

Annual MeCCSA Conference / Paper proposal

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Title

Bridging science and community knowledges: exploring digital storytelling as 'translational tool' for stakeholder engagement in drought risk management

Abstract

Digital storytelling is a methodology that typically captures subjective perspectives, critical reflections and multiple realities through experiential knowledge, in contrast to dominant conceptions of 'western science' which is perceived as producing objective data and aims to produce a single, incontrovertible truth. In 'Drought Risk and You - DRY' Project (4-year interdisciplinary project, funded under RCUK's Drought and Water Scarcity programme), we aim to bring together experiential and scientific data to support multi-stakeholder decision-making through new knowledge exchanges and the inclusion of previously unheard voices within and between different sectors.

As an interdisciplinary team, we are co-designing the research with multiple stakeholders in seven river catchments to investigate different perceptions of drought and water scarcity, organizing community workshops that use drought science as a stimulus for conversational storytelling and other multiple narrative approaches. As a tool for action research and public engagement, digital storytelling is already revealing different perceptions by different water users. This underlines the importance of co-designing the decision-making tool as the project's main output and of finding the right language for different contexts in order to optimize mutual cross-domain understanding. This may occur through hybridization of the language itself when we generate stories by reflecting on scientific data.

We are attempting to facilitate a dialogue between lay and science experts through the learning process, based on specific examples rather than abstractions and generalities. So we act as 'knowledge brokers' to create or maintain links between researchers and their new audiences via new and tailored translations of research findings.