Communicating with policymakers
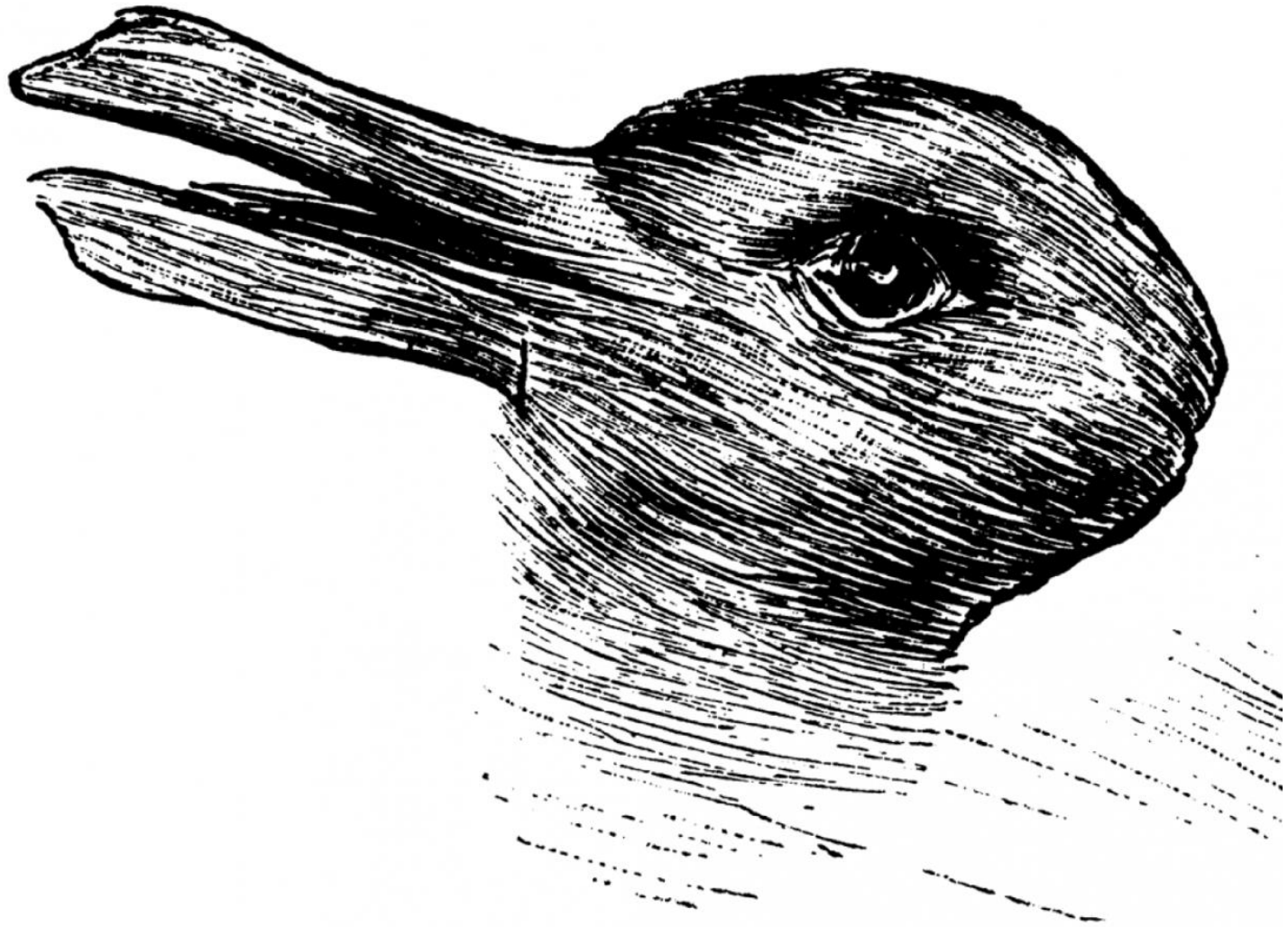
Trieste, 4 December 2020

Chiara Saviane

Media Relations and Communication Unit
Master's course in Science Communication
SISSA Trieste

SISSA.IT   MCS.SISSA.IT   saviane@sissa.it

SISSA

Science for policy

Pixabay

Science for policy

http://www.vaccinews.net
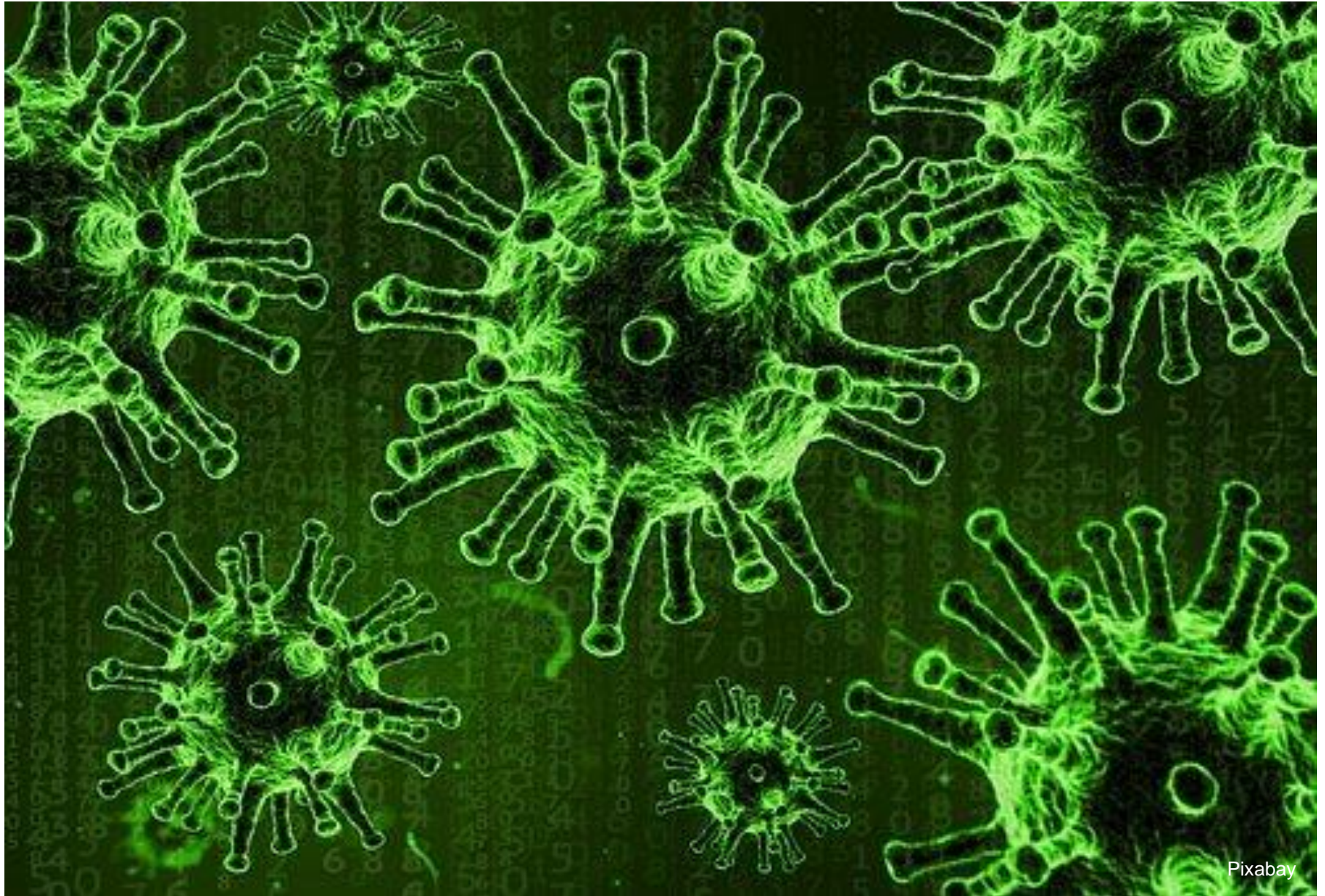
Science for policy
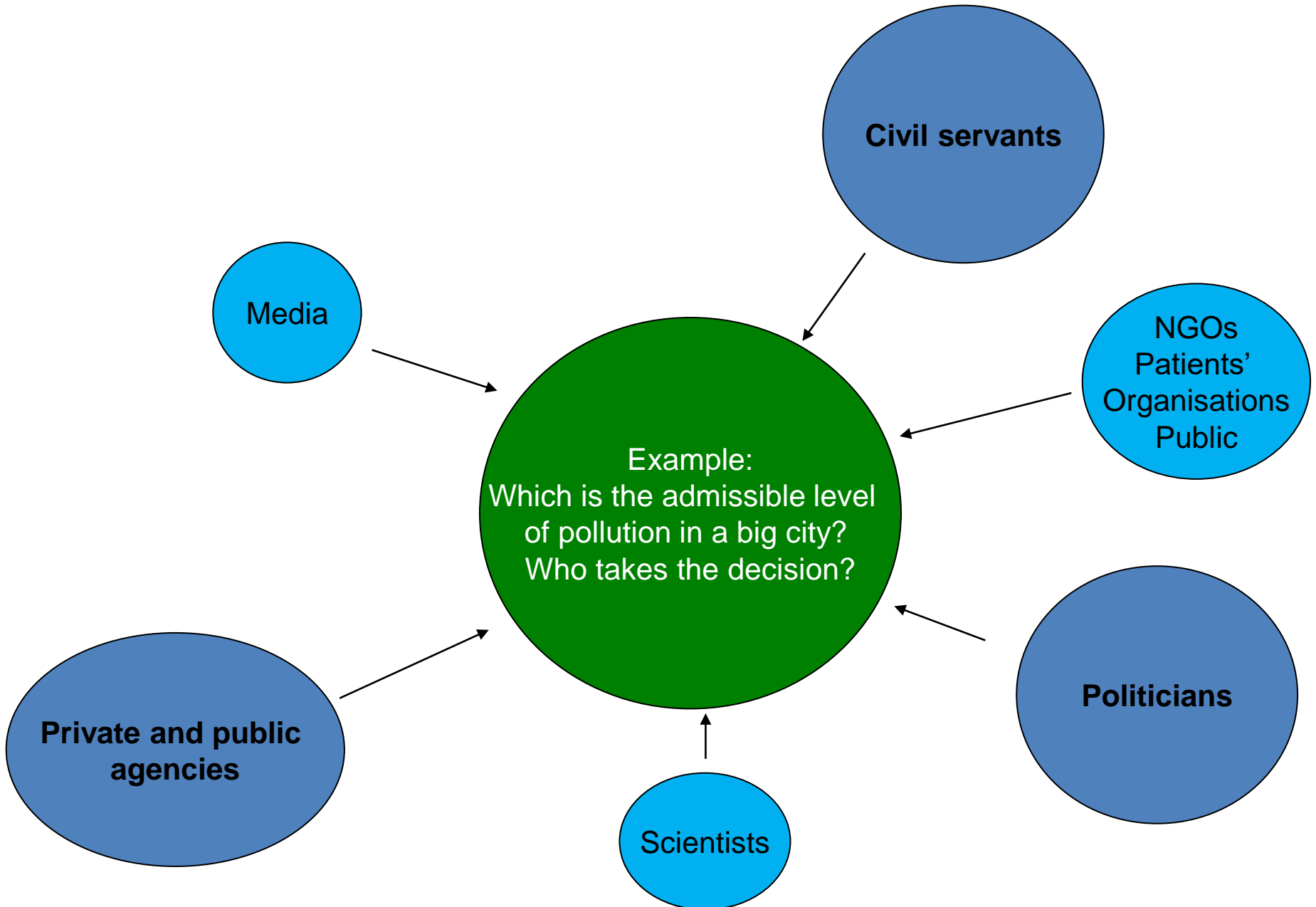

Pixabay

Policy for science

Horizon Europe

THE NEXT EU RESEARCH & INNOVATION PROGRAMME (2021–2027)

There is a **gap** between scientists, focused on **discovery**, and policymakers, focused on **decisions**

Policymakers and scientists: the cultures collide

Policymakers: a broad definition

Civil servants

Media

NGOs
Patients'
Organisations
Public

Example:
Which is the admissible level
of pollution in a big city?
Who takes the decision?

Politicians

Private and public
agencies

Scientists

Policymakers vs scientists

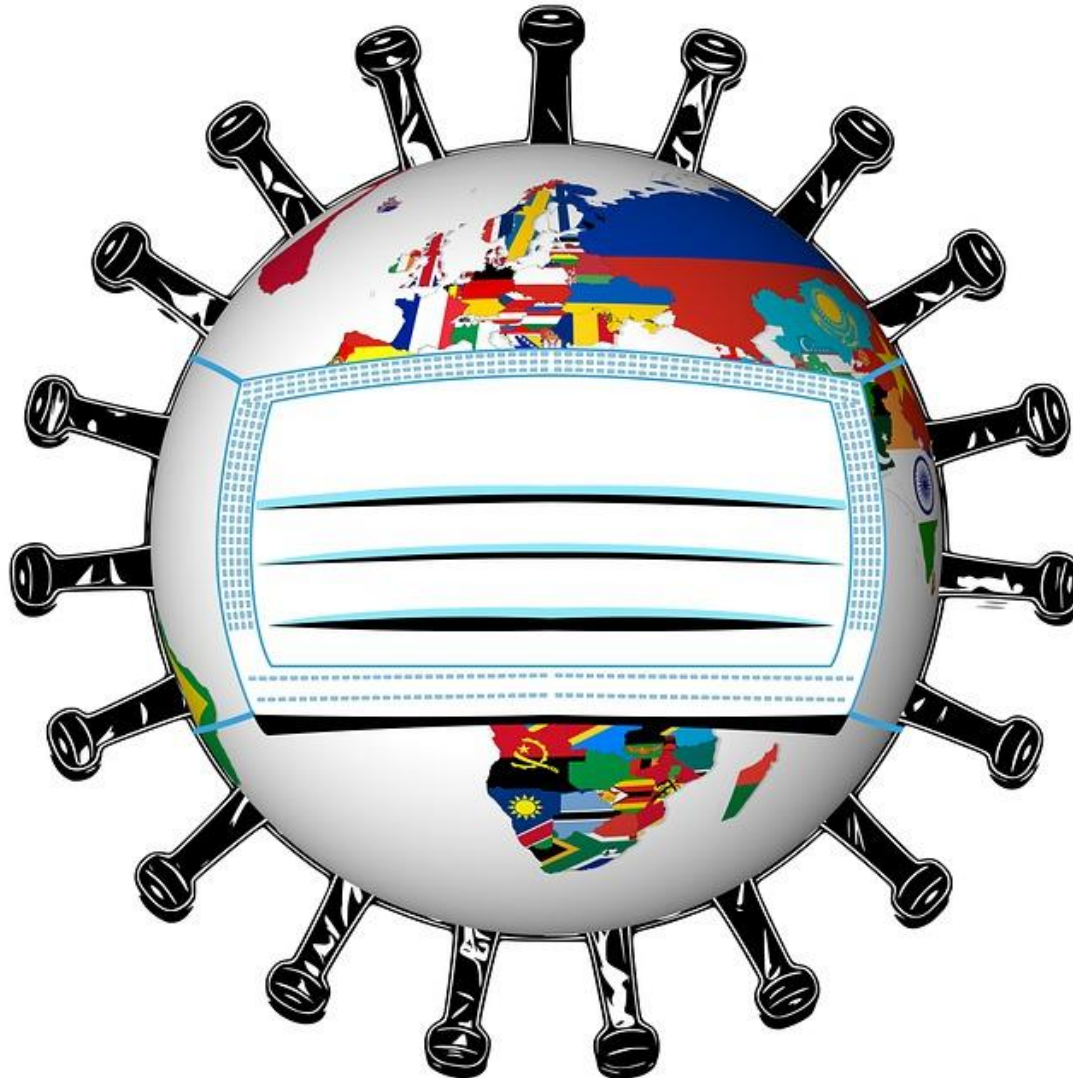|	Policymakers	Scientists
Focus	Breadth	Depth
Audience	Constituents	Peers
Language	Not technical	Domain-specific vocabulary and concepts
Communicative tools	Sound bytes	Extensive academic papers
Goal	To solve problems through policy	To solve problems through science
Timescale	Months, weeks, days	Years

Policymakers vs scientists: dealing with uncertainty

Dealing with uncertainty: risk communication and the BSE case

Policymakers vs scientists: policymaking is not just about science

Policymakers vs scientists: policymaking is not just about science

"Science cannot tell us where to go, but after this decision is made on other grounds, it can tell us the best way to get there."

J. Kemeny, *A Philosopher Looks at Science*, 1959

More things scientists need to know about policymaking

- Making policy is really difficult

- No policy will ever be perfect

- Policy makers (as well as scientists) are human

- "We need more research" is the wrong answer

- …

More on https://www.theguardian.com/science/2013/dec/02/scientists-policy-governments-science

Different roles of scientists in policymaking
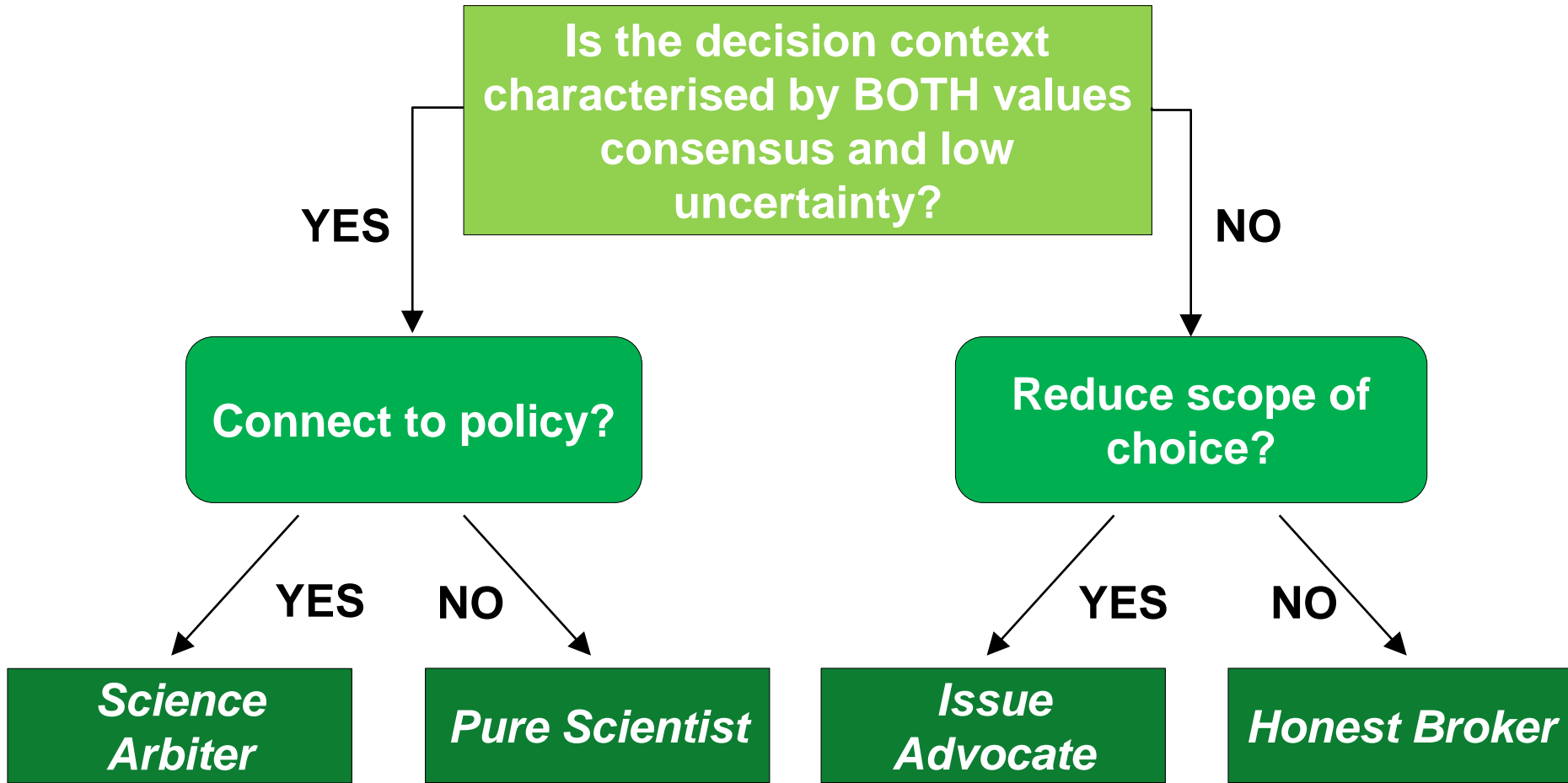
The pure scientist
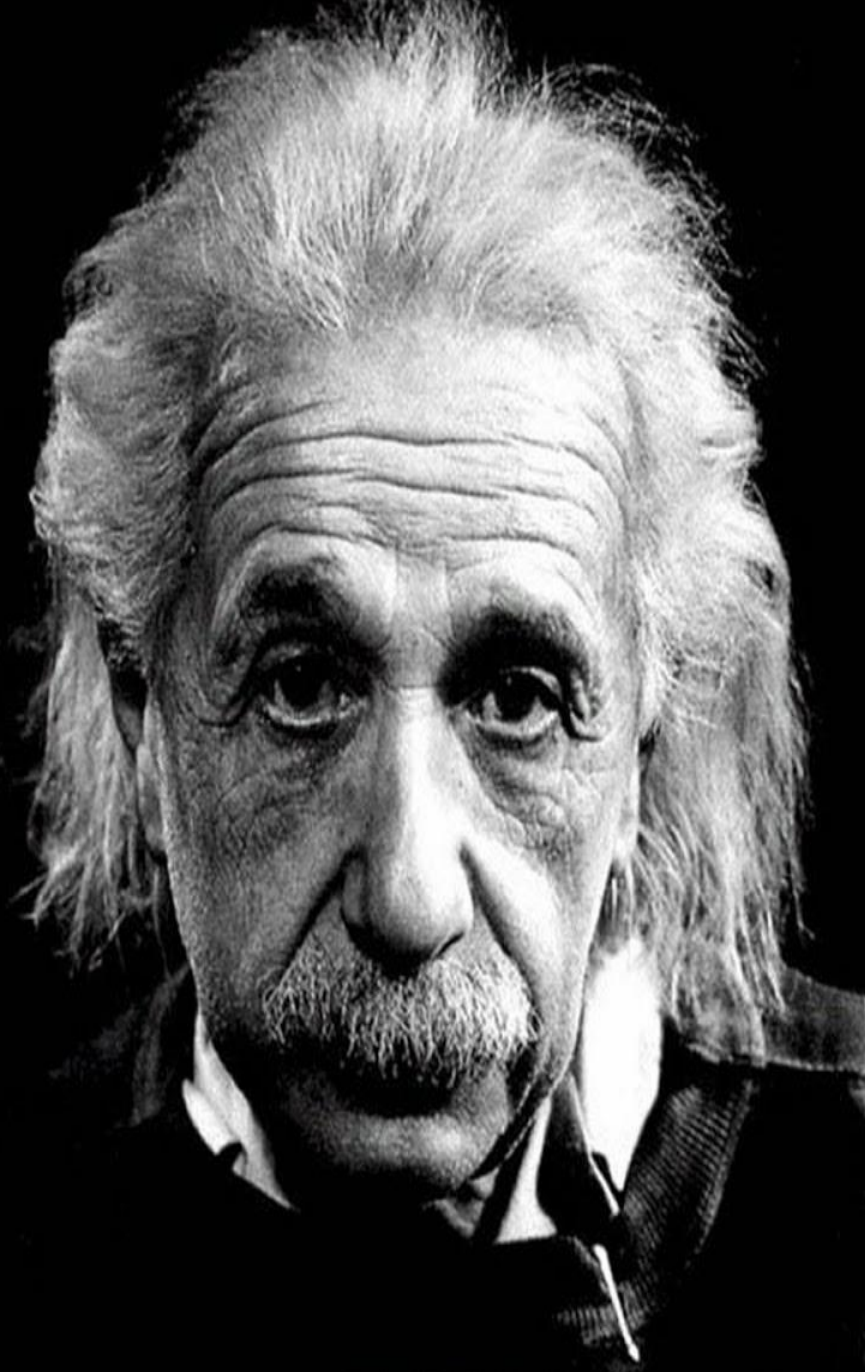
The science arbiter

The issue advocate

The honest broker

What role for science?

Scientists and policymaking today

From objectivity to non-violent civil disobedience

Greta Thunberg (Wikimedia)

Extinction Rebellion, 2019 (Flickr)

Advice through open letters

22.09.2020 [Covid UK: scientists at loggerheads over approach to new restrictions](#)

22.10.2020 [Cento scienziati scrivono a Conte e Mattarella: «Subito misure drastiche»](#)

29.10.2020 [Covid-19, la lettera degli studiosi: dai tamponi ai mezzi pubblici, tutti gli errori del governo](#)

Science and policy programs

Pairing policymakers & scientists
Royal Society Pairing Scheme 2016
THE ROYAL SOCIETY
royalsociety.org

AAAS | Science & Technology Policy Fellowships

SCIENCE MEETS PARLIAMENT

Standards for evidence in policymaking

| Validation level	Rating	Description of standard for evidence
Theoretical Argument or possible explanation stated	★	A scientifically-viable concept has been proposed but lacks empirical testing or validation. May come in the form of a descriptive theory, explanation of an issue, or a framework of a wider construct. Opinions may be treated as theory.
Empirical Concept described but not utilized	★ ★	Insights exist that identify and explain a given issue using valid measurement of observation or phenomenon. Eventually, it should include a move toward consensus on interpretations of robust study. May include non-successful interventions or lower-power studies, with increasingly converging conclusions as new data are generated.
Applicable Concept has been used to elicit effect	★ ★ ★	Effective intervention or application completed, in a controlled trial where possible. Measurement of processes and effects considered valid. Effect should demonstrate value for scientific insight and/or practice via reasonably-powered study. Ideally, the method was pre-registered for one or multiple studies.
Replicable Effect has been repeated independently	★ ★ ★ ★	Valid and effective interventions produce converging conclusions through successful replication in terms of setting, procedure, and measurement. This is also a safeguard against errors (e.g., false positives) or bias tied to an individual study.
Impact Effect has been appropriately replicated in practice with measurable value in real world	☆ ★ ★ ★	Successful translation of insight applied at scale, producing consistent and validated effects in line with prior conclusions. Findings validated at the highest conceivable power (i.e., populations) through real-world testing and replication of effects in multiple settings. Standard approach to implementation, evaluation, and interpretation of data.

How can scientists communicate effectively with policymakers?

The ABCs of communication to policymakers
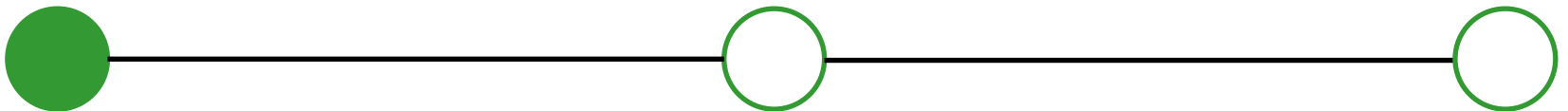
BEFORE   DURING   AFTER
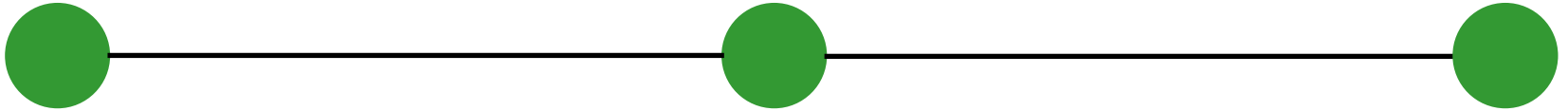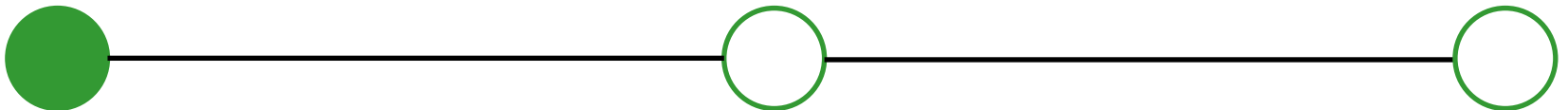
Before

- Why are you going there?

- What action do you want them to take?
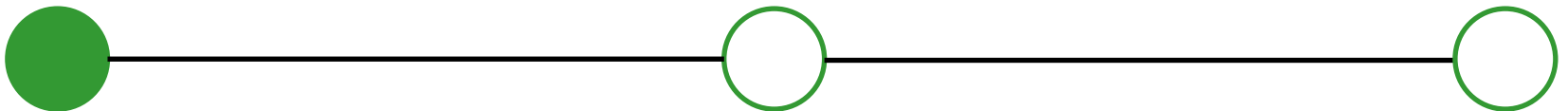
- Know meeting logistics

- …

Before: Know your audience

- Did you choose them or have they chosen you?

- What are their political and organizational affiliations?

- What is their background?

- Who are their staff?

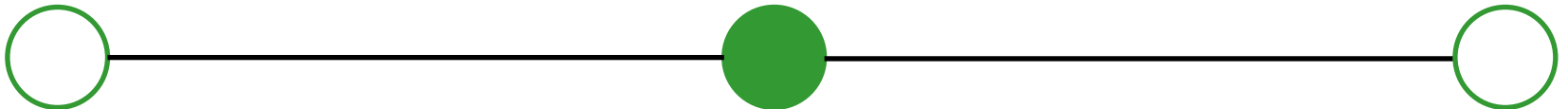- What are their positions towards your issue?

- …

Before: Craft your argument

- What is your story?

- Why does it matter?
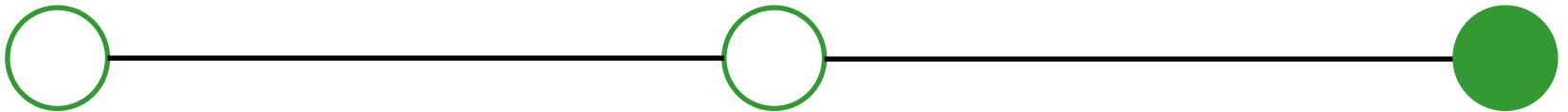
- What is the benefit or the threat?

During

- Be accurate, brief and polite

- Be credible

- Tell them what action you would like them to take

- Leave a lasting impression

- General appearance and non-verbal communication
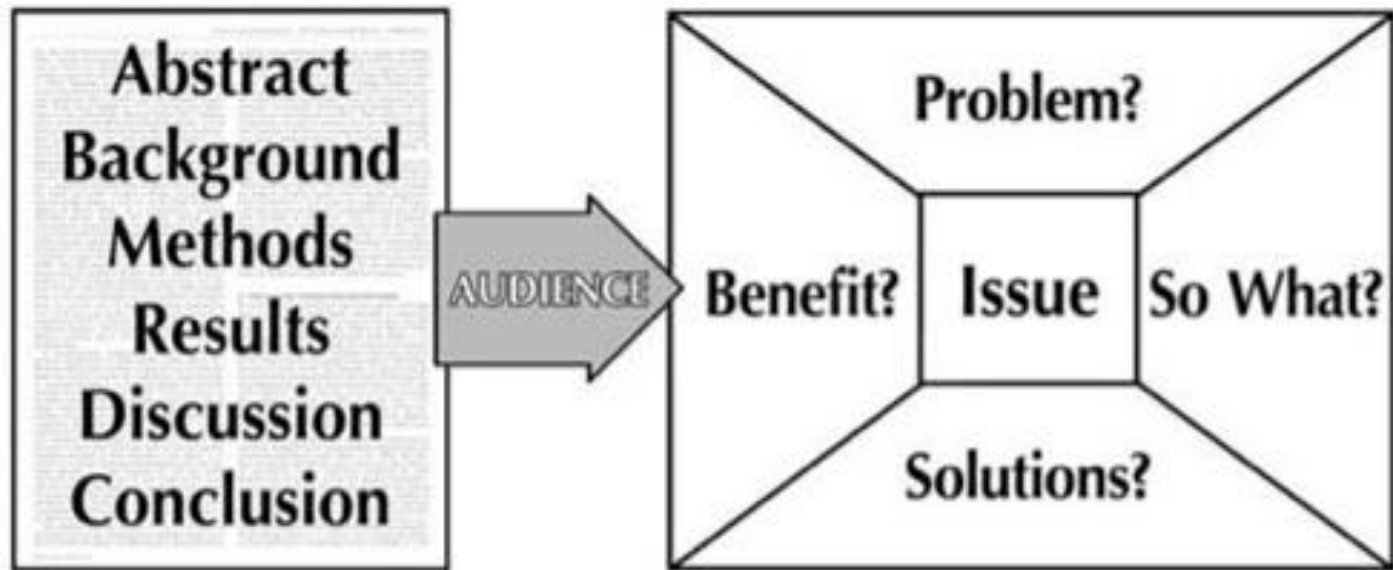
- …

After

- Did anything happen?

- Think of follow-up actions

A couple of tools

The message box

The message box

What is the overall issue?

What is your specific problem?

Problem?

Benefit? | Issue | So What?

Solutions?

Why should your audience care?

What are the benefits of your solutions?
What would your audience get out of it?

What are your potential solutions?
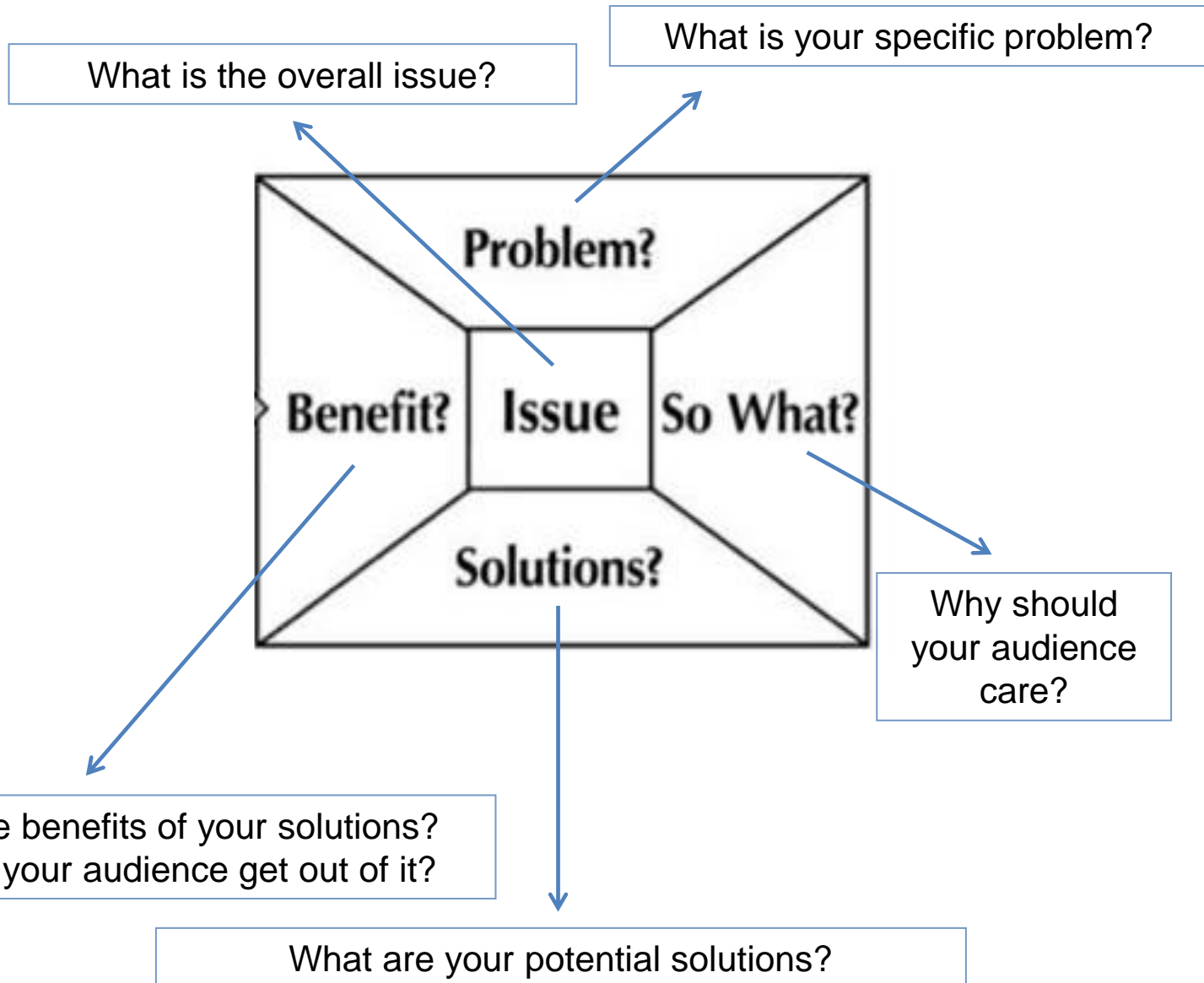
The message box: an example

The Message Box
Audience: Policy-makers

Problem?
A warmer world is a sicker world. Warming allows diseases to spread further, develop faster, become more severe.

Benefits?
- Predict and prevent disease outbreaks
- Lessen the impact of future epidemics

Climate change is triggering disease epidemics.

So What?
This is one of the most significant impacts of global warming, but we've paid little attention to it. We are not prepared for the future.

Solution
- Short-term: Prepare lines of defense [research, disease protocols]
- Long-term: Reduce emissions [monitor]

From http://blogs.esri.com/esri/esri-insider/2013/02/11/bridging-the-gap-between-scientists-and-policy-makers-whither-geospatial/#sthash.90kO0VrX.dpuf
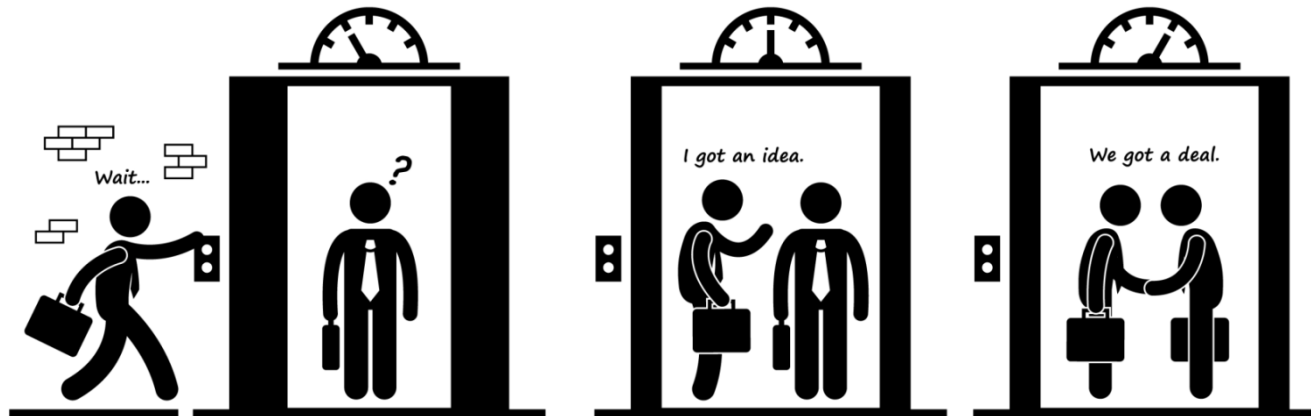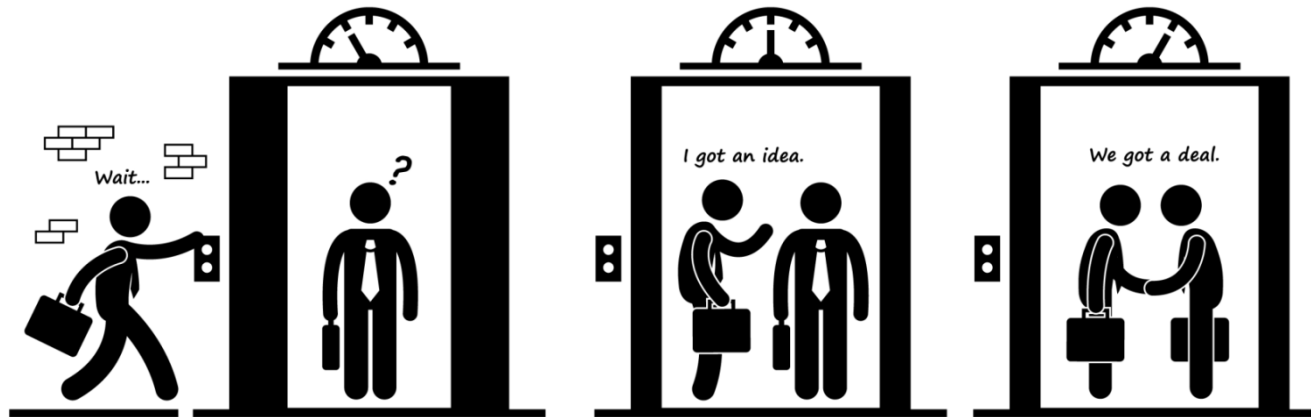
The elevator speech or pitch

A **clear, brief** message used to **quickly** and **simply** describe a profession, product, service, organization or idea.

The elevator speech or pitch

- It is used by a project managers, salespeople, policy-makers to get their point across quickly.

- It is delivered in the time span of an elevator ride, approximately thirty seconds to two minutes.

The elevator speech or pitch

- It is among the first things you do that will form an impression with others.

- If the conversation is interesting, it will continue after the elevator ride or end in exchange of business cards or a scheduled meeting.
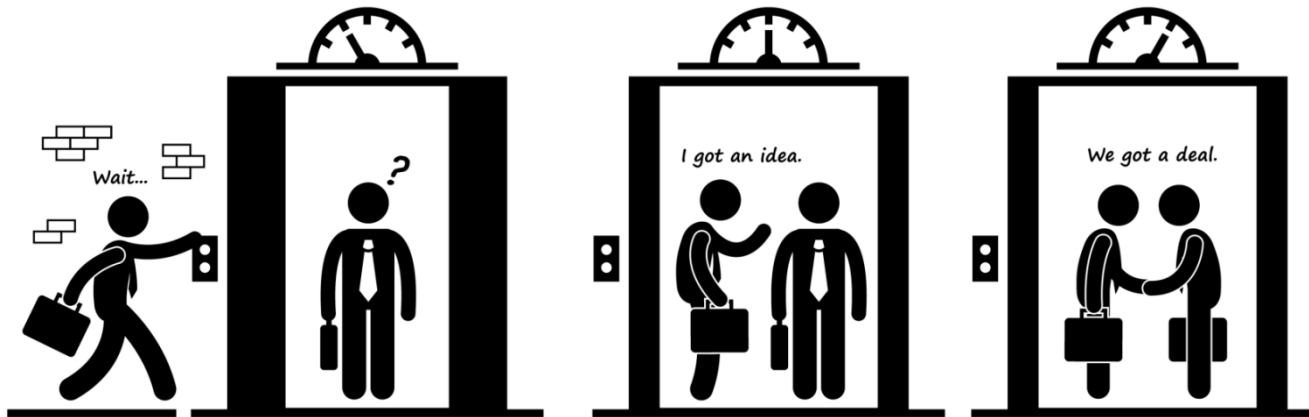
Why do you need an elevator pitch?

It may be useful with policymakers, but also with neighbours, friends or potential employers when:

- fielding questions about your job at cocktail parties
- interviewing for a position
- asking for money
- persuading a potential collaborator.

Your need different pitches for different audiences.

A sample elevator speech outline

Who are you?

Describe you and your company/laboratory/department.

Tell what you do, thinking at the broader picture.

Tell what problems you have solved or contributions you have made.

What are you looking for?

Tell why you are interested in your listener.

Explain the problem, why it matters and potential solutions.

What are the benefits?

What are the advantages of working with you? Tell what very special service, idea or solutions you can offer him or her.

What are the benefits of fixing such problem or supporting your idea?

Call for action: what do you want?

Do you want a business card, a referral or an appointment for a presentation after your elevator speech?

Don't forget to ask for it!

Image from lynnjenkins.house.gov

How to deliver a powerful elevator pitch

How to deliver a powerful elevator pitch

1. Sound natural

2. You Have To "Get" What's Unique about You or Your product/idea

3. Think short and simple

4. Attitude and body language

5. Capture attention

6. Shut Up

A successful pitch is where the other person relaxes and says "Interesting. Tell me more."

The Elevator Speech

Example: Job hunting

Hi, my name is Samantha Atcheson, and I am a senior Environmental Sciences major. I'm looking for a position that will allow me to use my research and analysis skills. Over the past few years, I've been strengthening these skills through my work with a local watershed council on conservation strategies to support water quality and habitats. Eventually, I'd like develop education programs on water conservation awareness. I read that your organization is involved in water quality projects. Can you tell me how someone with my experience may fit into your organization?

Example: Selling ppt

A: So, what do you do?

B: I help build PowerPoint muscles.

A: Huh?

B: I teach people how to use PowerPoint more effectively in business. Now, for instance, I'm working with a global consulting firm to train all their senior consultants to give better sales presentations so they can close more business.

Summary

- Scientists may play different roles in policymaking

- To bridge the gap between scientists and policymakers you need specific communication activities
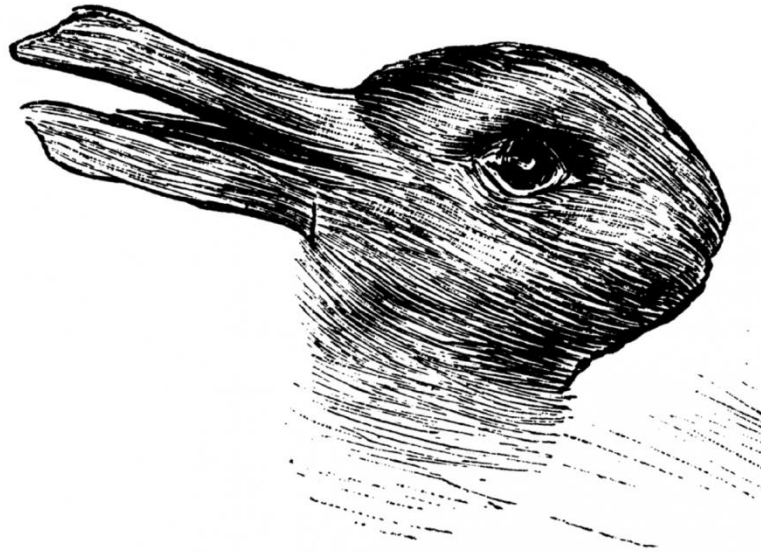
Practical activity: elevator pitch

You meet a member of the FVG Region who may be able support the organization of your event during the Brain Awareness Week

•Draft an elevator pitch of about 30-60 seconds to present your idea

•Practice and fine-tune it

•Get ready to present it

More examples of elevator pitches

https://mcb.unco.edu/students/networking-night/examples-MCB-Pitch-Contest.aspx

https://www.google.com/search?q=elevator+pitch+esof&client=firefox-b-d&tbm=vid&ei=RFLJX9GuAaHisAeHk6HICg&start=0&sa=N&ved=0ahUKEwjR4Jnc2rLtAhUhMewKHYdJCKk4FBDy0wMIeA&biw=1536&bih=750&dpr=1.25

https://www.cirm.ca.gov/our-funding/stem-cell-elevator-pitch-challenge

https://www.alc.manchester.ac.uk/study/graduate-school/student-experience/

Bibliography

Baron, N. (2010), Escape from the Ivory Tower: A Guide to Making Your Science Matter, Island Press

ESRI (2013), Bridging the Gap Between Scientists and Policy Makers: Whither Geospatial?

Gardner and Wordley (2019), Scientists must act on our own warnings to humanity, Nature Ecology and Evolution

Kwok (2013), Communication: Two minutes to impress, Nature

Know, D. (2020) Science and policy collide during the pandemic, The Scientist

Lucente (2017), Scientists and Policymakers, PLOSBlogs

Pielke, R. P. (2007), The honest broker, Cambridge University Press

Pielke (2015), Five Modes of Science Engagement

Safford and Brown (2019), Communicating science to policymakers: six strategies for success, Nature

Stevens A. (2020), Governments cannot just 'follow the science' on COVID-19, Nature Human Behaviour

Sturloni G. (2020), Decidere in condizioni di incertezza durante l'emergenza Covid-19, Oggiscienza

Tyler (2013), Top 20 things scientists need to know about policy-making, The Guardian

ESOF elevator's pitch competition:
https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLC86245DE7208D086&nohtml5=False