

Group SIX Luca Mercalli

Luca Mercalli (1966) is an Italian climatologist, glaciologist and science journalist. He is the chair of the Italian Meteorological Society and in 2012 he was appointed by the European Union for the elaboration of a law proposition about adaptation strategies to climate change in mountain environments and soil sealing protection.

1. When did you decide to be a scientist? And why?

I was always very interested in natural sciences since I was little. At the age of 14 I realized that meteorology and climatology were the most interesting subjects and all my attention was on them. Instead of watching football matches, I kept reading encyclopedias. Nowadays you have the privilege to use Wikipedia and you don't feel the need to go to the library anymore.

2. Why did you choose to study climatology and glaciology?

Living in Turin, a city underneath the Alps, the snow and the glaciers that I was looking at from my bedroom's window in my holidays house became the spark for my future studies and my future job.

I feel very lucky to have accomplished my goals. I did everything I've always wanted, but with hard work and a lot of sacrifices.

3. In your job of science journalist, what items do you write about usually?

I write about thoughts and solutions about environmental crisis and the consequences that it will have on your generation of young students.

4. What was your favourite subject at school?

Natural sciences

5. Why were you interested in meteorology?

I started to be interested in applied meteorology: I wanted to be able to predict the weather to manage my vegetable garden in the best way



6. As climatologist, what do you think about global warming?

It is the biggest enemy and the toughest challenge on Earth.

7. Did you always wanted to do this job?

Yes

8. What is your best memories about your job?

The discovery of the hidden language of nature: for example when I measured a glacier for the first time, in 1986, after 8 hours of climbing. I wasn't able to see it from the bottom until it showed up in a valley, and it was a moment full of happiness and contemplation. I was 20. Since then I go back there every year to measure the glacier with new and modern technologies.

9. What is your book "Prepariamoci" about? Why did you decide to write it?

We're able to see a lot of environmental changes in front of our eyes: Earth is under pressure and we will soon notice the evidences of our abuse.

To be prepared means to limit the damages and not be surprised by some situations that could be dangerous for our health and our wealth, like a period of drought that could limit food production, or a huge flood that could kill us.

10. Is there any important scientist which inspired you?

More than one. My preparation in science and in my normal life always depended by books, this is my advice: to read, read, read. Between my inspirations there is the meteorologist Francesco Denza that teached me through a book even though he passed away almost a century ago. And the environmental economist Aurelio Peccei, the pioneer of the Club in Rome.

11. You wrote a lot of articles and papers, you took part in many TV shows and gave many conferences. Is there a particular reason? Do you want people to know something? If yes, what is your message?

There is a very short time left to avoid irreversible damages to our life and our planet. We have to change now, until it is still possible. Even my 15.000 colleagues in the World Scientist's warning to humanity: A second notice (<http://scientists.forestry.oregonstate.edu/>) agree. I am the spokesperson of a big community of scientists whose message is always underestimated.

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relatore:
LUCA MERCALLI
Climatologo
Presidente della Società Meteorologica Italiana

lunedì
16 aprile 2018
ore 20.30
Sala Jacopo Da Ponte
P. le Cadorna 34,
Bassano del Gr. (Vi)

  

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12. Why did you choose to get your degree in France?

I'm lucky to live near the border of the french country and I took the chance to be part of two different cultures: an occasion that I would recommend to everyone.
In France this subject is more popular.

13. Do you think that being a climatologist has influenced your writing as a journalist?

Of course: the journalist has to be also a scientist or has to have scientific studies in his background to communicate in the best and professional way about complicated subjects

14. What is your law, asked by the UE, about? Is it respected all over Europe?

It is about mountain regions adapting to climate changes. It's a contribute to the biggest European strategy about climate changes. For now it's only paper, like lots of other laws! People can make a difference and change our world, we need laws, but we need culture, awareness and responsibility first.