropriately used, can be more effective than conventional scientific communications in engaging, informing and motivating people," says Sheppard. "Using pictures supported by models and data can make the future with [climate change](#) and its solutions more real, more compelling, and more connected to people's lives where they care the most—in their local communities."

Sheppard's talk focuses on this new method of communicating climate change with people—from a local to a global scale—and what the benefits, risks and dilemmas of using such techniques might be.

"Powerful visual media that go beyond [climate models](#) are not yet widely used, but could potentially be misleading or misused. What could make a big difference would be for a respected organization such as the AAAS to adopt a code of conduct and encourage new curricula and training centres, to promote the balanced use of science-based visualizations in planning for climate change," says Sheppard.

The [symposium](#), organized by Sheppard and post-doctoral fellow Olaf

Schroth, will be moderated by UBC professor and IPCC Nobel Prize-winner John Robinson. It will feature three other IPCC/Nobel Prize-winners including Mike Hulme, a professor from University of East Anglia, debating with visualization experts how to move beyond the limitations of climate science. The discussions will be informed by animated visual demonstrations and the latest research findings.

Extensively involved in research with local communities, Sheppard directs UBC's Collaborative for Advanced Landscape Planning (CALP). His forthcoming book, *Visualizing Climate Change*, will be released in March. Recently Sheppard oversaw the design of the BC Hydro Theatre, a visual 'decision theatre' in the new Centre for Interactive Research on Sustainability at UBC. The theatre is a large space equipped with the newest imaging technologies that researchers and communities can use to explore future sustainability options. Some of the other visual media that could connect people to climate change includes 3D visualization, virtual globes like Google Earth and serious video games.

This year marks the first time the AAAS Annual Meeting will be held in Canada since 1981. The 2012 meeting focus is on using the power of electronic communications and information resources to tackle the complex problems of the 21st century on a global scale through international multidisciplinary collaboration.

Provided by University of British Columbia

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