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► To cite this version:

Collectif Les Sacoques Du Climat, Juliette Bernard, Antoine Bierjon, Julie Carles, Antoine Ehret, et al.. 'Les Sacoques du Climat': An outreach cycling initiative for covering the last mile of climate communication in rural France. EGU General Assembly 2024, Apr 2024, Vienna, Austria. pp. EGU24-12554, 10.5194/egusphere-egu24-12554 . insu-04505433

HAL Id: insu-04505433

<https://insu.hal.science/insu-04505433>

Submitted on 31 May 2024

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'Les Sacoques du Climat': An outreach cycling initiative for covering the last mile of climate communication in rural France

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Rural and medium-sized town populations already regularly face the tangible impacts of climate change, particularly in relation to their professional activities. However, they are often overlooked by the scientific community when it comes to knowledge sharing, even though they equally deserve attentive listening and consideration. 'Les Sacoques du Climat' (i.e. 'The Climate Panniers') is a French scientific outreach initiative led by a collective of young climate researchers specializing in various fields. The initiative was designed to raise awareness of climate issues in such regions, taking on the challenge of reaching the last mile in the large-scale French awareness campaign 'La Tournée du Climat et de la Biodiversité' (i.e. 'The Climate and Biodiversity Tour') — a traveling exhibition in major cities addressing climate and biodiversity issues led by a multidisciplinary team of scientists.

Our journey unfolded over a week, navigating the landscapes of rural France on bicycles. During the day, we engaged with secondary school audiences, delivering an introduction to climate challenges followed by interactive discussions and workshops, with a particular emphasis on a sensitive approach. This educational endeavor was seamlessly intertwined with collaborative projects involving teaching staff. In the evening, we engaged adult audiences through conferences and debates, fostering collaboration with local communities and associations. Accompanied by esteemed French climatologists riding tandem with us, our collective presents here a brief retrospective of this journey and the messages derived from it. This initiative serves as an earnest call for climatologists to step beyond the traditional confines of research, immerse themselves in the field, and consider the impacts, adaptation, and vulnerability of territories in all their diversity and specificity in the face of climate change, fostering a responsible societal paradigm shift.