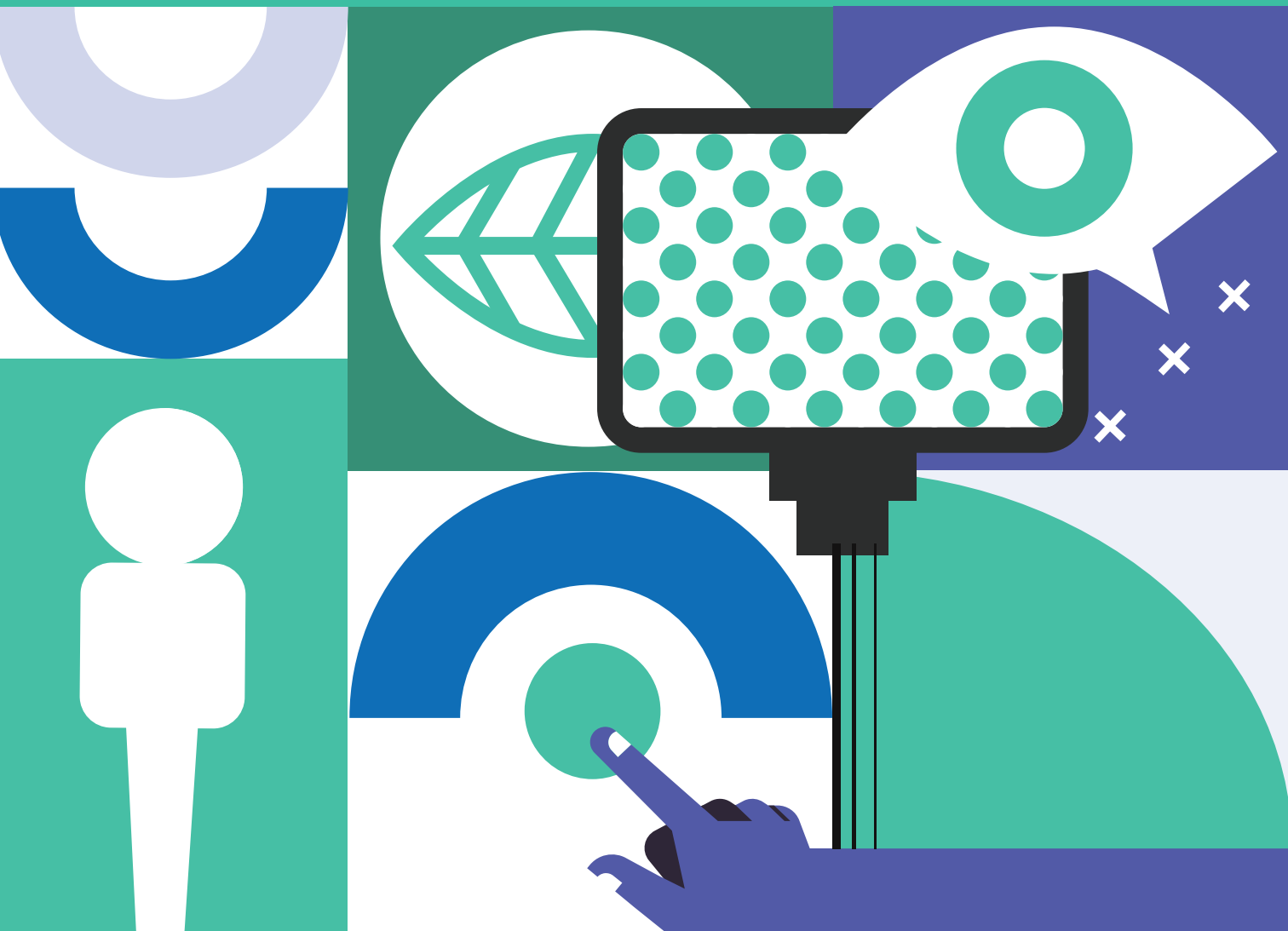
ENVIRONMENTAL COMMUNICATION EXCELLENCE GUIDE

ENVIRONMENTAL
COMMUNICATION



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COMMUNICATION

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INTRODUCTION
A Guide to Responsible Communication

Univ. Prof. Dr. habil Franzisca Weder
Dejan Andonov, MA

Environmental Communication – a term that encompasses a number of things, from news reporting about the latest flood or plastic waste in local riverbeds to civil engagement and activism against a new power plant, but there is more to it than that. Doing environmental communication involves a lot of ethical considerations, it's about taking responsibility and taking agency for socio-ecological transformation processes. Environmental communication therefore happens on various levels, from the (international and often strategic) communication of climate and nature related issues, for example in the media, to communication for sustainability and transformation. This guide explores the dimensions of environmental communication and translates global concepts into a specific local context.



Source: unsplash, 2023

Environmental communication is not only a task of nonprofit organizations and part of their engagement for the protection and conservation of our natural environment. Today, in the face of a climate crisis, individuals, but also big corporations, businesses, political institutions, or universities increasingly take responsibility for their actions and communicate about the environment, their human-nature relationship, and eco-cultural identities. Therefore, **environmental communication includes various communicative activities, structures,** and processes, from climate or green journalism to corporate sustainability communication, political rhetoric, science communication or communication for social change and development communication.

This Environmental Communication Excellence Guide includes **concepts, approaches, strategies, and tactics for communicators** in these fields, enabling better understanding of the environmental communication discipline. In this guide, we look at specific aspects of environmental communication and the potential to transform society and our human relationship to nature and the ways we deal with natural resources. The Guide provides

environmental communication knowledge, advice and best practices that will empower environmental advocates, marketing and PR professionals, journalists, educators, researchers, scientists, students, government employees, politicians, and business:

- To present facts in a critical manner, use the environmental terminology correctly and prepare pro and con arguments about an environmental issue properly.
- To create an action plan for improvement of ESG criteria for a company, city or region.
- To generate ideas, verify scientific sources and write news and journalism story on environmental topic.
- To design and choose key tactics, techniques and tools for social marketing and advocacy campaigns.
- To prepare an action plan for improving public participation and build conflict resolution approaches in environmental cases.

This Guide is inspired by and grounded in the amazing work of scholars and practitioners that contributed to the project "*Mainstreaming of Environmental Communication through Online Learning and Virtual Mobility*", implemented by the Institute of Communication Studies (North Macedonia) in partnership with the Faculty of Sciences (Department of Biology and Ecology) at the University of Novi Sad (Serbia), the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering and Naval Architecture at the University of Zagreb (Croatia), the Faculty of Political Sciences (Journalism and Communication Department) at the University of Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina) and the Faculty of Natural Sciences (Department of Biology) at the University of Tirana (Albania). The project is funded by the ERASMUS+ Program of the European Commission through the National Agency for European Educational Programs and Mobility of North Macedonia.

The project introduced an innovative and interdisciplinary approach to education through development and implementation of a new *Online Programme on Environmental Communication* and production of *open educational resources* and *learning games,* strengthening abilities of more than 150 environmental communication pioneers who can promote environment- and climate-conscious choices by individuals and social groups in their communities.

The interdisciplinary and transnational perspectives that were brought together in the Environmental Communication Programme are now represented in this guide. This is particularly important due to the fact that the field of environmental communication shows a dominance of US based studies, and less attention is paid to low-income countries and developing regions (Comfort & Park, 2018). Other studies also point to the Western bias in publications and research projects and uneven flows of scholarship and resources. Therefore, this guide reflects on environmental communication in South-East Europe and, thus, shows some of the antagonisms that impact environmental communication as well as science, sustainability or climate change communication scholarship that is still existent – but needs to be overcome due to the global dimension of the climate crisis and the local impact this has.

We will give a short introduction into our basic approach to environmental communication; after the chapters delving into local phenomena and fields of environmental communication, the "how-to" tips and most impactful "takeaways" from the Programme on Environmental Communication are summarized at the end of the guide.



Source: unsplash, 2023

Environmental Communication as an Area of Research and Teaching

In the United States, academic interest in how individuals, organizations and societal subsystems communicate about the environment sparked interest very early – not exclusively, yet mainly related to natural disasters, corporate or political misbehavior and a growing number of articulated statements about the status quo of our natural environment. Speeches and other artifacts produced by individual and corporate figures fostered the development of environmental rhetoric as a research field in the 1980s. Journal and book publications followed (i.e., Cox, 2013; Environmental Communication Journal, debuted in 2007) and first professional associations institutionalized research in this area, namely the Environmental Communication divisions of the International Communication Association (ICA), the International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR), and the International Environmental Communication Association (IECA).

The International Environmental Communication Association (IECA) defines environmental communication as follows:

> *'Environmental communication [addresses...] environmental issues and problems, and our relationship to the rest of nature. [...] Anyone who is participating in these discussions is engaging in the activity of environmental communication. That includes everyone from the most passionate environmental advocates to the fiercest opponents of ecological protection. In this sense, it is both a lay activity that anyone can undertake, and a field of practice that professional communicators have created' (IECA, 2019).*

Scan to check out the IECA

Practitioners, campaigners, journalists, teachers, artists, and researchers connected in networks like the IECA agree that good communication about the environment is essential if we are to avoid violent conflicts and address environmental health and justice issues in the most effective ways possible. Accordingly, a central goal of the field is to discern and promote good practices (ibid.).

In an age of polycrisis – social, health, political and climate crisis with strong global, but also local impacts – this seems to be even more important. Environmental issues are now brought to the center of attention and the risk of climate crisis increasingly becomes visible, a daily reality that directly affects millions of people each year through rising sea levels, bush and forest fires, severe weather patterns and related social problems (climate refugees etc.). One of the key terms today is **environmental sustainability.** Sustainability as a term means making positive change in the human-nature relationship. The original meaning of sustainability is that natural resources need to be treated in a way that the world is able to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). This idea has been picked up and institutionalized under the term **sustainable development,** manifested in 17 goals (SDGs, 2023), formally adopted by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly in 2015. These goals encompass various environmental, social, and economic problems and point to the overarching goal of all collective, organized but also individual action to manage the impact of humanity on the Earth's resources.

Sustainability has now developed into a guiding principle of action, which also guides all forms of environmental communication (Weder, 2021; Weder & Eriksen, 2023). Environmental communication matters and in 2023 it is even more a "crisis discipline" as Robert Cox already mentioned two decades ago (Cox, 2007). So, everyone doing, researching and/or teaching environmental communication has a certain responsibility and ethical duty to communicate about and for our natural environment.

VIDEO: What is Environmental Communication?



Ethical Duty for Environmental Communication

The increasing complexity of environmental problems and the tensions between global strategies, policies, and frameworks like the SDGs on the one hand and the local and often very direct impact of climate change related events (floods, fires etc.) on the other are a particular challenge of environmental communication. Not only **what** is communicated matters, but also **who** communicates and **how** it is done!

What is communicated?

Environmental communication is all communication about nature and human-nature relationships, therefore defined as the dissemination of information and the implementation of communication practices that are related to the environment" (Antonopoulos & Karyotakis, 2020). Environmental communication includes – going back to the IECA definition (see above) – all human interactions with the environment. The environment includes all external conditions and factors, living and nonliving (chemicals and energy) that affect an organism or other specified systems (like organizations of all kinds and shapes) during its lifetime. The environment is different from ecosystems (community or different species interacting with one another and with the chemical and physical factors making up the non-living

environment) or ecology which is the study of the interactions of living organisms with one another and with their nonliving environment of matter and energy.

So, there is various content (information, stories, meaning) that is communicated through and in a diverse and today highly digitalized media environment, because the media play a crucial role in communicating sustainability issues by shaping public awareness and political agendas (Anderson, 2014). It encompasses interpersonal, organizational, and mass media / public communication processes which again includes campaigns, strategies and techniques of environmental management, conservation and protection and thus, organizational communication, corporate environmental and sustainability reporting as well as the effects on audiences, 'stakeholders' and the impact on the environment itself.

Who communicates?

This broad scope of environmental communication also speaks of the variety of actors that actually communicate about and for the environment, from political to corporate actors to campaigners and journalists. It is important to differentiate between collective and individual communicators. A communicator can be a CEO or a business, a journalist, PR professional, policy maker, sustainability influencer, blogger / vlogger or scientist or climate change expert for example (Weder et al., 2023). At the same time, we can identify collective actors as communicators, like a media corporation, non-governmental organization (NGO), a political institution such as the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) or a big corporation like Nestlé as a communicator or a conservation center. Also, cities and communities have certain communication patterns that connect people in villages or larger cities and build relationships between each other and the individuals and their community as their main social and cultural environment. Each communicator is responsible for developing its own environmental communication approach based on its goals and the assessment of the target audience(s).

What we know, study and communicate as 'the environment' includes material and symbolic dimensions that exist in a relationship of reciprocal influence. Thus, we can say that basically, all communication is environmental – because communication always takes place in a particular location, and it involves people defining and interpreting this location. With environmental communication we create a sense of place for and about the interaction. Therefore, **in every communication, our eco-cultural identity – or: how we perceive our human-nature relationship – is created!**

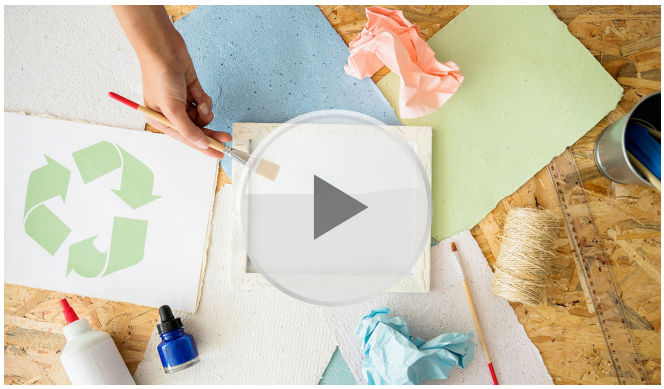
How do we (want to) communicate?

Key factors of 'ethical' or 'responsible communication' are trust and credibility, which has a huge impact on the quality and effectiveness of communication. Therefore, environmental communication gains from research and practices in science communication or strategic sustainability communication, the applied methods and the tactics and tools that are developed to deal with environmental challenges and the interpretations and effects of environmental problems. It feels very reasonable to say that there is an ethical duty of environmental communication, an obligation to enhance the ability of the society to respond appropriately to environmental signals relevant to the well-being of both human communities and natural biological systems (Cox, 2007). The two core principles that therefore guide environmental communication are agency and care:

> **Agency:** agency means the transformative potential of environmental communication. Doing environmental communication is an ethical responsibility, the responsibility to enhance the ability of society to respond appropriately to environmental signals (disasters, crisis, etc.) that are relevant to the well-being of both human civilization and natural biological systems (Cox, 2007). Whenever we communicate thoughts, ideas and goals, we increase understanding, collaboration and productivity. And we co-create our relationships and our identity. Therefore, doing environmental communication includes the capacity of individuals to have the power and resources to fulfill this potential.

> **Care:** environmental communication also means to care! Environmental communication is about human and non-human interconnections, system limits, biodiversity and interdependencies; environmental communication practitioners have an ethical duty to honor people, places and non-human spaces with which we share our world. The goal of environmental communication is not just surviving, but thriving, nurturing resilience and therefore environmental communication is guided by the principle of sustainability (Weder, 2021). Sustainability is a moral compass for all forms of environmental communication.

VIDEO: What Skills Environmental Communicators Need?



Check for further reading:

1. Cox, R., & Pezzullo, P. C. (2015). Environmental Communication and the Public Sphere. London (GB).
2. Cox, R., & Depoe, S. (2022). Emergence and growth of the field of environmental communication. In The Routledge handbook of environment and communication (pp. 13-32). Routledge.
3. Takahashi, B., Metag, J., Thaker, J., & Comfort, S. E. (Eds.). (2021). The handbook of international trends in environmental communication.
4. Weder, F., Krainer, L., & Karmasin, M. (2021). Sustainability Communication Reader. Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden.

Dimensions of Environmental Communication

Communication from an environmental communication perspective includes all forms of sharing ideas for the purpose of conveying meaning. This includes environmental and particularly green or climate journalism (Brüggemann et al., 2022), strategic environmental and sustainability communication (Genc, 2017), particularly social marketing, advocacy campaigns, public participation and stakeholder dialogues or green marketing, but goes beyond into the space of representations of nature in popular culture, art, literature or drama, environmental collaborations and conflict resolutions like energy communities, science and risk communication and environmental rhetoric and discourses on a public level (Takahashi et al., 2021).

Specifically, a rhetorical perspective brings in a strategic understanding and includes the planned, intentional, goal oriented and thus strategic presentation of messages designed to accomplish pragmatic and constitutive functions or outcomes (Pezzullo & Cox, 2021, 49-50). Therefore, environmental communication is:

- an **interdisciplinary and critical field** of research but
- as well a field of **professional practice** (communication of, about and for the environment) and
- an **everyday, lay activity.** Environmental communication shapes how we see the world and how (much) we value the world and care for our environment.

In academia it is defined as the pragmatic and constitutive mode of expression (communication) of our ecological relationships in the world (Pezzullo & Cox, 2021, 4-5) – as we further defined above. But also from a practical perspective, this includes naming, shaping, orienting, organizing and negotiating environmental issues and all forms of sense and meaning making in interpersonal relationships and intrapersonal communication.

To create a framework for this guide, we go back to the two modes of communication that build the background for all research and teaching of environmental communication. Therefore, the differentiation between communication used as a tool to reach a certain goal or purpose on the one hand (pragmatic mode) and communication as everyday social interaction (communicate, social constructivism, constitutive mode) is important for the typology of environmental communication building the basis of this guide at hand (see also Weder & Eriksen, 2023).

- **Pragmatic mode** – communication in order to convey an instrumental purpose, functional approach to communication; this mode understands communication as a one-directional process, describing who (sender of information) says what (content) to whom (receiver of information/audience) in which channel (media) with what effect.
- **Constitutive mode** – communication in order to shape, organize, order or negotiate meaning, values and relationships; this mode understands communication as sense and meaning making that creates attention, evokes values and gives orientation in a complex world, and stimulates engagement.

This leads to the following framework:

Communication *of* environmental issues
Focus: Who communicates environmental issues and why? What are the goals and audiences?
Mode: One-directional, transmissive, one-to-many
Function: Transmission of information and knowledge towards a specific objective (receiver)

Communication *about* the environment / nature
Focus: What is communicated and where? What are conversational spaces where environmental issues and our understanding of nature, natural resources etc. are negotiated?
Mode: Deliberative, horizontal, many-to-many
Function: Deliberation, negotiation, production of intersubjective and shared concepts of meaning, frames, narratives

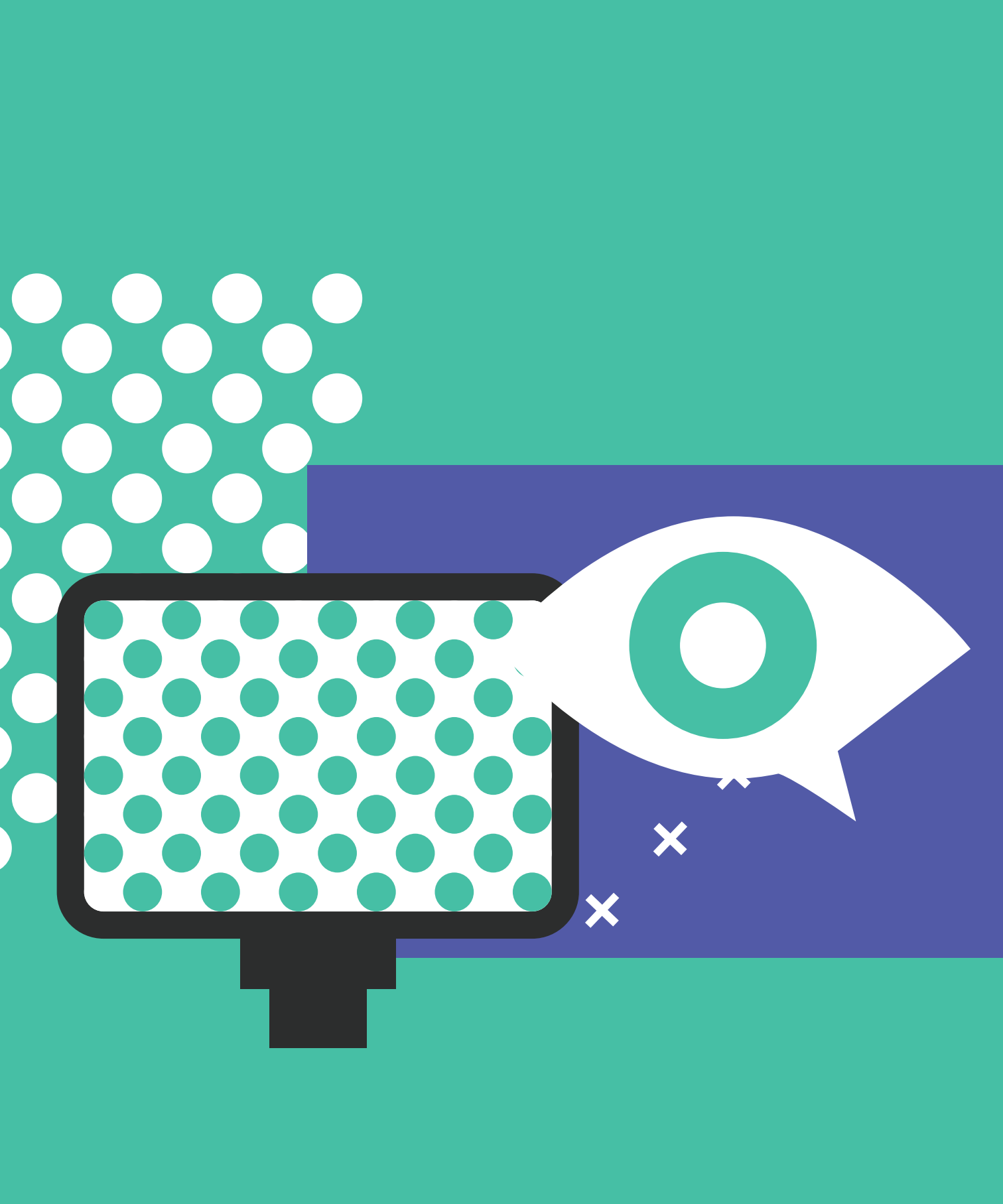
Communication *for* transformation and sustainability
Focus: What are the effects? What is the impact? What are the stories that are told and how can we make them stay? How can human-nature relationships be restored, and eco-cultural identities (co)created through communication? How can we transform society with communication?
Mode: Participative, self-organized, many-to-one
Function: Participative, sense- and meaning-making, social change, cultivation of new norms (such as sustainability)

The chapters of the guide at hand will offer a deep dive into certain aspects of environmental communication following these dimensions and will reflect this by bringing in local perspectives on environmental communication, what works and what doesn't.

Further reading:

1. Anderson, A. (2014). *Media, environment and the network society*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
2. Antonopoulos, N., & Karyotakis, M. A. (2020). Environmental communication. *Sage Int. Encycl. Mass Media Soc, 1,* 551-552.
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CHAPTER 1

Communicating Environment: Facts and Arguments

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Let's Begin with a Story!

For more than ten years one of the biggest environmental questions in Serbia and the Western Balkans is potential exploitation of lithium carbonate, sodium sulphate and borate through Jadarit ore mining in Serbia. One of the greatest environmental issues concerning lithium mining is waste and residue processing management in terms of environmental hazard. While researching the subject, one of the headlines stood out: "Mihajlović: Lithium mine in Serbia would be digitalized, with no liquid waste (balkangreenenergynews.com)". A statement coming from the Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Mining and Energy of the Republic of Serbia being so contradictory to the majority of articles concerning lithium excavations around the world provoked an instant red alert.



Source: balkangreenenergynews.com

Background

Although environmentalism in the Western Balkan region has flourished in the last decade, the domain of communication, reporting and journalism hasn't quite followed the trend. Environmental communication is "the dissemination of information and the implementation of communication practices that are related to the environment" (William, 2022). There is a substantial lack of relevant, competent investigative reporting concerning issues of public importance including environmental topics (birn.eu.com). One of the reasons is probably the lack of possibility to address such topics publicly. According to the World Press Freedom Index by Reporters Without Borders (RSF) all countries in the region including Croatia had "problematic" press freedom until 2021 (birn.eu.com; rsf.org). In the last two years Croatia, Montenegro and North Macedonia scored "satisfactory" press freedom, even though their scores (except North Macedonia) weren't drastically different compared to previous years (rsf.org). Additionally, a group of journalists who attended BIRN "Going Environmental" conference held in Sarajevo in February 2023 concluded that environmental issues reporting is not yet a priority for the media in the region, mainly due to the lack of media freedom and subsequently the needed knowledge about the topic and dedication to research (birn.eu.com; Mocatta, 2015). There is a need to strengthen environmental communication and science communication capacities and improve critical examination of their topics of interest (Davis, 2018). In order to change the situation, it is important to support, enhance and strengthen the capacities of interested parties on how to properly research, address, explain, deliver, and disseminate information about existing environmental issues to the wide audience. It is a process that is critical for journalists, but also for scientists, activists and planners who want to raise awareness about specific topics, support effective policymaking and project implementation (Davis, 2018, Oepen, 1999, Cox, 2010, Weder, 2021). Appropriate environmental communication would give the public the opportunity to take a holistic view of existing problems based on relevant information and form an opinion about the topic (Davis, 2018; Holanda, 2022).

One of the fundamental phases of environmental communication is research, fact-checking, proper use and explanation of professional terms and expert knowledge in common language and critical analysis of all available information sources (Weder, 2021; Fähnrich, 2023; Borel, 2023; Borel, 2018). Environmental communication should educate, alert, persuade and help to solve environmental problems (Davis, 2018; Cox, 2016).

Therefore, it is of utmost importance to present the facts in a critical manner, use the environmental terminology correctly and prepare pro and con arguments about an environmental issue properly.

Case Study: The Lithium Deal



Source: Freepik.com

In 2004 a new mineral was found in the Jadar river valley in Western Serbia and was named Jadarit after the river (riotintoserbia.com). Studies showed that Jadarit ore contains a unique and high-quality composition of boron and lithium which are both very valuable and relatively rare industrial elements (bankwatch.org). Jadarit was discovered by the Rio Tinto mining company, and according to the data on company official website, Jadar mine would support production of 58,000 tons of lithium carbonate, 160,000 tons of boric acid and 255,000 tons of sodium sulfate per year, while the mine's life expectancy is about 40 years (riotintoserbia.com). On the other hand, the Jadar valley has extremely good soil, which currently enables high-quality agriculture and supports about 20,000 citizens in the region according to the last census (bankwatch.org). The Jadarit ore excavation and processing technologies are not fully disclosed on the project website (riotintoserbia.com) or in the withdrawn area spatial plan and its strategic environmental assessment (bankwatch.org) so there is little information about how Jadarit mining would affect the surrounding ground, soil, air and water. Therefore, there is significant apprehension of the local population about the pollution and destruction of natural resources and habitats that the mine could cause.

To check the relevance and truthfulness of facts about any environmental subject, statement, issue, protocol, terminology, etc. relevant information sources should be consulted. Information sources could be divided in several groups: i) national and international legislation which are in jurisdiction for the domain of interest, ii) official correspondence of the involved parties, iii) scientific and peer reviewed sources, iv) media (newspapers, portals, blogs, tv, social networks, different streaming platforms).

I. National and international legislation framework:

Find out which laws, acts, rulebooks, declarations, etc. have jurisdiction over topic of interest.

- In the case of lithium mining and nature protection there are several instances:
  - National legislation: the Law on Mining and Geological Research, the Law on Environmental Protection, the Law on Nature Protection, the Law on Water, the Law on Waste, the Air Protection Law, the Law on Land Protection etc.
  - International legislation: the Bern Convention, the Aarhus Convention, the IPPC Directive, the Convention on Biological Diversity, etc. (for EU member states: the EU Water Framework Directive, the EU Habitat Directive, the EU Bird Directive, the EU Waste Framework Directive, the EU Extractive Waste Directive etc.)

According to the Law on Mining and Geological Research, after finishing the research phase, any company needs to obtain approval for an exploitation field from the Ministry of Mining and Energy in order to open the mine in Serbia (arhiva.mre.gov.rs). One of the mandatory documents for the submission of the requests is the feasibility study on the exploitation of mineral deposits (arhiva.mre.gov.rs) which is an integral part of the environmental impact assessment study (pravno-informacioni-sistem.rs). While researching the available online sources, none of the mentioned documents weren't fully disclosed by the national authorities or the mining company. However, in the withdrawn area spatial plan and its strategic environmental assessment there are statements that there will probably be some negative environmental changes within the surrounding area (air, water, soil, climate, noise pollution) (MGSI, 2019).

Therefore, substantial technical information about the subject couldn't be found in this instance, but there are some general statements.

II. Official correspondence of the involved parties

Until October of 2023, the mining company had published a series of answers to the most frequently asked questions concerning the environmental impact of the mine on the surrounding area on its website riotintoserbia.com. The company is stating application of the best available technology and solutions in compliance with applicable regulations. However, none of the answers included any official documents. Sporadic official documentation concerning nature protection and impact of mining is published on the company website. Nevertheless, posted without much context, disclosed documents cannot provide sufficient information about potential environmental impact of the Jadarit ore mining. The economic impact study of the Jadar Project posted on the company website, conducted by a third party consulting company, only states that *"all emissions on the Project will be far lower than the maximum allowed values in the EU"*.

None of the relevant technical information about the subject could be found on this instance either.

III. Scientific and peer reviewed / studies, books, papers

Jadarit is a new and unique mineral found only in Serbia so only a limited number of papers tackling this ore are available. However, there are several studies exploring and explaining issues of potential Jadarit mining in Serbia. Stefanović, et al. 2023 (mdpi.com) tackled the issue of potential environmental impact of mining Jadarit through examples of negative experiences the company has undergone in the other countries, but also the negative experience of very low-level environmental monitoring of foreign companies in Serbia and the array of incidents that have taken place. Also, one Oxford MSc thesis (ora.ox.ac.uk) offered insight into 'common people' opinions about mining projects. Trpeski, et al. (ikm.mk) presented some specific info about potential pollution: tens of kilometers radius of air pollution, thousands of tons of wastewater and a total of 7 billion tons of tailings, but without reference toward presented values. Also, numerous Serbian academics expressed their apprehension about the environmental impact of potential Jadarit mining and processing (balkangreenenergynews.com; n1info.rs) based on current knowledge and available public information. The Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts even organized a conference "Project Jadar – what is known?" to address the environmental issue and potential impact of mining (www.sanu.ac.rs).

Researching through academic resources provided some insights into the experts' opinions about the topic, and the reserves they have towards it. One of the greatest concerns is non disclosed technical documentation, since there are no other mines in the world extracting lithium and borates from the same ore and therefore there is a lack of common knowledge about the technology.

IV. Public media

Most of the available online sources are following activists' narratives and are focusing on future potential problems. The only facts that are currently available concern crop damage made by "leaking" of mining company piezometers (birn.rs). A total of 125 piezometers were installed to monitor the groundwater level, and "leakage was detected on a small number of devices," according to Rio Tinto's memo. The company stated that in the last six years, they have signed 15 compensation contracts with five field owners. Also stated that reasons are mainly the result of inadequate handling of the devices. This way of maintaining the devices works in favor of citizens' distrust in the company statements about adequately managing environmental pollution. Distrust towards the company could only deepen if the company's *modus operandi* worldwide were investigated (londonminingnetwork.org). Information found within common media showed that the lithium and borates mining process could devastatingly affect the region around the mine, based on current knowledge and previous experience in some other countries.

How-to Advice

! Keep in mind: If you want to prepare and share information about the state of the environment or potential threats, be prepared from the beginning to spend a lot of time! No quick and easy texts, no bombastic short articles that "sell newspapers", no compiling other people's articles and interviewing only some loud activists. Interview a wide range of sources from activists to government officials (Mocatta G. (2015) and scientists. Find and use primary sources of information and check sources' claims (Mocatta G. (2015). To understand expert sources, ask for an expert's opinion. Maintaining quality is one of the central concerns regarding science communication (Fähnrich, 2023) and should also be in environmental communication.
In order to present the environmental issue in a critical manner, use the environmental terminology correctly and prepare pro and con arguments properly. The following steps might be helpful:

1. **Identify the target audience** to which the information is presented (decision makers, industry, academia, general population, etc.) (William, 2022). This will influence what kind of information they will be interested in, as well as the wider context (connection with economic, political, health, technology, and other aspects of human life) (William, 2022; Fähnrich, 2023). Accordingly, prepare relevant information in a way that the target audience will understandably accept it (Mocatta, 2015). Here, it should be considered that in many cases presentation of scientific information should be adjusted to an audience of interest (Mocatta, 2015) in cooperation with communication experts.

2. **Using keywords** research legislative, scientific, professional, and relevant media sources, gather and fact check the information (Fähnrich, 2023; Mocatta, 2015).

   European legislation: www.eea.europa.eu
   National legislation: line ministry websites
   Scientific sources: www.webofscience.com
   www.scholar.google.com
   www.sciencedirect.com
   www.researchgate.net

   The easiest way to find information about any topic is online media research, but that is also the least relevant and reliable source of information. Whenever possible, use an academic (universities) internet network for the research – it will give you better access to published scientific papers. In the lack of written resources, eminent scientists and professionals could be contacted and asked for an opinion.

3. **Confirm** phrases, collocations, common and idiomatic expressions, and terminology used in the topic domain. Some of the helpful tools might be:
   www.ozdic.com
   www.lextutor.ca
   www.dictionary.cambridge.org
   www.englishclub.com
   www.freecollocation.com

4. Present the topic systematically, transform professional language and facts accurately into a **storytelling understandable for a wide auditorium.** Challenge often binary positions taken by scientific institutions and NGOs on one side and corporate and political actors

on the other (Weder. 2021). Offer fair, strong, and relevant pro and con arguments. Respectfully conclude with your standpoint and the facts why the issue is important for the auditorium.

VIDEO: How to Communicate Environmental Topics?

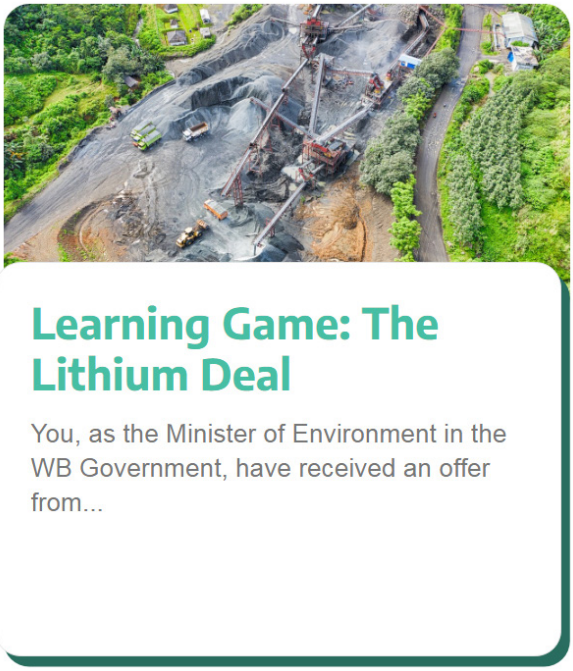


What Have You Learned?

Leaning Game: The Lithium Deal

You, as the Minister of Environment in the WB Government, have received an offer from LithoTech Industries. They propose extracting lithium ore from a rural area in your country by constructing a large-scale mine. This opportunity brings potential employment and financial benefits to the region. The offer includes an 18-million-dollar payment for a building permit. As the environmental minister, what course of action will you take?

PLAY THE GAME!



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CHAPTER 2

Action Strategic Sustainability Communication and ESG

Authors: Luka Herc, mag. Ing. Mech., Assoc. Dr.sc. Tomislav Pukšec, Prof.Dr.sc Neven Duić

Let`s Begin with a Story!

In the corporate buzz, whispers echoed about a company rewriting the rules of success. I stumbled upon this company, not just profitable but thriving in an unexpected way. As I delved into murmurs, it became clear: their unwavering commitment to sustainability was setting them apart. This dedication wasn't just a strategy; it became the foundation of their success. Transparency and accountability in their communication enhanced trust, and their reputation soared. As their influence was growing, competitors were left reevaluating their approach. In the grand symphony of business, this company played a different tune—one that harmonized profit with purpose. And so, the question arose in my head: What is so special about it?



Source: freepik.com

Background

In the rapidly evolving landscape of contemporary business, the imperative to implement sustainable strategies has become more crucial than ever. This urgency is underlined by an increased global awareness of sustainability issues, prompting companies to reevaluate and realign their practices. As consumers and investors become increasingly conscious of the impact of their choices, companies recognize the need to transparently communicate their genuine dedication to sustainable practices. At the heart of this communication is the strategic deployment of sustainability strategies, serving as a powerful tool to articulate an organization's ethical values, environmentally friendly initiatives, and social responsibility efforts. The effectiveness of these strategies depends on a dual approach. Transparent internal communication within a company allows for necessary changes that lead to company becoming more sustainable. Additionally, external communication enables businesses to build trust and cultivates positive relationships with customers, partners, and investors (Genç 2017).

Sustainable development has been defined as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (United Nations; 2017). At its core, the initial definition of sustainability points out the importance of balancing economic, social, and environmental factors to ensure that resources are not depleted, and that well-being of future generations is preserved. In this dynamic business landscape, successful sustainability requires comprehensive and transparent communication strategies that resonate both within and beyond the organizational boundaries.

One of these strategies is the ESG concept. ESG stands for Environmental, Social, and Governance. It is a set of criteria or standards used by investors, businesses, and organizations to assess a company's performance and practices in areas beyond traditional financial metrics. Each component of ESG represents a different aspect (Kiehne 2019):

Environmental (E): This refers to a company's impact on the environment and its efforts to address issues such as climate change, resource usage, pollution, and sustainability. Companies with strong environmental practices may focus on reducing their carbon footprint, adopting renewable energy sources, and implementing eco-friendly policies.

Social (S): The social dimension involves evaluating a company's relationships with its employees, customers, communities, and broader society. Social factors may include

labour practices, diversity and inclusion, human rights, community engagement, and product safety.

Governance (G): Governance relates to the internal policies, procedures, and structures that guide how a company is directed and controlled. This includes aspects such as board composition, executive compensation, shareholder rights, ethical business practices, and transparency in financial reporting.

The use of the ESG concept allows an assessment of the impact of an investment or business decisions on sustainability. It means that the ESG concept alone will not lead to sustainable development, but it makes it clearer for companies whether they act in line with sustainable development. Investors consider ESG factors as part of their decision-making process, believing that companies with strong ESG performance are better positioned for long-term success and are more likely to manage risks effectively.

The commitment and engagement of companies to undertake actions and initiatives that extend beyond legal obligations, with the aim of contributing positively to societal and environmental well-being is called Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) (Comimission of the European Communities; 2001). CSR reflects voluntary actions, while ESG focuses more on investment criteria, but both concepts are tools for achieving sustainable development.

Greenwashing is another term related to sustainability and corporate responsibility, but it represents a contrasting concept. Greenwashing involves deceptive tactics to create a facade of environmental and social responsibility without genuine commitment or action. Companies that engage in greenwashing may harm their reputation and credibility, as stakeholders increasingly seek authenticity and transparency in corporate sustainability efforts (Baldi and Pandimiglio 2022)rating, volatility, maturity,(Ruiz et al. 2022).

Case Study: ESG Principles of a Company

A Croatian company known for its electric hypercars and cutting-edge technology in the automotive industry recognizes the importance of aligning its operations with ESG principles to contribute to the well-being of the local community and the preservation of Croatia's natural beauty. The company would like to enhance their sustainable communication and improve their ESG criteria. Some of the proposed strategies for this are listed below:

1. **Transparency and authenticity:** the company commits to transparently communicating its ESG practices, reflecting authenticity and openness. To do so, it would be beneficial to publish a detailed ESG report on the company website and share it with stakeholders. Include information about sustainable manufacturing processes, energy-efficient technologies in their vehicles, and efforts to reduce environmental impact. Use clear and engaging language to connect with investors, customers, and the global automotive community.
2. **Engagement and Education:** the company aims to educate its employees and stakeholders on the importance of ESG principles and how they are integrated into their high-performance electric vehicles. One of the examples of implementation of this is to host webinars and workshops for stakeholders showcasing the environmental benefits of electric vehicles and sustainable manufacturing. Another example is to collaborate with local schools and universities to organize events promoting STEM education and green technology, emphasizing the company's commitment to both innovation and sustainability.
3. **Multichannel Communication:** the company wants to reach a diverse audience through utilization of various communication channels. To implement this strategy, it would be beneficial to launch a comprehensive social media campaign to share real-time updates on sustainability initiatives, using platforms like Instagram and YouTube to showcase behind-the-scenes efforts. To extend the reach, it would be beneficial to engage with automotive and tech publications for interviews and articles to ensure a global reach and awareness of company's commitment to ESG.
4. **Collaboration and Partnerships:** the company aims to actively collaborate with local and international organizations to enhance the impact of its sustainability efforts. To implement this strategy, it would be beneficial to form partnerships with global environmental organizations to support joint initiatives focused on promoting sustainable transportation and clean energy. Dissemination of these partnerships could be implemented through press releases, collaborative events, and online platforms to demonstrate the company's dedication to global sustainability goals.
5. **Long-Term Goal Setting and Reporting:** the company aims to set ambitious, measurable, and long-term ESG goals, track the progress of implementation, and regularly report progress to stakeholders. To implement this strategy, the company will set clear targets for achieving carbon neutrality, zero waste company, an ethical supply chain, a diverse and inclusive workplace, minimizing water pollution, sustainable production development, transparent governance, and renewable energy transition.

How-to Advice

Developing a robust ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) strategy is crucial for aligning your organization with sustainable and responsible business practices. Here are some key pieces of advice to help to develop an effective ESG strategy (NAVEX 2022):

1. **Identifying where the organisation is now vs. where it needs to be** is the initial step in building a comprehensive ESG strategy. Here, the ideal outcome is a more profound comprehension of significant matters and the establishment of a strategic roadmap.
2. **Outline the program's scope for the upcoming 1-2 years and identify the key stakeholders who should be engaged.** Once the strategic vision is clear, the subsequent step involves assessing available resources for implementing plans over the next 1-2 years. Key stakeholders in sustainability, supply chain, HR, investor relations, and compliance play pivotal roles in defining the scope and identifying internal ESG "champions" to lead the program. The ideal outcome here is that internal subject matter experts are identified, and a committee is formed.
3. **Choose a communication strategy for both internal and public progress reporting.** After identifying the internal scope and key stakeholders, the subsequent step involves selecting reporting methods that align with internal requirements and external communication plans. Factors to consider include regulatory obligations, industry-relevant material issues, and strategies to address risks and opportunities. Answering these questions assists in choosing an appropriate reporting framework that is realistic, achievable, and repeatable.
4. **Create repeatable workflows and an ESG metrics database.** Establishing automated workflows is crucial for ESG teams, offering the best chance to create a streamlined and easily managed program. ESG reporting involves multiple contributors from various departments, each required to submit specific data. The importance lies in implementing a unified system that automates data collection across utility systems, Human Resources, finance, and supply chain partners, ensuring standardized and verifiable data. Teams relying on do-it-yourself solutions like spreadsheets may face inefficiencies, errors, and incomplete disclosures in the complex realm of ESG. Here, the ideal outcome is achieving, automating repetitive workflows, as well as data collection tasks and establishing a singular "source of truth."

5. **Consistently provide report findings to facilitate benchmarking and identify trends.** Establishing reliable, repeatable data collection workflows empowers ESG teams to consistently assess their progress against monthly, quarterly, and yearly targets. Rather than relying solely on time-consuming annual Sustainability or Corporate Responsibility reports, accessible ESG data allows for quick snapshots and dashboards. This approach ensures stakeholders have timely access to the information they need, serving as a valuable resource for easy data retrieval during reporting seasons or other stakeholder inquiries. This marks a significant transition from laying the foundation to fostering an environment of simplified, consistent reporting—preferably presented graphically for enhanced clarity compared to traditional spreadsheet tables or text-only formats. The ideal outcome of this are consolidated data, and readily available clear charts and dashboards for convenient updates. The completed assessments are stored and easily accessible.
6. **Plan for Actionable Improvements.** Ultimately, equipped with a vision, team, established workflow, and reporting structure, corporate ESG teams gain entry to a centralized, automated control center for ESG-related initiatives. By following these measures, ESG transforms into a systematic business practice and a vital key performance indicator, moving away from being an ad hoc undertaking. This results in a cohesive cycle of workflow, planning, improvement, and reporting integrated across departments and consolidated to meet the needs of various stakeholders, including customers, investors, regulators, and the Board. The ideal outcome for this is that ESG evolves beyond a sporadic or annual manual reporting routine, transforming into a continuous program that is consistently monitored and enhanced.

VIDEO: Criteria for environment, social and governance (ESG) rating of a company

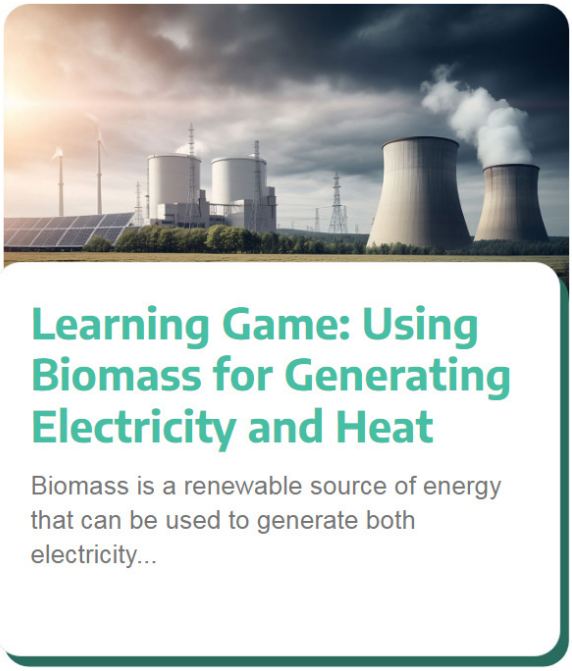


What Have You Learned?

After reading the chapter, you should be able to answer the following questions:

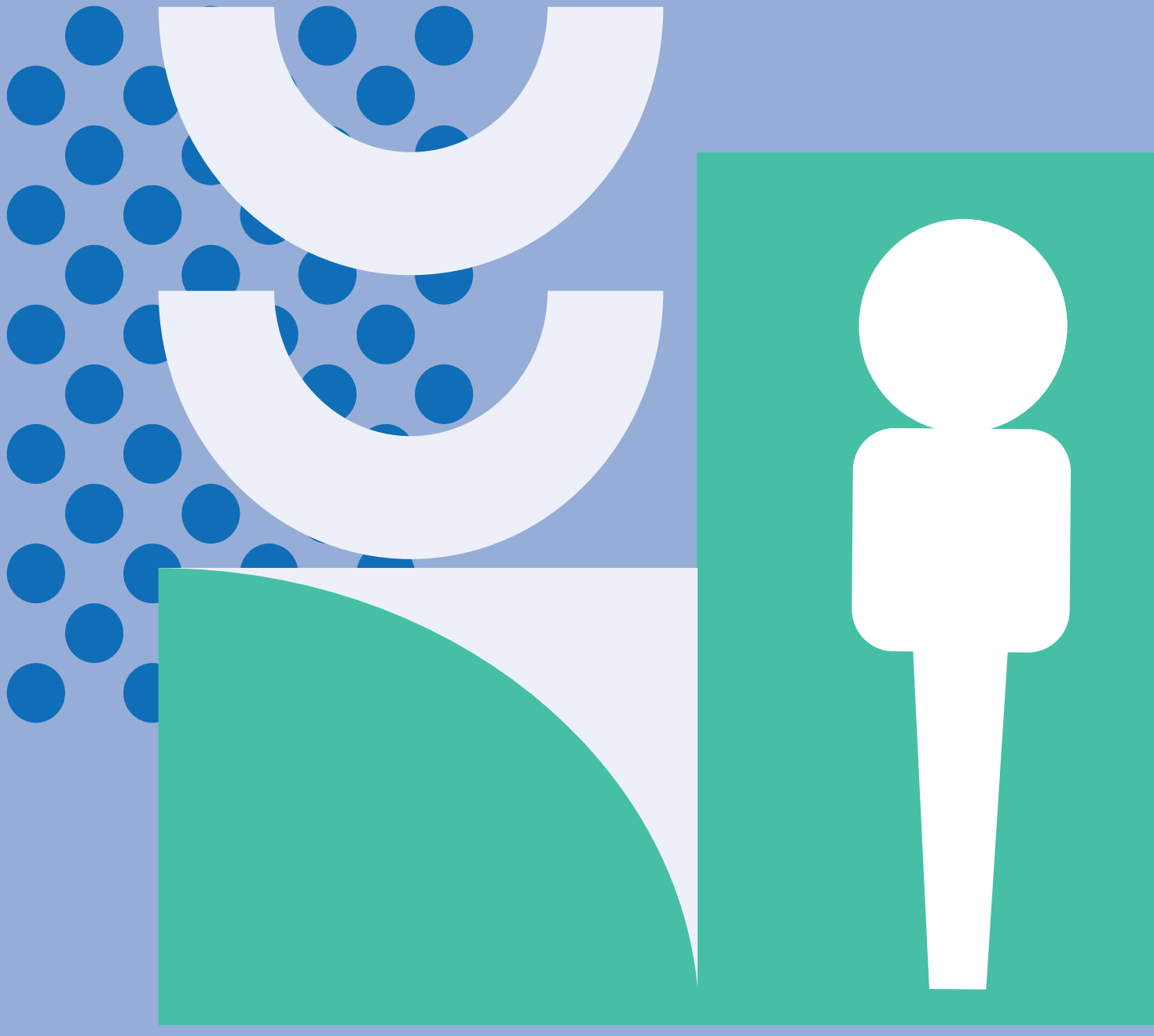
- Why has the implementation of sustainable strategies become more crucial in the contemporary business landscape?
- What does ESG stand for, and what are the three components it encompasses in evaluating a company's performance?
- How do investors use ESG criteria in their decision-making process, and what is the belief about companies with strong ESG performance?
- How can usage of ESG and CSR concepts help in achieving sustainable development?
- Explain the concept of greenwashing and how it contrasts with the legitimate framework of ESG in corporate responsibility efforts.
- When does the CSR concept become greenwashing?

PLAY THE GAME!



Further reading

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CHAPTER 3

Writing for the Environment: Environmental Journalism

Author: Prof. Dr. Lejla Turčilo

Let's Begin with a Story!

In 2023. web portal antikorupciija.ba has published an article: "Brave Women of Kruščica are Celebrating", stating:

> *"Bosnia and Herzegovina is far from a Hollywood movie, but Happy Ending still happens sometimes. Here, it happened to the brave women of Kruščica. To the women who, at one time, defending their river, stopped the excavators of investors with their bodies, endured the violence of special police forces and stood on duty on their bridge for 500 days, 24 hours a day, earning the respect of both the domestic and international public. And then they waged a political and legal battle against the construction of mini hydropower plants on the Kruščica river. Which these days, it seems, they are finally definitely getting."*

The story that attracted the attention of the global audience has resulted in a legal victory, in which women in Kruščica, a small village in Bosnia-Herzegovina, managed to stop building hydropower plant. One of the reasons for the success was the media stories created by journalists both in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the region. This was an example of how environmental journalism can contribute to changing the outcomes of societal and political events.



Picture: Story cover of the web portal antikorupcija.info

Source: [antikorupcija.info]

Background

Environmental journalism is one of the most important types of journalism nowadays, due to the fact that environmental issues affect each and every inhabitant of the Planet. As stated on the website shorthand.com, "most of us feel like we know the meta-narratives - about the climate crisis and global warming, the need to reduce carbon emissions, deforestation, air pollution, biodiversity — but we don't often pay enough attention to the detailed stories of what's really happening on the ground.

In recent years, environmental journalists have been doing amazing work to get our attention. To counteract the distractions of social media, journalists have embraced cutting edge storytelling techniques, including the use of interactive tools, multimedia assets, and immersive scrollytelling."

There are several key requirements and pre-requisites for journalists to become environmental journalists:

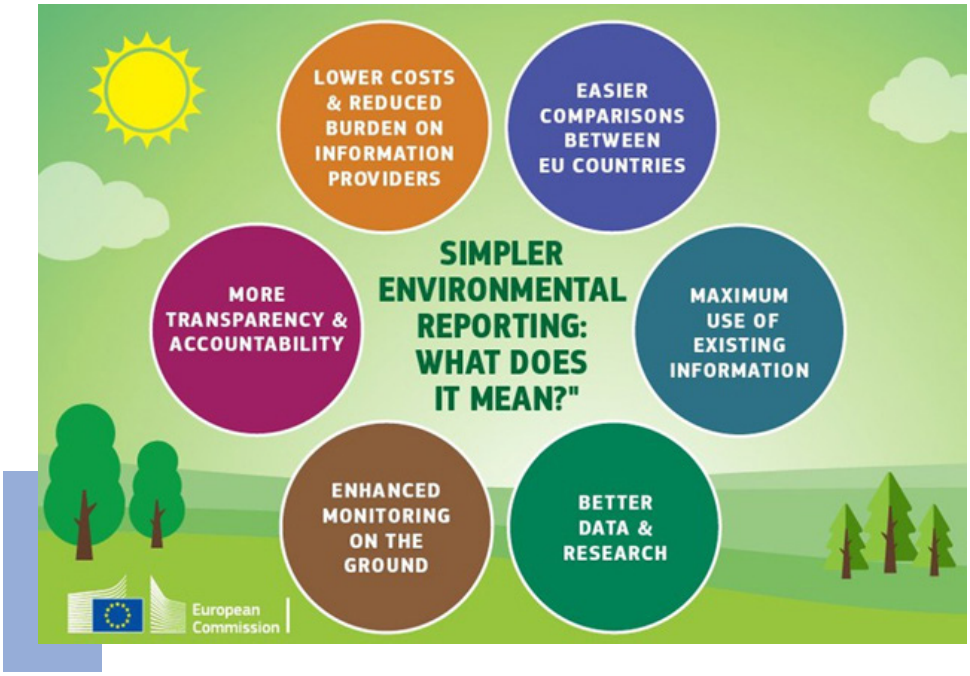
- Understanding the relevant scientific language and translating it into simpler vocabulary close to the consumers of information;
- Using knowledge of historical environmental events;
- Following environmental policy-making and decision-making in the environmental field;
- Understanding current environmental issues;
- Communicating information to the public in easily understandable ways.

The Council of Journalists emphasizes that "It may even be necessary to place environmental issues at the heart of the agenda, to present news stories through the lens of an ecological worldview. This effectively challenges the functioning of the media and its economic models while raising fundamental questions:

- How can we continue to simply talk about wealth generation when we know environmental degradation generates growth?
- How can we analyze social tension without first looking at the living conditions and environment of the people concerned? Can multinationals continue to exploit with impunity resources like water and timber? In fact, the environment involves a host of societal issues that need to be addressed today.

Environmental journalism is more necessary than ever even if green journalism is in danger."

The European Commission advocates for simpler environmental reporting, so that all newsrooms can afford it and do it with less effort. One of the key tasks of journalists in this context is to make use of the existing data, as well as to do more research. In that regard, the European Commission promotes the exchange of information and stories, as well as resources among countries.



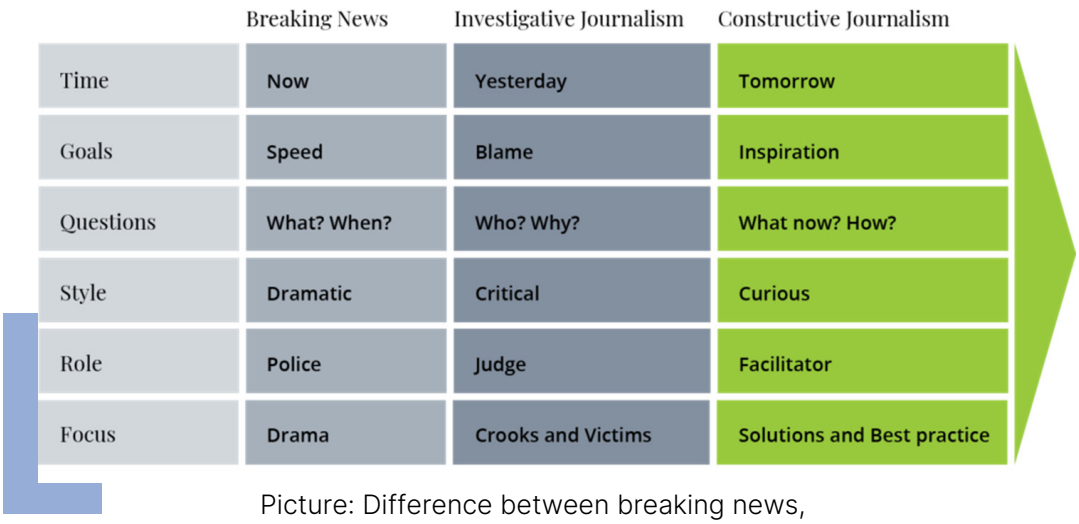
Picture: Simpler environmental reporting – European Commission
Source: epanet.eea.europa.eu

The website Africa-media.org offers some advice on how to write a good environmental story, which include the following:

- *Choose a general topic:* the one which is prevalent in the society, the most recent or the one you as an author feel strongly for;
- *Narrow the story down:* which will standout your story from the rest written on the same general topic;
- *Do a thorough research:* read scientific articles, previous journalistic articles on the same topic, do interviews, research archives etc.;

- *Compile a research sentence:* that is a sentence that summarizes the article; have it in mind during writing and let it lead you in the right direction;
- *Do more research* if necessary;
- *Structure the article:* including the intro, the body text and the conclusion;
- *Write an intro and a conclusion* as the first and the last impression that the readers will get from your article;
- *Edit the article:* for spelling errors, factual mistakes etc.

In general, environmental journalism should not only be focused on current environmental issues and problems (which is only one of its dimensions) but should be more future-oriented and look for potential solutions of the environmental issues and problems for the sake of the future. It should also be used to promote and enhance public dialogue about the most important environmental issues and to facilitate such dialogue through media and journalism. It should inspire people to search for solutions and new approaches to environmental issues, not only to make them aware of the environmental problems.



Picture: Difference between breaking news, investigative journalism and constructive journalism
Source: constructiveinstitute.org

Constructive journalism about environmental issues should include different perspectives (which means it should be complex, with different angles to a story), should be impartial, but at the same time empathetic and should focus on solutions. In that context, solution journalism is also an important and useful approach in writing about the environment.



Picture: What is solution journalism; Source: cojouk.org

Case Study: Brave Women of Kruščica

From August 2017 until December 2018. a group of women in the Bosnian village Kruščica stayed in tents in the street in their village, to prevent building a hydropower plant and protect their river. They used their bodies to prevent trucks and heavy machines from entering the village. Even the police came to the village, but they refused to move and let the trucks start building. They stood against 200 police officers and thus have shown the act of solidarity which has not been known before in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

In 2019, women of Kruščica received a prize for their courage in protecting the nature, from the German Foundation Euro Natur. The Jury justified their decision on the grounds that hydropower is not green and is one of the greatest threats to wild rivers and the people living along their banks.

Maida Bilal and the other women fought for one of the last free-flowing rivers in Europe – and won. The group of women from the village of Kruščica in Bosnia and Herzegovina had occupied a bridge over their river for over 500 days and nights – despite violent eviction attempts by the police and even during the long, cold winter – and thereby prevented the construction of two hydropower plants.



Picture: Women of Kruščica
Source: Slobodna Evropa (Free Europe) portal; picture used with their permission.

This story has been breaking news for most of the media during this period, but also after the action has been completed.

In an article by Free Europe, one woman described the protest:

> *"A truck with a machine started. I was the first to sit in front of that truck. The driver said: 'Get out of the way, I have to pass.' – 'You don't have to pass, you won't pass, there will be no construction here,' I answered. If I had to, I would do the same again. I wouldn't be afraid of anything."*

"Now I immediately shudder when I think about it. Really, they trampled, they beat us, they hit, they were against us. From then on, this spite and defiance was created. I thought – oh, no, you won't! Well, now you won't! You hit the most delicate thing in life, that's a woman. You won't go on!"



Picture: The bridge "Brave Women of Kruščica",
on which they stopped trucks
Source: klix.ba

The web portal BUKA, published on their YouTube channel a documentary on the brave women of Kruščica, in which women described their fight for the river. This documentary is a good example of constructive journalism, since it provided the women from Kruščica with an opportunity to talk about their unity, resistance and dignity during their fight for the river. The author Aleksandar Trifunović used the potential of video journalism to present pictures and sounds of the river, he drank water from the river to show how good the water is, and he gave the viewers an insightful story on how important the fight of these brave women was, not only for their village, but for Bosnia-Herzegovina in general.

Most of the media reported about the action of the women of Kruščica and this has been one of the events that has opened a wider debate on protection of rivers in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Environmental activists continued to mark anniversaries of the gathering of Kruščica women as a symbol of resistance and solidarity and the media covered that as well. The media paid special attention to explaining how hydropower plants destroy the environment and to reminding the public of the importance of activism in preventing the destruction of nature. They created a slogan "The brave Women of Kruščica" and used it as a symbol for these women when reporting about them. Also, the media reported about the power of the joint actions and used the women of Kruščica as an example.

Based on this case, we may say that there were several lessons learned regarding media reporting on environmental issues:

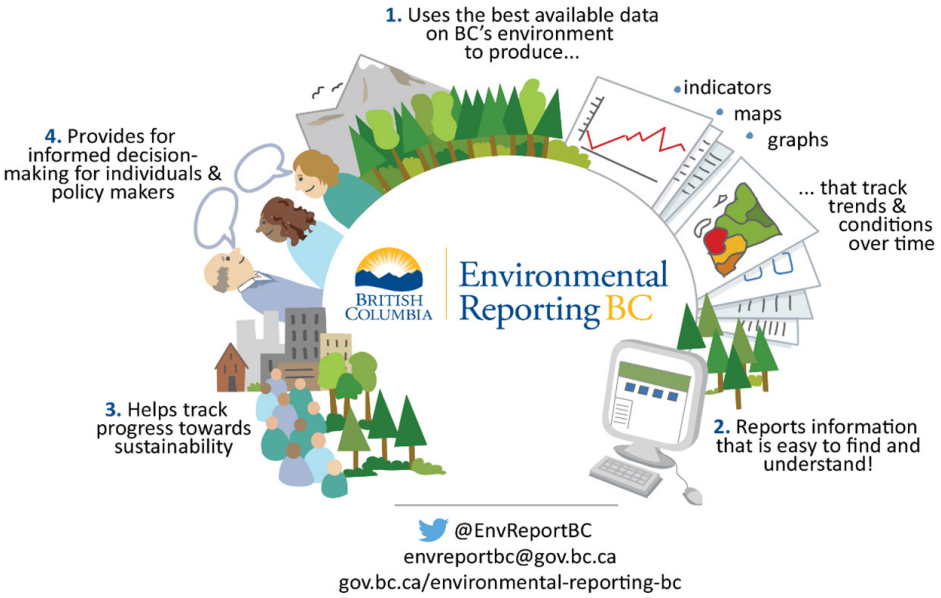
- Individual cases can (and should) be used to report more broadly about the environmental topics;
- The media should report on these topics in a constructive and solution-based way (more about solution journalism can be found on the website of the Solution Journalism Network: (www.solutionsjournalism.org);
- Stories should be written in a manner which is easily understandable to most of the people and should speak about the power of ordinary people to protect the environment or to raise awareness of its destruction.

On a broader level, it is important to mention that environmental writing should provide a basis for informed decision-making of both the public and the authorities, so the main goal of environmental journalism is to expose and explain environmental issues and possible solutions. British Columbia states that environmental reporting should be:

- Based on open and the best available data, information, and knowledge;
- Based on rigorous, open and repeatable scientific investigation;
- Includes consideration of community, social and traditional knowledge;
- Utilizes leading edge science communication practices.

In general, environmental writing and reporting should use all available data and information, "translate" them into the stories and messages that are understandable and useful to citizens

and provide sufficient knowledge for the people, in order to either simply understand what is happening or to be aware of the possible actions that they or the authorities should undertake in order to solve the environmental issues or problems.



Picture: What is environmental reporting?
Source: www2.gov.bc.ca

The case of the women of Kruščica and the media reporting about it has shown how an individual story about the brave act of ordinary people can help solve an environmental problem, but also how a single story can be used to explain broader problem and enhance searching for its solution.

How-to Advice

If we want to sum up some tips and tricks for environmental reporting, they would be related to several key issues: how to generate ideas for stories, how to verify sources and how to write stories.

How to generate ideas:

- Choose topics that are close to ordinary people, rather than those about the general issues and meta-narratives;
- Choose topics that resonate with the audience, but without exaggerating the news.

How to verify sources:

- Check who is behind the information (do a search on the source);
- Instead of clicking the first link that pops-up, take the time to analyze the links and determine the most reliable source;
- Check if the content presented is current enough for your story;
- Check if the author(s) has/have the expertise on the topic;
- Check the purpose of the content (is it scientific, propaganda, news etc.);
- Check the objectivity of the source.

How to write environmental stories:

- Try to be informative, explanatory and solution-oriented;
- Describe problems clearly (with clear explanation on how it affects peoples' lives) and offer some constructive solutions that could function in certain situations;
- Include various stakeholders into the story: experts, policy makers, citizens etc. and present their perspectives on how to deal with certain environmental issues;
- Avoid sensationalism and tabloid reporting on environmental issues, as well as click-bait;

In general, the job of an environmental journalist is to:

- Analyze and interpret data obtained from literature reviews, research, and sample findings;
- Analyze historical data and historical issues;
- Note and analyze trends and cycles; use model data to relay information about future trends;
- Research, interview, and report on leading scientists and theories;
- Explain and illustrate how the environmental event or trend in question may impact the Earth, and human or animal populations;
- Communicate clearly with the public and other stakeholders on tightly focused environmental incidents or broad environmental trends.

VIDEO: Explanatory Journalism

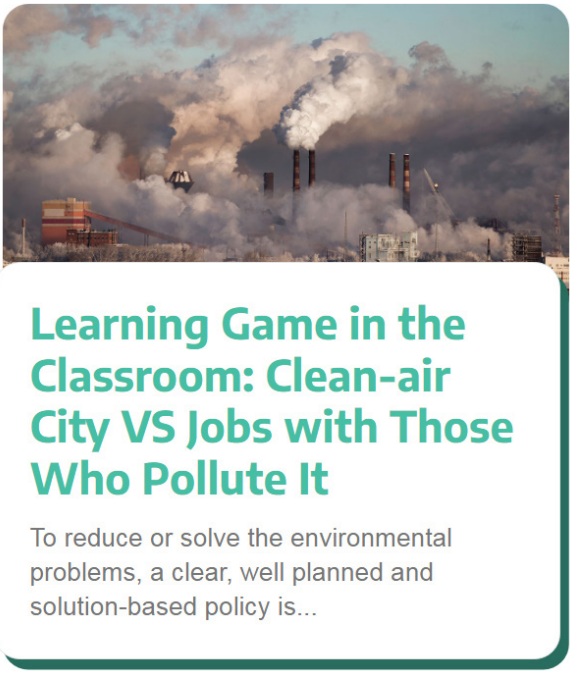


What Have You Learned?

After reading the chapter, you should be able to answer the following questions:

- What is the specificity of environmental journalism in comparison to other types of journalism?
- What are the steps of creating a good environmental story?
- How to choose a topic for an environmental story?
- How to verify the sources?
- How to write a story?
- What does the job of an environmental journalist include?

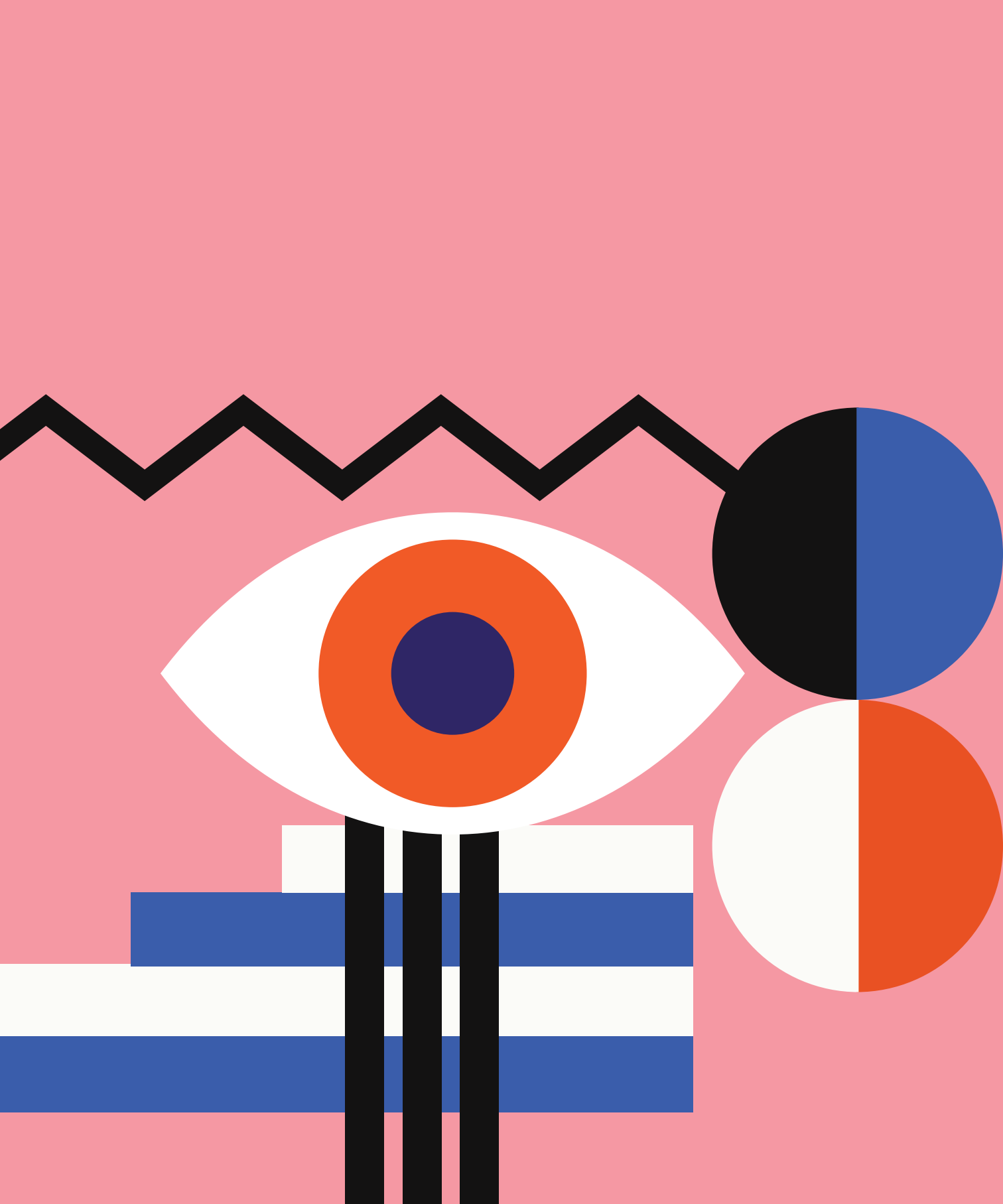
PLAY THE GAME!



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CHAPTER 4

Social Marketing and Environmental Advocacy Campaigns

Authors: Sen. Lect. Pedja Ašanin Gole, Dejan Andonov, MA, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Zaneta Trajkoska, ass. prof. dr. Meri Karanfilovska

Let's Begin with a Story!

"THINK ABOUT IT. DON'T DRINK AND DRIVE."

"SAFE IS SEXY - TRANSMIT A MESSAGE, NOT A VIRUS."

"ONE IN FIVE WOMEN FALLS DOWN THE STAIRS. LET'S STOP VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN."

"EARTH IS OUR ONLY PLANET. THERE IS NO PLANET B."

What do the slogans above have in common? The slogans are from communication campaigns - for safety in traffic, safety in sexual life, against violence against women and to raise awareness about climate change. All of them try to use the tools of marketing, advocacy, or integrated communication to influence a voluntary change in social behavior for the benefit of the individual and society. To achieve social changes, communicating about socially important issues alone is insufficient; social change can only be achieved through an in-depth understanding of the needs, demands and perceptions of the target audience while carefully planning strategies and their effective implementation. One of the ways we can influence social change is social marketing.



Source: Freepik.com

Background

Traditionally, regulation and information-intensive campaigns have been the most common strategies used in relation to the environment, however, social marketing can complement these two strategies by overcoming some of their drawbacks.

Social marketing, a field first introduced by Philip Kotler and Gerald Zaltman (1971), uses marketing concepts to influence the behaviors of individuals and communities for the greater social good, including public health, injury prevention, environmental protection, community engagement, financial well-being, and education. Social marketing has been used to address environmental issues such as sustainable forestry, decreasing water consumption, eliminating non-point source water pollution, decreasing fertilizer runoff, and reducing automobile idling.

The International Social Marketing Association defines social marketing as "a discipline that seeks to develop and integrate marketing concepts with other approaches to influence behaviors that benefit individuals and communities for the greater social good" (Lee & Kotler, 2023, p. 1).

A paraphrase for social marketing often used is "behavior change for social good".

Social marketing is about:

- influencing behavior change,
- utilizing a systematic planning process that applies marketing principles and techniques,
- focusing on priority audience segments, and
- delivering a positive benefit for individuals and society.

Fundamental principles at the core of this practice have been used to help reduce tobacco use, decrease infant mortality, stop the spread of HIV/AIDS, prevent malaria, help eradicate polio, make wearing a bike helmet a social norm, decrease littering, stop bullying, increase recycling, encourage the homeless to participate in job-training programs, and persuade pet owners to license their pets and "scoop their poop".

Similar to commercial sector marketers' objective, which is to sell goods and services, social marketers' objective is to successfully influence behavior change. We typically want to influence priority audiences to do one of four things:

- **accept a new behavior** (e.g., composting food waste),
- **reject a potentially undesirable behavior** (e.g., starting smoking),
- **modify a current behavior** (e.g., increase physical activity from three to five days of the week or decrease the number of fat grams consumed), or
- **abandon an old undesirable behavior** (e.g., texting while driving).

However, it should be noted that over-reliance on individual voluntary behavior change is naïve, so when using social marketing, advocacy campaigns are also increasingly used to influence other agents of change in the environment (e. g. public policies, media, and corporations). Therefore, below we show a good example of an advocacy campaign.

Case Study: Clear It Up! Campaign



The campaign *Clear It Up!* (www.razbistri.se) advocated the sustainable use and protection of natural resources, with an emphasis on the water monitoring system, concessions for mineral resources and environmental inspection. The campaign was designed and implemented by the Institute for Communication Studies (ICS) together with a broad alliance of civil society organizations (CSOs), civil initiatives, academic institutions, media, and public institutions in North Macedonia. In the following, we mention only two directions of this advocacy campaign.

The advocacy and lobbying campaign was launched in December 2020. First, ICS organized the training on advocacy and lobbying and founded the "Clear It Up!" Alliance for lobbying and advocacy with the purpose to promote and advocate for sustainable use and protection of water resources and effective supervision of the excessive use of natural resources. The Alliance connected the dots on several levels by involving institutions from central and local government, civil society, researchers, journalists. To strengthen the dialogue with institutions and influence institutional processes of decision and policy making, ICS included environmental organizations that had expertise in environment, law, economy. To gain wider influence in raising public awareness, organizations that work in other areas such as youth, gender equality, European affairs, human rights, were also involved.

ICS conducted thorough research of the themes of the project, in co-operation with several experts. University professors and researchers assisted in conducting measurements and assessments, presented analyses, and offered solutions. For example, the measurements of water quality of the waters of Dojran, Berovo and Tikvesh lakes were conducted by the University of Goce Delchev - Shtip, by providing directions and recommendations. Experts have also provided input on how the area of natural resource management can be regulated.

At the very beginning of the campaign, the Alliance found out that a potentially harmful draft of the Law on Changes and Amendments to the Law on Mineral Resources was submitted to Parliament. The Alliance was able to organize itself quickly, to demand actions by MPs, political parties, and the Government to withdraw the draft law. The Alliance publicly elaborated the weaknesses of the draft law, making its position and requests clear to everyone. The Ministry of Economy withdrew the draft law for further revision and invited the Alliance to participate in the process, accepting several of its comments and suggestions. Also, the "Clear It Up!" Alliance succeeded in engaging in a dialogue with the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning in the process of adopting the Water Law, where CSOs were involved at the beginning of the consultation process with the competent institutions and after accepting the proposals for amendments, the draft-law was published, followed by a public

debate. When the dialogue was launched, the channel of communication with the policy makers allowed academia, experts and civil society to be involved in drafting legislation.

Starting with 21 CSOs and two civic initiatives, the Alliance later has grown into a network of 84 partners, including 41 from civil society, 36 media, 4 faculties and 3 public institutions. The experience of the Alliance demonstrated that when CSOs and media join efforts to work together on an issue, the results have greater impact.

How-to Advice

Preparing a social marketing campaign for environmental protection involves several key steps, including:

1. **Conducting research:** Before beginning the campaign, it is important to conduct research to understand the current attitudes and behaviors of the target audience towards environmental protection. This research can be conducted through surveys, focus groups, and interviews.
2. **Define the campaign's objectives:** The first step in preparing a social marketing campaign is to clearly define the objectives of the campaign. This should include specific behaviors or actions that the campaign aims to encourage and the desired outcome of the campaign.
3. **Setting campaign SMART goals:** The campaign should have clear and specific goals that align with the overall objectives of the environmental protection organization or initiative. For example, the goal of a campaign might be to increase recycling rates in a community or to promote the use of renewable energy sources.
4. **Identifying target audience/public:** The target audience should be identified based on factors such as age, gender, education level, and socio-economic status. It is also important to understand the attitudes and behaviors of the target audience towards environmental protection.
5. **Developing messages:** Based on the research, develop a clear and compelling campaign message that will resonate with the target audience and encourage them to take the desired actions. The campaign should develop messages that resonate with the target audience and align with the campaign goals. These messages should be clear, concise, and emotionally engaging.

6. **Select the appropriate tactics and choosing communication channels:** Select the tactics that will be used to deliver the campaign message. The campaign should choose the most appropriate communication channels to reach the target audience. These channels might include traditional media such as television, radio, and print, traditional forms of advertising, such as billboards and posters, as well as digital channels such as social media, email, and websites.
7. **Implementing the campaign:** Develop a detailed plan for implementing the campaign, including timelines, budgets, and the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders. The campaign should be implemented in a way that is consistent with the goals and messages of the campaign. This may include creating a website, social media accounts, and running ads on TV, radio, print, and online, and using public relations, event management etc.
8. **Monitoring and evaluating the campaign:** The campaign should be monitored and evaluated to measure its effectiveness. This will involve measuring key indicators such as reach, engagement, and behavior change. This will help the campaign team to identify which elements of the campaign were successful and which areas need improvement and make adjustments as needed to ensure that it is achieving the desired outcomes.
9. **Continuously refine the campaign:** Based on the evaluation, refine the campaign to optimize its performance and make sure that it reaches the target audience and achieves the goals.

VIDEO: How to use social marketing for environmental protection?



VIDEO: Implement Social Marketing Campaign for Environmental Protection: Key Steps



What Have You Learned?

After reading the chapter, you should be able to answer the following questions:

- How social marketing can be used to protect the environment?
- How to create a sense of community and social pressure to encourage people to adopt environmentally friendly behaviors?
- What are the main principles of social marketing?
- How to design an environmental social marketing campaign?
- What are the main steps in planning an environmental social marketing campaign?
- How to change the behavior of (individuals from) the target audience using a transtheoretical model of behavior change?
- How to create effective messages to achieve socially desirable environmental behavior?

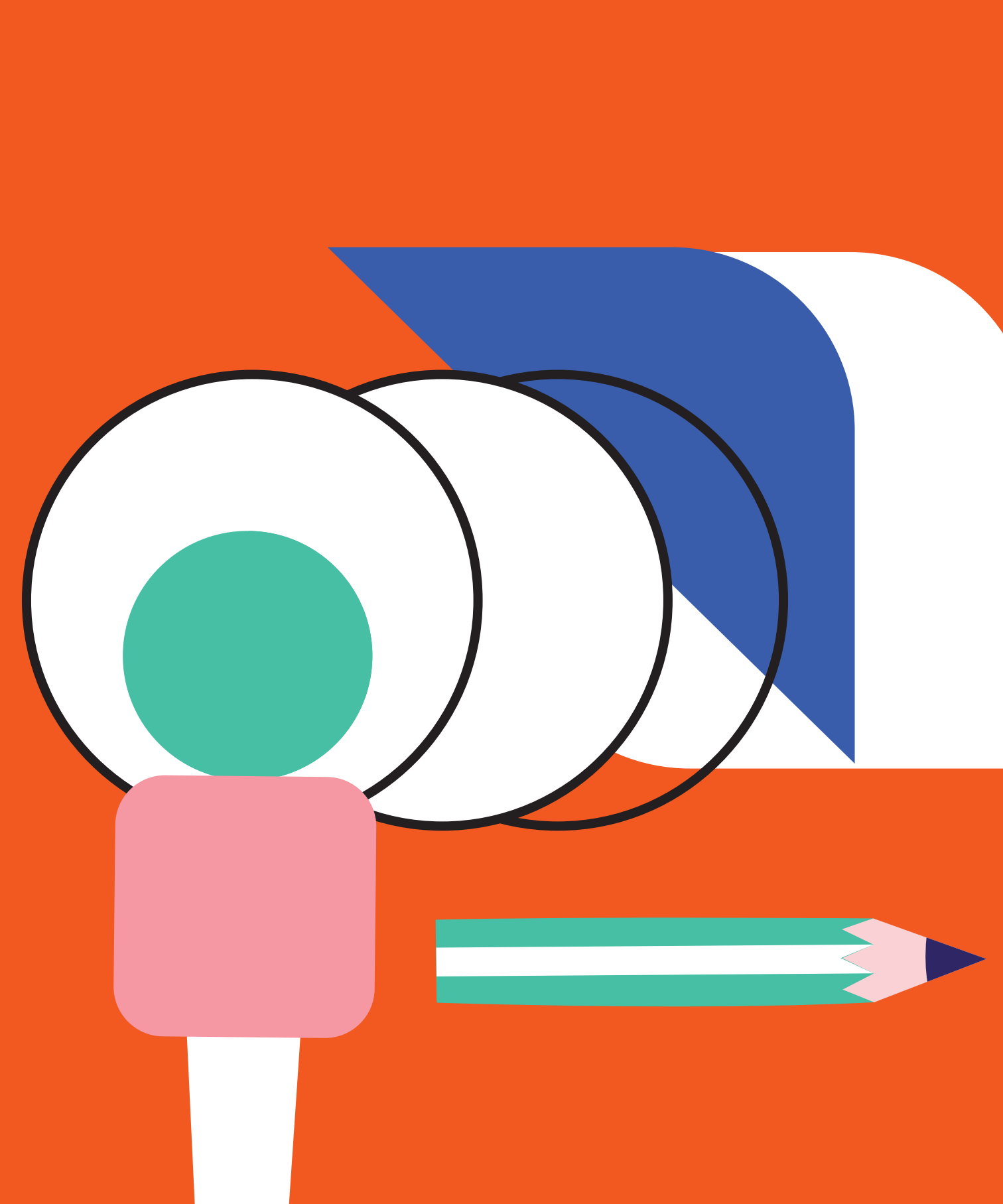
PLAY THE GAME!



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CHAPTER 5

Public Participation and Engagement

Author: Assoc. Prof. Mihallaq Qirjo

Let's Begin with a Story!

Everybody is talking about climate impacts as the year 2023 is breaking all records as the hottest year on records. All our countries are committing themselves to go carbon neutral by 2050 and have set objectives for reducing carbon emission by 2030 at a significant level. Despite the political talk, communities and environmental organizations are not engaged in discussions with governmental authorities about the Climate and Energy Action Plans. Are we supposed to be informed and participate in such important developments? They will be expected to re-structure and configure the economy and the societies. Furthermore, such public engagement helps for better preparedness to face the climate change impacts and increase the community resilience towards catastrophic events such as floods, long drought, and extreme heat.



Source: freepik.com

Background

Local to global-scale transformational change in socio-environmental systems requires responses that build on informed governance, planning, and decision-making (Patterson, 2018). The local knowledge, which represents skills and understandings developed by groups of individuals in a specific local geographic setting, often informing decision-making in day-to-day life, is an unsubstituted dimension of this transformation. The contribution of the public comes through two main processes: participation and engagement.

In participatory models, the approach is to open decision-making processes to the public, communities or simply to participants, allowing them to influence outcomes. The engagement models go beyond informing and participating, aiming at empowering and capacitating communities, so being able to influence the decision-making process. Such engaging models are described as bottom-up approaches. In participatory models, the nature of the engagement is presented as a deliberative, consensus-based public dialogue aimed at reaching better-quality decisions through the transformation of individual rationalities (Armeni, 2016). Often, some participatory processes are described as non-meaningful community participation, seeking public acceptance. In those situations, participation is framed as mere validation of decisions already made and as a way to accelerate implementation and facilitate compliance. Lacking community engagement, those processes are highly criticized by environmental civil society groups and community.

Each environmental decision-making process and intervention should contain the public participation plan. It serves not only the transparency of process, but the quality of the decision making, therefore it should be planned from the beginning of a process. Furthermore, it can be a method to reduce or avoid conflicts. When conflict does arise, consider the conflict prevention and resolution techniques described below in this section. Arhus Convention Secretariat and Arhus Center provide useful guidelines and practical tools on the rights and models for public participation in environmental decision-making processes, which can be referred to and used by environmental journalists.

Good Planning for a Public Participation Process

The success of a public participation program is largely determined by how thoroughly and thoughtfully it is planned. Successful meetings and events are determined by the degree to which an organization or the activist group effectively commits to and prepares for the entire process, specially creating and providing the information needed by stakeholders and building effective relationships with them.

Conflict Prevention and Resolution

A conflict may arise in the public participation process when perspectives from two or more parties are incompatible. Conflicts may be due to a difference of belief, values, understanding, or interests. Conflict may show up in numerous ways, including interpersonal tension, disagreements about facts, verbal arguments, being “stuck” on a problem, resistance to changes, or inability to reach decisions.

Conflict prevention and resolution refers to a broad set of practices and techniques aimed at reducing the likelihood of conflict and, if conflict emerges, developing effective solutions to those conflict situations. Conflict prevention and resolution can often be most effective with the help of impartial third parties such as a mediator or facilitator.

Conflict prevention and resolution techniques can be applied in many contexts, including environmental enforcement actions, protests, negotiations, and litigation. Conflict prevention and resolution techniques, with the use of an impartial third-party, can also be effective in contentious collaborative processes, including those designed to build consensus, such as environmental ones on the share of natural resource use.

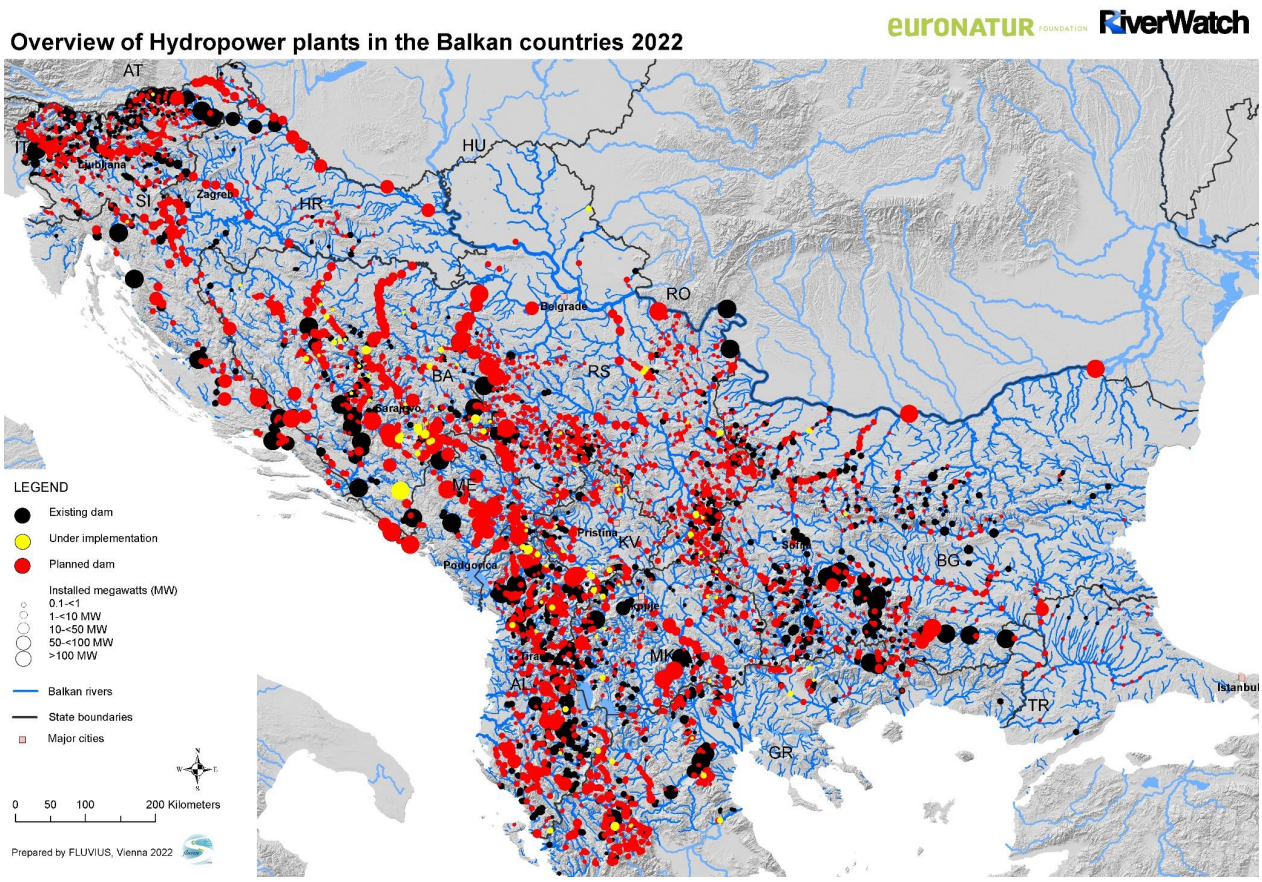
Benefits of Techniques for Preventing and Resolving Conflicts

- Faster resolution of issues
- More creative, satisfying and enduring solutions
- Fostering a culture of respect and trust among all parties involved
- Increased likelihood of compliance with environmental laws and regulation
- Broader stakeholder support
- Better environmental outcome

Quiz: How familiar are you with environmental legislation?



Case Study: Protecting Rivers in Western Balkans



Examples of failures on investments with insufficient public participation involvement at planning and implementation phases are abundant in the Western Balkans. In most of the cases, the consequence is environment degradation and natural resources exploitation. According to RiverWatch Update for 2022, 1,726 small hydropower plants built in all streams and rivers of the Western Balkans, and over 3,281 are planned.

Civil society advocacy campaigns claim that such a “development” policy is not strategic and rooted mostly on vested interests, poor control and enforcement. In most of the cases, public participation processes were poorly organised and communities were not consulted. Media reports community protests, frequently quite aggressive ones, by blocking roads and clashing with the police. Protestants claim corrupted practices, with poor community participation, which negatively affect people’s lives by limiting access to resources.

The investigative journalists of Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN) through its media outlet Reporter.al published a number of articles about the high risk of investing in the hydropower plants due to long drought periods, negative environmental and social impacts.

In cooperation with local partners, the NGOs EuroNatur and RiverWatch launched the "Save the Blue Heart of Europe" campaign aiming to save this natural European heritage from destruction. The action got concentrated on four key areas that are particularly valuable: the Vjosa River (Albania), the Mavrovo National Park (North Macedonia), the Sava River (Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia), as well as the rivers of Bosnia & Herzegovina. Needless to say, all of them are threatened by large dam projects. The campaign goals were:

- to raise public awareness about Balkan Rivers, their ecological values and vulnerability
- to stop dam projects in the four key areas
- to coordinate the development of a masterplan with no-go areas for dam construction for all Balkan rivers
- to improve knowledge about the biodiversity of those rivers playing a crucial role in terms of biological connectivity and endemism in the region.

Since 2014 to 2022, a group of Albanian Environmental NGOs led by EcoAlbania, joined the regional campaign "Save the Blue Heart of Europe". Community participation is supported by sharing information on biodiversity values of Vjosa river. A number of scientific expeditions and academic events gathered data and shared information on endemic and threatened species and habitats along the river.

Furthermore, investment plans on building dams and hydropower plants are shared with local and scientific communities, requiring meaningful participation of local inhabitants and environmental NGOs. The NGO coalition "Protecting our rivers" organized several public hearings and debates in the villages along Vjosa with participation of local authorities and representatives of central governmental agencies. Several artistic events are organized in cities and towns along the river, as well as in Tirana aiming at increasing the supporters base. Engagement of local communities is achieved through pilot investment projects such as "Solar in Bence, installation of solar panels in public buildings", as a vivid example of abundant alternative energy sources in the area.

In March 2023, after an almost decade-long campaign by environmental NGOs, the Vjosa river was declared the first wild river national park in Europe. Environmentalists described it as a historic decision that has placed the tiny Balkan nation at the forefront of river protection. NGOs said there was still work to be done to safeguard the remaining unprotected parts of the river, including the delta and the source in Greece. This achievement took the attention of the national, regional and international media.

Quiz: What do you know about mini hydropower plants?



How-to Advice

Developing a good Public Participation and Conflict Resolution Plan is not rocket science! Above all, it needs good will and intentions to receive and respect the community opinions and interests. By doing so, the negative environmental impacts are prevented or minimized, and the sustainability of the investment ensured.

Step 1. Organize for Participation

The first step in planning for public participation is to ensure that you are seeking to obtain

and use public input and not merely seeking public buy-in to an already determined outcome. It is important to engage all levels, especially the decision-makers, to understand their willingness to engage the public in the decision or action. Factors to consider include:

- Are decision-makers open to and committed to considering public input in the decision process?
- Are there constraints around the decision that limit the ability to engage the public?
- What will a "successful" decision look like?
- Are there unspoken interests or hidden agendas?

▶ Tip: A good decision is one supported by the communities! The local knowledge should be built in the decision, as early as the planning phase.

Step 2. Identify and Get to Know Your Stakeholders

It is important to conduct a situation assessment to understand who might be impacted, who should be involved, and what concerns they bring to the process. It is essential that you identify all the viewpoints and interests that must be heard to create a fully participatory process.

You should consider a broad range of interests that may be important to the community such as health, safety, pollution, property values, jobs, local economy, etc. You can identify additional information about the range of interests to be engaged by asking specific questions about your stakeholder community, such as:

- Who will be directly affected by the decision?
- Are there parts of the community that might be disproportionately burdened by the project?
- Who will be indirectly affected by the decision?
- Who wants to be involved?
- Who can affect the decision?

Meeting with stakeholders at the beginning of a project will help you to know your public, make them more accepting of you and the information you provide, and help you to design a public participation program that responds to their needs and concerns.

▶ Tip: The broader the stakeholder group, the more solid and consolidated the decision will be. The process will be transparent and fair to different interests. The marginalized groups should be identified and their voice should be heard, as they are impacted disproportionately.

Step 3. Plan and Integrate Public Participation in the Decision Process

In order to have clear and meaningful public participation, it is important for all stakeholders to fully understand the decision process being used. Creating a visual representation of this process is helpful. Key points to consider in describing the decision process include:

- What are the key steps and timing in the process?
- At which points will public input be obtained and used?
- How will the public be kept informed throughout the process?
- How will alternatives be developed?

It is essential to start public participation early so that stakeholders and community are on the same learning curve about issues and development of alternatives and solutions. Most important, that everybody has a common understanding of the problem to be addressed and alternatives for reaching the desirable decision.

▶ Tip: Participatory and engagement plans are as creative as the diversity of the stakeholders. Modalities and processes should consider the features of the community size, dispersion, age and education. Concrete action is a powerful tool to engage stakeholders and communities.

In case of conflict raise, the community usually has different interests and position compared to government and investors. This section describes some common conflict prevention and resolution techniques and tools that practitioners from environmental organizations may consider in their public participation efforts.

Convening: involves the use of an impartial third party to help assess the causes of the conflict, identify the persons or entities that would be affected by the outcome of the conflict, and help these parties consider the best way for them to deal with the conflict. The convener may also prepare the parties for participation in a dispute resolution process by providing education to the parties on what the selected process will be like. Some examples include mediation and consensus building.

Consensus Building: a process in which people agree to work together to resolve common problems in a relatively informal, cooperative manner. It is a technique that can be used to bring together representatives from different stakeholder groups early in a decision-making process. An impartial third party helps the stakeholders design and implement their own strategy for developing group solutions to the problems.

Facilitation: a process used to help a group of stakeholders or parties have constructive discussions about complex or potentially controversial issues. The facilitator provides assistance by helping the parties set ground rules or establish communication agreements for these discussions, promoting effective communication, eliciting creative options, and keeping the group focused. Facilitation can even be used in situations where parties have not yet agreed to attempt to resolve a conflict.

Mediation: is a process in which an impartial third party (the mediator) assists disputants in reaching a mutually satisfying settlement of their differences. Mediation is voluntary, and confidential, and the parties can withdraw at any time. The mediator helps the disputants to communicate clearly, listen carefully, and consider creative ways for reaching resolution. The mediator issues no decision or judgement; rather any solution must be agreed upon by, and must satisfy, all the disputants.

▶ TIPS on conflict resolution approaches

- **Interest based:** be focused on identifying the underlying needs, or interests of the community, and developing a mutually acceptable solution that addresses the interests that matter most to the parties.
- **Facilitative:** be focused on guiding communities through a process that is designed to result in a resolution.
- **Transformative:** be focused on the relationship between the community and the other party and support their ability to understand and share their views.
- **Narrative:** be focused on the story or stories that the community understands about the situation and help them to understand similar situations and respective resolution of that conflict.

VIDEO: How to reach the public about an environmental issue?



What Have You Learned?

Learning to develop effective public participation processes never ends. Practice improves your skills to understand the dynamics and consider the whole landscape where the process is occurring. Nevertheless, it is good to self-check the progress, through responding to the following questions:

- What are the benefits of the meaningful public participations process?
- What tools and techniques might help to develop an inclusive process for all actors which represent different interests?
- How to solve a conflict which might arise due to different interest for an environmental issue?
- What is the role of media and journalists in supporting those processes?
- How to build a narrative that motivates people to participate and engage in environmental debates and discussion?

PLAY THE GAME!



Further reading

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‘Let’s talk about the environment…’ – Takeaways

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Source: unsplash.com, 2023

In this guide, we started with defining what environmental communication is and how broad and therefore challenging it is. We started to explore various dimensions of communication of, about and for the environment. The chapters of this book direct environmental communication in the future from being very pragmatic and strategic to being more conscious about local contexts and people focused – from journalism to activism, from organizational to social media communication.

There are many levels on which we communicate: individual, organizational and societal. And there are multiple arenas in which we communicate. Additionally, there are various people communicating with often different world views – and some of those voices are loud and some rather silent. To talk about a changing climate, natural disasters, biodiversity loss and a general negative scenario of the future is challenging. Often their own individual behavior is



Source: unsplash.com, 2023

criticized – if not by others, then at least by their own feelings of guilt, shame or anxiety.

It isn't always easy to be informed in the highly complex field of climate research. It thus happens that the loud voices dominate conversations and public discourses, while the voices that are rather unsecure or want to avoid conflicts or social isolation, remain silent – and it feels like the loud voices represent the opinion of the majority.

So: **let's talk (more) about the environment!**

Not only in organizational or institutional contexts, but also at your dinner table, in coffee bars and lounges, in dressing rooms and public pools, in bars, pubs and beer gardens, online and offline, at parents-nights in kindergarten or video conferences with your colleagues. We need to talk so much more that climate change as scientific reality transforms into a social and cultural reality. And particularly as environmental and communication experts, we need to talk about how we communicate. This includes storytelling and framing and the co-creation of meaning and values. There is no one-size-fits-all communication strategy for environmental communication!

The *Online* Programme on Environmental Communication, implemented within the project "Mainstreaming of Environmental Communication through Online Learning and Virtual Mobility", included all levels of communication, the level of communication of, about and for the environment. Therefore, the takeaways from the chapters of this guide and the course on Environmental Communication can be summarized as follows:

A. For communication of the environment and climate change communication, we want to summarize the following takeaways:

Create a communication value:

- Proximity
- Personal influence / personalization
- Impact
- Suitability / context
- Controversy
- Timeliness / actuality
- Completeness
- Human interest

Communicating environmental issues means creating relationships! **Relationships** in

- **a social dimension:** people need to feel related to the issue, a certain key event or person that a story is about;
- **a time dimension:** people need to feel a certain sense of urgency and that the event / issue is related to their current situation;
- **a space dimension:** the connection of an issue / topic / event to the local or regional context of people is needed to get attention and potentially generate impact.

B. For communication about the environment and the rhetorical strategies, language and frames we use, we make the following propositions:

Think about the rhetorical elements:

1. The rhetorical situation: material conditions and contexts that prompt or shape how we respond; audience, setting, cultural context, other constraints;
2. The naming, labeling: assigning words to invite an orientation, a valuation about an assemblage of persons, statements, and relationships; emphasizing certain aspects, hiding others;
3. The frames: cognitive map, interpretative pattern, organizing principles of communication; interpretation that people use to organize their understanding of reality;
4. The metaphors: a figure of speech that, for rhetorical effect, directly refers to one thing by mentioning another; may connect two different ideas or concepts (house is on fire);
5. The narrative: storyline, that provide meaning, gives sense, central organizing master frame in an issue field or discourse;
6. The genres: distinct forms of composition that share a certain recognizable similarity in form, style, and or topic; example: apocalypse, melodrama;
7. The identification, personalization: imagined commonality or common ground between two figures, personalization, identity / and possible reputation transfer.

Also think about visual rhetoric:

1. Strategic deployment of images (still or moving) will help to communicate a persuasive message through pragmatic and or constitutive modes or functions (Pezzullo / Cox, 2021).
2. Elements of a visual image (colors, composition, lighting etc.) function differently. Visual images of all kinds convey more information than can be conveyed via discursive representations.
3. Visual forms are not discursive, but present their constituents simultaneously not successively or sequentially.

4. Visual rhetoric is used for:
   - verification: documenting & witnessing something taking place;
   - perspective: presenting a new or different way of seeing something, a new angle;
   - storytelling: capturing moments of action and character within a larger narrative;
   - condensations / symbol: creating vivid and immediate emotional connection based on a combination of visual elements, packing a lot of meaning into a single frame, providing possibilities for a variety of responses at the same time.

5. Choose a genre in visual rhetoric:
   - Ecotopic: natural landscapes, nature in its beauty, majesty, wonder.
   - Dystopic: depicting landscapes and habitats no longer unspoiled but marred or threatened by traces of human intervention.

C. For communication for the environment and sustainable development, we summarize the following drivers of change:

Interventions (disruption, pilot projects, pioneer work, problematization, questioning the status quo etc.) and institutionalization of new behavior (implementation of new rules and regulations, manifestation of sustainability in organizational value frameworks etc.).

Intervention planning:

- Problem analysis, needs assessment, situation analysis;
- Developing goals and objectives;
- Developing strategies and key messages;
- Developing tactics and tools to deliver the key messages to the right audiences;
- Implementation, adoption;
- Evaluation → problem analysis, situation analysis.

Institutionalization / manifestation

- Narrative: one narrative needs to be manifested. This can be one of the following:
  - Nature as a resource: emphasizes uses of nature for private / public welfare; calculates monetary or related value; is human centered and mostly associated with business, law, policy, advocacy.
  - Nature as an object, regards nature as a source of knowledge; obtained and constructed through rigorous methodology; emphasizes measurement, differentiation, relationships among phenomena in larger ecosystems; nature-centered discourse, grounded in faith that humans can unlock nature's secrets; associated with scientific and technical discourse.
  - Nature as a spirit: regards nature in terms of transcendent unity; focuses on beauty and emotional power of nature; seeks to locate value in terms of harmonious relationships between human and non-human worlds; nature and other-centered discourse; associated with the arts, music, painting, sculpture, poetry, drama etc.
- Rules / resources need to be agreed on and institutionalized in organizations (business, NPO, political institutions, newsrooms etc.). Therefore, we need guidelines that all communicators agree on! Like a Charta (see below)!

The dialectic process of intervention and institutionalization is key for any form of strategic communication. This can be understood as a circular model of communication, or circular communication (CC). Every time the "normal", the existing reality is questioned, disrupted, broken up by a certain activity or new behavior (intervention or specific action / project as condensed form of the 'new behavior'), it needs to be followed up by a phase in which the "new normal" gets institutionalized, where new rules get implemented. This is how change can be secured!

Consequently, an intervention needs strategic planning!

From a communication perspective, the core of interventions is to change existing frames and narratives and to establish (institutionalize) new ones. Narratives and the stories we tell about the environment and us as humans in relation to nature, are key for environmental communication. A narrative or a story is the organizing element and thus the manifestation of certain cultural patterns, values and norms (Weder & Eriksen, 2023). A new narrative can be developed in or through an intervention, in a specific project. The evaluation of the intervention or project will show if the narrative (overarching storyline) needs to be adapted.

A narrative is driven by frames, cognitive elements, or patterns, that organize communication. Frames are patterns of interpretation that people use to organize their understanding of reality and of the world; frames organize the story line that is created through communication, frames provide meaning, a central organizing idea for making sense of relevant events and suggesting what is at issue (Gamson & Modigliani, 1987, 1989).

Frames induce us to filter our perceptions of the world; they make some aspects of our multi-dimensions' reality more noticeable than other aspects and some information or bits of information more salient than others.

Never forget: Communication is always transformative. Every environmental or nature related conversation has the potential to change our human-nature relationship. Therefore, we do not only think about and plan WHAT we communicate, but also HOW we communicate!

To conclude, we want to highlight some guiding principles for environmental communication in the future that can be used as **Charter for EC: CLAC – something that everyone who communicates about or for the environment needs to agree on:**

CLAC: CHARTER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL COMMUNICATION

1. **C**reativity: Engage your audiences in climate action through storytelling and inspiring narratives. Narratives drive change! Be concrete, local, and give examples – and use more than text (games, art, literature, drama)
2. **L**earning: Provide training (environmental issues, climate change & sustainability communication, impact of communication on transformation), tools and learning opportunities for all communicators. Continually learn from each other and form initiatives outside your own industry!
3. **A**dvocacy: Speak up! Take authorship of your stories, raise awareness, frame and drive positive action! Champion existing projects, initiatives, and grow collective capacity to shape and influence the wider debate.
4. **C**ollaboration and Co-creation: strengthen partnerships, foster participation, share knowledge, collaborate with your peers, and be accountable in these networks! Seek for issues-ambassadors and connect with them.

Key Achievements



Sourse: Freepik.com

Project "Mainstreaming Environmental Communication through Online Learning and Virtual Mobility"

- The **new** **Online Programme on Environmental Communication** consisted of 5 courses and a final online hackathon designed and implemented.
- **155 students** from 14 countries enrolled (Macedonia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, Croatia, Kosovo, Slovenia, Turkey, Italy, Montenegro, Nigeria, Lithuania, Germany, Japan).
- **12 open educational resources** on environmental communication topics produced.
- **5 learning games** on environmental communication cases developed.
- **21 lecturers trained** in competency-based curricula for environmental communication.
- Students, educators, and professionals from 14 countries connected.

Online Programme on Environmental Communication



A high percentage of enrolled students (83%) have **completed the Programme**, of which 113 (or 88% of the 128) have chosen the graded option and obtained a certificate for respective completed courses with ECTS points, and 15 (or 12%) have chosen the audit option.



For each of the courses, all the evaluated **skills and knowledge** are perceived by the students as **improved towards significantly improved.** The lowest grade given was 3.72 and the highest 3.83, on a scale from 1 to 4 (4 the highest/best and 1 lowest/worst grade).



Students evaluated that their **behaviour has changed after completion of the Programme** – they more often or always talk to people about environmental degradation and their role in protection. A positive change in their behaviour was observed in *communicating about environmental issues,* risks and hazards, and in their *engagement in the community and involvement in resolving conflicts* related to environmental issues.



Four fifths of the students (*83%*) found the Programme **contributing to their career and research development.** For 84% of students virtual collaborative learning helped to **establish personal and professional relationships with peers.**



Almost three quarters of the lecturers (*73%*) stated they will **apply some innovations from the Programme** in their regular work, while 93% will use online resources from the Programme in their regular teaching activities. When it comes to the aspect of whether the Programme enabled them to connect with other professionals and widen up their career or research, 95% and 90% respectively, responded affirmatively.

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMUNICATION

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