# Audio file

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# Transcript

Alexandra Dales

Hello, this is the Institute of Social Justice podcast series. My name is Doctor Alexander Dales and I am with my colleague Rory Padfield, and we're going to be talking to you today about the recent research project we've been undertaking and all about communicating sustainability. And climate change stories. Rory I hand over to you, let you introduce yourself.

Rory Padfield

Thanks, Alexandra. Hi everybody. My name's Rory padfield. I'm a lecturer in sustainability and business at the university. Leads and as Alexandra says, we've been working together over the last year or so on this project and today we're going to talk through some of the steps and some of our key findings through the process of the of the.

Alexandra Dales

Project I should probably introduce myself to, so I'm Alexandra.

Rory Padfield

OK.

Alexandra

Obviously, I'm in the York Business School and. My background is traditionally economic geography. So so moving into a new sort of area in this research project for me. But it really began, I think the call was the end of 2021. I think that came in and we we had our funding from Excel stories, which is a sort of one of the creative clusters that have been funded for some time through the arts and Humanities Research Council. And exile stories put out a call for research and development projects. In looking at ways in which the sort of skill sets of creative sector, small and medium sized enterprises. Could be developed and advanced, and we had a look at this proposal and saw a way in which our thinking around sustainability and climate change and our background of understanding markets and sectors could be developed so that the excess stories and sign, which is another part of the creative cluster, that funding. Came through so March last year, which feels a long time ago and we really got started in June 2022 and we have our amazing postdoc, Gemma Bridge, who's still working, working with us on the project. She's contributed a. Amount and through June to December, we've done a lot of data collection and we'll talk you through what that is and we sort of had a big event at the 31st of January this year with a workshop that introduced the critical sustainability stories tool that we developed through the research. And what we'll do is. We'll talk you through the stages of our research project and why we think communicating about sustainability and climate change is so important and the and the critical role of the creative sector and. In developing and advancing understanding about sustainability and climate change and it's so, I mean, Rory, can you tell me, I know you've thought about this really a lot previously, a great deal is why is it important to think clearly and be critical in communication? About sustainability and climate change.

Rory Padfield

I mean, I think that's the basis really of of this project going forward. There's lots of information out there about climate change. We know that there's lots of information about sustainability, but whether it's getting to the right audiences and whether it's provoking the right sort of behaviours, that's that's really the sort of question that's underpinning much of the work, not just in this field. But but in kind of broader in the broader sense. So we were interested right at the beginning about presenting information or presenting a tool to communicators in a particular way that would allow those communicators to to tell stories that. For on sustainability and climate change that we're going to provoke, the sort of change the the kind of behaviour change or change in policy that that that is necessary we we are certainly of the opinion that current modes, current structures, current systems around thinking about climate change and sustainability are. Not fit for purpose, really. There's a big critique around green capitalism around green growth, and really those messages are all pervasive in in all parts of society and communicators broadly defined, whether that be those in the creative sector all the way through to. Journalism through to press relations, marketing. Really, the majority of those are feeding into those existing narratives that that green growth is sufficient and we don't need to worry about doing anything structural or anything bigger than that. So for us, I think the rationale behind the project was. Knowing that that there is insufficient and there isn't the kind of action that's taking place, what kind of information can we pull together in a practical, easy to use way that communicators can actually make a difference and start telling stories in a different? So I think that was really our our starting point and we call that closing the information and narrative gaps in a sense, closing the gap between what we know science is saying about what kind of action needs to happen versus the kind of actions that are taking place on the ground and the sorts of policies that we see. In the public and private sphere. So how can we change that? How can we get somewhere in the middle or or close that gap? How can we bring public policy human behaviour changed to a point where actually it's responding to the real needs when it comes to sustainability and climate change?

Alexandra Dales

That's what I was thinking, listening to that and it's probably worth helping the audience understand what we mean by green capitalism and the and the prevailing policy and and and organizational action around environmentalism, or rather, environmentalism that acting to change the situation for the climate. So what? Can you explain that a little bit more for our audience?

Rory Padfield

Yeah. So green capitalism. I would, yeah, broadly define as the the kind of common business as usual type approach when it comes to. Tackling sustainability. So if we think of businesses and organisations at the moment, they may be talking the language of sustainability. They may be doing things like recycling. They may be looking at some kind of transport plan for their employees. They may be looking at some kind. Carbon emissions reduction, where there is a problem and where we see researchers and the literature more broadly picking out faults with this, is that it doesn't address some of the bigger questions around our society. Some of the bigger questions around the growth agenda, in other words. Consuming resources on a on a finite planet. It it it? To to put it crudely, sort of tinkering around the edges quite a lot of this action when it comes to sustainability, it's not leading to fundamental change in the way that our economies are working. The way that we are behaving not as just as citizens and individuals, but as organisations, as governments, we're still pushing along a path to grow and consume resources and just simply introducing a kind of recycling scheme at work and maybe offering some sort of scheme. Car sharing scheme for employees is really not gonna get us to a point where we are limiting global warming to, let's say. Well, 1.5 degrees warming may be out of reach now, but but perhaps 2 degrees and therefore limiting the devastating impacts that, that that the scientists predicting when it comes to global temperature rises. So green capitalism, in a sense, is that common business as usual way of viewing sustainability, and one that doesn't look to make. Big fundamental changes in society.

Alexandra Dales

Yeah, and that. Was really the basis of our thinking. As we see, the creative sector is that that, that voice piece in a way and the the communicators and the experts in communication as those people who know how to tell stories, who know how to reach audiences and engage and entice audiences into a compelling story. We know that there's been a lot of. Negative stories it. It feels very overwhelming for many people. It feels very. Arguably sort of doom, doom and gloom when thinking about stories about climate change. And you can create that sort of apathy or a sense of overwhelming. So what can you do? So our whole research is really thinking about how do we help communicators really engage with the research so that their stories are enriched? With the research itself, and that was one of the aspects we were thinking about is how do we introduce? This critical thinking as an approach how do we get communicators creating stories? And there are great many out there about sustainability and climate change. How do we get them to think in a way that closes this information deficit that sometimes good news stories or many good news stories or stories about how to mitigate and adapt to climate change, there's a huge number of amazing stories out there that go beyond the basic of green capitalism, and that's where we wanted to create a framework for. Allowing and enabling storytellers to develop those kinds of stories and do it, do so in a matter that that's evidence based and linked to research and critical. This probably comes on to that thinking of how do we make this tool?

Rory Padfield

Well, I was going to ask you then, Alexandra. How should we be thinking, then, about sustainability and climate change going forward? What the, I suppose, what's the rationale and the underpinning theoretical basis then for for? This tool.

Alexandra Dales

Yeah, we, we've gotta hit the hard points on theory, aren't we? So, I mean, I know in our conversations we started by thinking what do communicators need to know and understand? What do they need to be thinking about and how should they be thinking? And that came we came through that. Through that conversation, I know that we were thinking about ontology. What do we think we know about the world around us? And therefore, a question would be what is sustainability? What is climate change? So, trying to get communicators to think about those having a really clear understanding or maybe more so than what they currently have, so asking that core question and then linking on to the what question is to epistemology of how do we know about the world around us? So how do you find out about sustainability challenges? Climate change? So that's very much a doing a data collection. Ask and then lastly, once you've got the information we've got you, you know you on an empirical level. Once you have information, what do you do with it? How do you use it? And through us asking those kinds of questions that made us realise that critical thinking is a a key component of what we would want communicators to develop and drilling down into their understanding of the issues that they're communicating about. And that led us into developing those.

Rory Padfield

It is. I think it's worth also pointing out that the we know communicators, many communicators do critical thinking in their day everyday except they are experts and I think that's something we wanted to.

Alexandra Dales

I guess they're experts already.

Rory Padfield

We want to stress that throughout this project and through the stakeholders that we've met that they are experts at doing this. I suppose what we are doing is putting a bit of focus. The critical thinking around, then sustainability and climate change and and and looking to to source information from places that they may not have thought about. Previously and in and in a manner and in a way that they may not have thought about. So yeah, just to make that clear.

Alexandra Dales

Yes, I should have said that already. I realised that. So I guess that we developed 6. Themes, each with a series of questions, and yes, the idea is that we help organize and communicators thinking around.

Rory Padfield

Yeah, yeah.

Alexandra Dales

Sustainability and climate change because they're experts and you don't want to, they're, I think. Like it's just bringing a framework, as you said.

Rory Padfield

Yeah, yeah.

Alexandra Dales

I'm repeating myself but slightly but, but probably it was the idea of... how thinking about critical thinking and using questions as a as a tool to achieve that and the different types of critical activities.

Rory Padfield

And so when we think then about critical activities, do you want to quickly go through some of those key components in a way it might be helpful for the listener?

Alexandra Dales

Yeah, I think when we're thinking about what it is critical thinking we often think about our students and the research that we do ourselves, and I think as researchers, you know, we're quite trained to high level and critical thinking and it's bringing that skill set. So, whether that's comparing and contrasting information, asking questions revealing. Friends synthesizing information and and communicators do all of those activities already, and it's just bringing them those types of activities to the fore when thinking about issues like sustainability and climate change to make sure messages are, are organised and formal to a point in the connections that they make with the data that might be out there.

And I guess I guess they moving down the so that that thought pattern of thinking about the types of information the story might convey and are sort of rolling thinking about how to develop critical thinking for or how to advance critical thinking for communicators. What we realized through the project is the importance of really thinking about the story and the narrative. And I think, you know, academics might like, well we create our own stories, but they're very formulaic. As academic papers, they're not the same type of creative story, which is compelling. So we're trying to. So we very quickly engaged in. The idea of storytelling.

Rory Padfield

Yeah, yeah, exactly. And I think for us it was a bit of an eye opener to see some of the foundations then of what of what storytelling is. And we came up with, in fact, we drew on some work actually by Prof Tony Morgan at the University of Leeds. He's done some work around storytelling, and I think it's important to, to articulate. This within every story we see characters or many, many stories we see characters. We see a setting, we see a plot, typically a beginning, a middle and an end. And within that story there's often a struggle. There might be a goal. There might be a struggle. It comes often to some sort of crisis point and then a resolution at the end. And I think it's important that when we were reflecting ourselves on how storytellers themselves may be using this type of information, the information within our tool with it, the sort of organising of questions, the organising of thought. We have to be responsive. And appreciate the sort of limits in a way and the the boundaries in which the storytellers were working. So this particular framework of character settings, plot beginning, middle end, conflict and resolution. We were working using that basis within the tool. So hopefully it's it, it speaks to that idea of a story.

Alexandra Dales

And we also realised and we throughout the project, so we initially undertook a literature review with with Gemma, our lovely postdoc, but very quickly we found out that excess stories were had funded. Another project called the Climate Change Challenge. And this project funded 3 small nonprofits and small businesses to create particular content, communicating about climate change and climate change issues. And one of the projects was the sustainable arts and leads, and they were translating their very successful carbon literacy training into a virtual reality experience and where you would experience a section of the five sectioned carbon literacy train. And it was through our relationship and real collaboration with them in helping them or supporting them develop this virtual reality experience called Home Planet that we learned a lot about how to assist communicators and thinking about sustainability and climate change. And a lot of it was around. That that structuring of ideas and accessing relevant information, so their home planet be virtual reality experience zoomed in from a sort of a global sphere into hull and explored the ramifications of climate change for the city center, Hull and we were, yeah, it was.

Rory Padfield

Yeah, very powerful.

Alexandra Dales

And it it was, it was a really amazing experience, amazing sort of to interact with in the virtual reality with you when you got your headset on. And really through. So we were invited onto their Advisory Board and through that board we were able to learn. A lot from them about understanding how to communicate in developing a story and the role of setting, but we're also able to advise them on how to organise the information that they had, what to think about the types of questions to ask. So that was us was a really iterative process and you can see the home. And it VR experience and the details of it on the XR stories website, I'm sure we can if we have show notes, we shall add those details in for this podcast. So that really ties into how we developed the tool, it was through a series of interviews with experts who are professional communicators through numerous conversations that we, we developed. SAIL, We can't thank them off at sort of Helen Brooke and Phil Holgate, who run sustainable arts and leaves, which is a nonprofit organization that's really keyed into supporting the creative sector in the Leeds region, that is seeking to make these changes within the crater sector. So the combined process of both sort of this active change in terms of organizational functional aspects, but also communication of sustainability and climate change issues. But before we, as we were almost doing that before. As I'm not quite sure when it started, but we started with the evaluating and doing a review of existing content. Rory, do you want to tell us how we worked out a way to evaluate that, but I'll let you tell how we get to that?

Rory Padfield

So we were talking about this recently in terms of the evaluation and and using the evaluation really as a springboard to understanding what was important. When it comes to communicating key key issues, key messages around sustainability and climate. Range and we started off pulling out a number of different digital, mostly almost or almost entirely digital content that we could find online. Pulling out these stories, whether they be short video pieces of three or four minutes, something a little bit more interactive where there was some user engagement. But those that were accessible via a computer laptop phone, that sort of thing. And we, we compiled a list. Gemma compiled a list of these. These different pieces of content, and at that point we decided that we needed a means to then evaluate. These different types off outputs. So we really started quite organically, just reflecting on what were the key messages for us in viewing these different these different types of content looking back into the literature a little bit to see how were there any methods that could support us in developing some sort of analytical framework or a very sort of simple, straightforward framework and in here.

Alexandra Dales

And we had a that conversation where and I guess it goes back to that critical thinking and. And thinking about how students, the range of activities and might we might assess the student on which it and I don't know how research based is looking at just but it was a spectrum of describing, explaining, evaluating and it's I think you mentioned it first and then we sort of ran with that and Gemma gave some very pointed questions at different points. I remember, having a conversation where she really unpicked her ideas.

Rory Padfield

Yeah. Yeah. Successfully. Yeah, yeah.

Alexandra Dales

Quite successful, hopefully, but it may look better, but it made made she made me go away and think a bit more.

Rory Padfield

Yeah, it was. It was. It was a very helpful, instructive process, I think.

Alexandra Dales

She was good at just seeing it from the communicators view, someone from outside. I know that we occasionally get sort of lost in the trees. And in the forest of it all, I can't see the whole, the whole thing.

Rory Padfield

The whole story. But you're right. And I think by the end of that process, we then had a very clear set of questions that we were then asking ourselves of the content. So we were asking things like does the content provider description of the problem. So here thinking about climate change and sustainability stories, does it? Describe the problem what was done well in terms of the communication, what could have been improved. Moved does it explain the problem? So the why question does the content provide an explanation for the why? You know why is this particular issue occurring? Let's say maybe it's rising sea levels in hull. Does it explain why that is happening? Is there anything that doesn't make sense to the to the audience to the to the user? Explanation how does the content provide an explanation for how the problem occurred? Does anything not make sense with that as well? So you've kind of got from description to explanation and then importantly for us steps for behaviour change. Does the content lead us in a direction, require us to think about our behavior. Does it? Does it ask us to sign a petition, right that we then submit to our, you know, local MP or write a letter to your local MP? Or does it make us go further than that and those are the sorts of things that. We were looking for, well, I remember.

Alexandra Dales

When we were doing this process, I watched there was an animation on Facebook from Greenpeace, so it was really good. It was beautifully done. It told us. Story of plastics in the oceans how do the plastic get there? What the impacts of the plastics? You know, the unfolding awfulness of all the all the plastic in the oceans and you sort of feeling realy engaging through it, but also gosh, gotta do something. Then it ends with sign a petition and I sort of felt like throwing my hands up at that point and go. Ohh, I'll sign the petition.

Rory Padfield

And then you're done with it, yeah.

Alexandra Dales

That's it. Plastic fixed.

Rory Padfield

Yeah, and it's.

Alexandra Dales

Yeah, it's like that. And then another time. I think it was Sunday evening and it was the Frozen Planet series, the latest one. It was the last episode we had David Attenborough sort of facing that huge screen. Watching the programme and all this amazing wildlife, but also cutting to the scientists saying this is what's happening to this glaciers. It's melting incredibly rapidly. Look, I'm standing in the place where there used to be hundreds of thousands of Penguins. They're all gone. And all the ice is gone. It's killing them and the a awfulness of it. And I actually timed it. That 55 minutes were spent on this amazing programme, not cutting the program at all. It was amazing on the issue of what's happening and then it. Had probably say about 2 1/2 to 3 minutes all about what to do about it or not or or. It's not all about it was. Literally, snippets from the scientists and they were good points and I thought if you'd spent 55 minutes actually in deep diving explaining to the audience this is how we can actually do something and the pathways. How powerful would have that have been? And and I'm and I just think I'm waiting for that program because everyone loves David Attenborough as they should, you know, and his programs have such power and he's had an amazing impact already. That's how do you how do you take that? Beyond, I mean. We've got to the point that pretty much, I'd say most people apart from the crazies. Are on board. We sustain acting sustainably, acting towards climate change, but I wondered if there's a growing frustration of, well, what do we actually do about it?

Rory Padfield

What we do, yeah.

Alexandra Dales

And and I think a big motivation of ours is to, really. Show communicator, link to the evidence linked to critical thinking, and let's talk about sort of mitigation and adaptation and positive stories about what can happen. Yeah, and and that's been a big motivation. I mean, we want to save the world if we can do it in a tiny way, let's see what we can do.

Rory Padfield

Yeah, I think that’s it, well put.

Alexandra Dales

We did have, we did show in the workshop the cheesy love story. Which is quite a good example. Another example.

Rory Pafield

Yeah, it's another example almost. I think the one that you've just described there was was really nicely done as another example in the workshop that we had, which pulled together really our thinking and we invited a number of different stakeholders into the workshop at that point to get their views. So we were very interested actually in the creative sector and what they thought about this particular of digital. Story or digital creative content. We we I'm not gonna say the name. I think maybe it's not fair to say the name but there was a about a 3 minute piece that showed a well known brand of crisps and it was a very amusing little story which showed two people coming together. They met over sharing their first bag of crisps and they go on this little life together and they get married. And then at the honeymoon they get this, this, this crisp, and they get a ticket to go and see where that crisp was made and it takes them to a scene of devastation. It's what would have been a tropical forest and it's been cut down and there's nothing there, it's absolutely bare. And the the the couple look at one another, they. Had previously they were sort of looking into one another's eyes, you know in. In that particular way and they see the devastation and they start to question or the crisp and how it was made. So it was, it was actually a very impactful. Piece of video. No words spoken. It was. It was kind of comedic. It had music. It had a very impactful message. There was a little bit there about putting pressure on particular suppliers. There was one manufacturer or producer of food that they targeted, they said you can put pressure on and try and get that that particular producer of food to reduce deforestation and reduce it from their supply chain. So that was really what it was all about. But in terms of how we used it and its utility within the workshop, we got the stakeholders there, the participants to think about the messages within that within that particular piece of digital content. And then work through our evaluation tool. You know, what did it describe? What did it explain? How did it explain the problem? And were there any steps for behaviour change that that was, you know, prompted them to to think about and yeah, we got a variety of different opinions, actually.

Alexandra Dales

Yeah, it's really interesting.

Rory Padfield

It was it wasn't as clear cut as we thought it would be.

Alexandra Dales

We got a lot of really insightful commentary and critiquing of our work on that workshop. Yeah as well. But this one was it. I think our focus would be. I mean, well, it's another descriptive story and but it's not telling you what you can do beyond sort of signing a petition or, you know, tweeting and such like. But the feedback we got was really helped us understanding that showed us that stories of different of different lengths of different focuses can play a different role, so not every story is going to describe, explain, evaluate and show an alternative future. But the collection together can be quite is powerful and that different stories will have different messages and focus on different points. But the but what we hope to do is by organising the information supporting the stories and including increasing rigour within the story creation and probably cut you off there.

Rory Padfield

No, no, that was perfect. That was perfect. But yeah, I mean, it sort of led us then from thinking about the logic, the sequence of events within the workshop and almost the sequence of events then within our project it sort of led us to a point where, OK, we've we've set. Up the the the, the the evaluation tool we've set up the kind of under the rationale of what? What sort of questions do we need to be asking? It then led us into, well, what tool?

Alexandra Dales

How are we going to help communicators? How do we do it?

Rory Padfield

What is the basis and of our tool?

Alexandra Dales

And I think what we touched on certainly was, was that asking questions and discussing the issue is a really helpful framework because you're if critical thinking you're asking questions, it's quite simple idea, it's simple. Approach, but we organised 6 themes into so so we had. So before the workshop we obviously developed 6 themes and within each theme we we asked a series of questions to prompt and promote some thinking so I can go through the tools we've got.

Rory Padfield

Yeah, yeah.

Alexandra Dales

The first theme is critical activity, so within the story, what type of critical activity you're going to be doing, and that really reflects. How we use to evaluate content? Are you describing? Are you explaining how or why? Are you of commentating? Are you building connections? So questions within the critical activity which is in the one of the themes, let's say one of our first themes. To look at is critical activty as a structuring frame? Can a critical activity whether be describing or explaining provide a structure within the story. The next theme we developed was audience because whatever you always have to think about your audience and this really related to I guess it was bhaviour change. Thinking about who's your target audience? Are you trying to elicit a behaviour change and through conversations with Helen Brook at SAIL and talking about their their home planet project, we realized that language and script the the use of language. What language are you using? And script was really important. And a lot of the story storytellers that we that came across were very focused on the emotion and creating that emotional response. And my, I think our view is that you can have that emotional response and it doesn't need to take away from all the having data and evidence within. It doesn't need to detract from creating emotional. Can we pull them together? Do you want to talk about the storytelling journey theme?

Rory Padfield

So within within that particular theme, again thinking about the different types of questions that, that we would be asking, how is critical thinking and learning and reflection encouraged during the production of the story? So here we were thinking about from start to finish, there will be certain points at which. The producers, the content creators will come together.

Alexandra Dales

So this, that's that storytelling journey. So you've got two journeys really the production journey from the idea to actually reaching the audience. And then the storytelling journey in the content sounds that the audience that the audience follows that journey, so that's that we that, that theme sort of covers the two, doesn't it tries to capture the two.

Rory Padfield

And alongside that, we acknowledge that in, in certain situations, there'll be creators, producers who don't have the knowledge in in producing that journey. So what do they do? You know? Do they do they turn to their own literacy skills in sourcing out information? How do they do that? They may get to a point where they need to seek some sort of advisor or advisory group? So that was one of the questions that the we want the the storytellers to reflect on do we need as a group, external help on this and...

Alexandra Dales

And experts by experience.

Rory Padfield

Experts by experience so that we're not just referring here to. You know, university or research as academics, it could be going out into the communities, asking people who have lived experience of a particular well, whatever it might be. So that was an important part of the this particular theme. And technology being part of that storytelling journey, how can technology help? Can it hinder? I think that was another thing that we were quite important to stress.

Alexandra Dales

Especially with the extended reality technologies, whether it's augmented reality or virtual realities, we've found that in some instances that. The technology couldn't keep up with the ideas as yet, although it's very rapidly developing technology. But if you're wanting to create a virtual world, what what is what is achievable and does that limit or shape the story and how might it?, and how do you compensate for that? That's one of the things we were discussing with colleagues and. It's sale and such.

Rory Padfield

Contexts, should I say something about? Context. Or would you like?

Alexandra Dales

Yeah, for both underpinning geographies, it's the geography, it's the geography theme isn't.

Rory Padfield

It is the geography theme, and we had a debate about whether we should call it geography at one point didn’t we?

Alexandra Dales

Then we thought everyone would think, e don’t want to colour in maps!

Rory Padfield

Get our crayons out.

Alexandra Dales

Bedomtish...

Rory Padfield

So we ended up refer or using the term context here, but in a way what what is important about the context. Why is the context important in telling particular stories? How does the location matter? And, of course, as geographers, we. Say you know the geography where things happen. They happen there for a reason. So we wanted to reflect that within the questioning within the within the kind of you know organising of thoughts within the framework. Relatedly, now how does scale, so whether that be local scale, whether it's national, regional, global. How does scale have an impact and how? How does that particular story connect at a scale? It might be, let's say, a story. About climate change impacts in let's say, Pakistan, we use that as an example. Within our workshop it may be a very localized story about one particular family, let's say, or one community that's been affected. How does that then reflect a what potentially a wider story. Are there? Maybe there aren't wider, wider connections to be made on a scale on a global or regional scale. Quite often there are. When it comes to climate change, when it comes to sustainability, you know it's very, very difficult to disconnect what happens in one place with another. So we were trying to get people to think or the creators to be thinking about scale. Within that as well, representation, who is being represented within our stories?, you know, are they diverse representations? How do they contrast as well? So do we see the wealthy family from the global north, let's say, how is their experience? Different to, let's say, a community in the global south who don't have the access to access to resources, they may be more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. So how these?

Alexandra Dales

I think, and that ties in that that we have I think that ties in with the notion of knowledge spheres and that we might traditionally prioritise some knowledge spheres and you know, say academic experts on you know above other groups and what we've tried to do here especially with the experts by experience question is who has sort of on the ground direct experience and they don't have to have be of a certain standard or type. And it's having trying to breakdown those knowledge hierarchies that exist. You know whether it's government or organisations or academia and actually see communities of all types and diverse and that have as much value in terms of the knowledge that they can share.

Rory Padfield

Yeah, and that, that, that that obviously raises some difficult questions or problematic questions. There may be some communities that don't write stuff down thinking about indigenous communities.

Alexandra Dales

Have you reached them?

Rory Padfield

How do you reach them? How if we're telling a story about an indigenous group in a remote part of the world, how do you gather their knowledge? It might be that facts and fact finding or some. Seeking out gatekeepers who have information about these particular groups, rather than deferring to some a journal or some, could be, you know, respected knowledge but that hasn't engaged with that particular community that's engaged in the kind of. Broader sense.

Alexandra Dales

And I guess that's quite hard for communicators to try and access that information or can be and I think what we've what I should as part of the deliverables for the project is to create a sort of a document of guidance notes which includes websites and addresses and information on how to get perhaps hard to reach information for the storytellers. So that's one of the packages, or one of the the products of this particular research product, sorry research project.

Rory Padfield

So yeah, and then two other parts just on context then. So we're interested in relationships and impact. So does the story examine the relationships and connection between places? So again, going back to that, the importance of place here within telling the stories, so relationships and connection between places, but also time scales. Again this is an important consideration when we can, you know, when we think about climate change, we think about sustainability. This is not something that will be solved overnight, so we need to be thinking in different types of time scales and stories that reflect that. But you know would do well to do so. The next component is or next theme is quality of information.

Alexandra Dales

So it's quality of information. So our our, our fifth theme. So we've gone through critical activity, audience, storytelling, journey context and now quality of information. This is really that nuts and bolts and any researcher, you'll be very familiar with it so. We've got themes about evidence, you know, is the information in the story evidence-based knowledge categories. So what type of information is included? Is it historical, economic, social, political, legal, environmental, law, social justice based? And then how do the categories of information included in the story represent the sustainability of climate change issue? And then we've got three important points of accuracy. So can you check the data that you've got? Is it reliable, verifiable, how transparent is it? Are you able to be transparent with your audience? So are that if there's in the credits or the final section, or can you have flash up statements if that where? Where has the data come from, there's lots of really good examples out there for how data and evidence is incorporated and shown within stories, and then trust. How do you create trust in in the story amongst your audience? And that's sort of that, that cross section? And I guess the last one, I think we probably both sort of chip in on on. Justice, which I think will relate most to. So the Institute of Social Justice is one thing that came up of out of the workshop was a reflection on the role of that the communicators could take in. Raising issues of adaptation to climate change and mitigation and how climate change and the environment impacts different groups, so the Justice theme was to make more explicit the focus on addressing the impacts and consequences of climate change. So just as how does your story explore social justice but for communities? Affected by sustainability climate change how does explore environmental justice. An important question we ask here, which might be quite tricky to address, is will the story explore who is responsible for sustainability challenges or climate issues? Is that individual organisations, governments, systems of activity or interaction, so they're quite more substantive. Its sort of challenging to try and say, actually we need to start addressing those people that are. Have the power to make decisions. And then last final section on adaptation and mitigation. So does the story consider adaptations and mitigation measures? So these six themes were really a way of organizing our thinking and organizing, helping communicators think through some of the complex issues that they may not have and the workshop really gave us a lot of good feedback. And what we did explore with within the workshop and subsequently with new stakeholders, is is how we can, how communicators can use the the critical sustainability stories tool. We've so the Chris. Tool that was a guest thing.

Speaker 3

Get that right.

Alexandra Dales

Yeah, it's the best we could come up with. Sorry! So CriSS Critical sustainability stories too. Also, the tongue so easily so well at the moment what we're looking at next steps is exploring how it can be implemented on a larger scale. With different stakeholders and and what we're looking at doing. Thing is, at the moment we have been introducing the tool to stakeholders such as Opera North and heritage interpreters businesses and we're looking to work with sale to work with large organisations, hopefully sort of Channel 4, ITV lose 2023 with. We're working towards working with them to introduce the tool. And although we have a number of ideas about how it can be implemented, for example with the six themes create, communicators can work through each question methodically or review all of the questions and pick out the ones that speak to them most. Importantly, storytellers, communicators can add questions in to each theme. We're trying to have it as a as a living tool. And because it's all it's meant to. Be adaptable with the core basis of questions for communicators to go away and say actually I want to explore more issues of mitigation and adaptation within my story so I need to develop more questions that will pinpoint my thinking and help clarify the thinking that I need to sort of how the story should be developed and the type of information.

Rory Padfield

We could also talk about the different types of stories that users could be could be using the tool with, so it might not be just one piece. It might be, let's say, advertising. It might be the way that they or that press relations on a particular type of event. So Opera North is a good example. We've had discussions with them about some of the some of the communication that they're developing around audience engagement with a series that they're running in the next year or so or coming up. So it could be and they look at, they're looking retrospectively potentially at the programs that they've already developed, but look at using the tool. Looking forward on some of the the kind of press relations around that. So it it's it's sort of it can be used in different types of circumstances, even if content has already been produced, there will be other content, other types of stories that they that that could it could be applied to.

Alexandra Dales

Yeah, and that that rather takes us to what we're going to do next, so. We've developed. This critical sustainability tool. We've had a measure of success in engaging a range of stakeholders that are wanting to use it and really that's what we're working on now beyond writing our our big full paper, we've got our sort of discussion paper ready. And really the tasks that we have set ourselves now is a larger sort of Arts and Humanities Research Council Follow and Impact and Engagement fund. So we're over the next month or two, we're going to be drafting our our our bid for that and get that in. But also looking at other types of funding to see how we can develop the project. But I think we've probably gone through..

Rory Padfield

I think we've covered most of it.

Alexandra Dales

Quite a lot. Yeah, if you have any questions, please do get in touch with us. I'm sure we can add our emails to the podcast’s notes. And, but if you've got this far, thank you so much for.

Rory Padfield

You've done well to stick it.

Alexandra Dales

We’ve not bored the pants off anything. But thank you very much. And yeah, we'll give you an update if we can in due course.

Rory Padfield

Brilliant. Thank you everyone.

Alexandra Dales

Bye.