

The Biennial Environmental Communication Conference

# **Critical and Creative Approaches to Environmental Communication – Storytelling as, and for, Sustainability**

March 12–13, 2025, Uppsala, Sweden



**MISTRA  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
COMMUNICATION**

# March 12

11.30-12.40	<b>Conference registration and light lunch</b>				
12.50-13.15	<b>Welcome</b>				
13.15-13.55	<b>Inspirational keynote – Environmental Communication and storytelling</b> Mike Wilson, Loughborough University				
14.00-16.00	<b>Parallell sessions</b>				
	<b>Art installations /exhibitions.</b> No 1, 7, 10	<b>‘Narratives’ – academic paper presentations.</b> No 19, 20, 21, 22, 23	<b>Creative presentations.</b> No 5, 8, 35	<b>Workshop: Climate futures.</b> No 28	<b>Open events &amp; cosy corner</b> Cosy corner room: No 1, 2, 6, 9, 12 Foyer konstkällaren: 4, 10
16.00-16.30	<b>Fika</b>				
16.30-17.30	<b>Workshop: Do you say what you mean? And do you mean what you say?</b> No 34	<b>Workshop: The Public Narrative Model.</b> No 30	<b>Workshop: Storytelling: Experiences of reciprocity and asymmetry</b> No 29	<b>Workshop: Stories of transition and visions of the future.</b> No 32	
18.15	<b>Mingle with entertainment</b>				
19.00	<b>Dinner</b>				

**Rooms:**

- Studion
- Prefekten (Akademihotellet)
- Galleriet
- Konstkällaren

# March 13

8.00-8.30	<b>Morning coffee</b>				
8.30-10.00	<b>Parallell sessions</b>				
	<b>The versatility of storytelling in education, deliberation and (mutual) understanding – perspectives and methods – academic paper presentations.</b> No 16, 17, 18, 24	<b>Workshop: Skriva klimatnödläget (in Swedish).</b> No 26	<b>Roundtable: Kollektiv ensamhet (in Swedish).</b> No 37	<b>Drama workshop: Nature remembered.</b> No 25	<b>Open events &amp; cosy corner</b> Cosy corner room: No 1, 2, 6, 9, 12 Foyer konstkällaren: 4, 10
10.00-10.30	<b>Coffee and sandwich</b>				
10.30-12.00	<b>Roundtable: All these false stories.</b> No 36	<b>Escape room - Rädda viken (in Swedish).</b> No 3	<b>Workshop: Storytelling and power.</b> No 31	<b>Drama workshop: Nature remembered.</b> No 25	
12.10-12.30	<b>Conference wrap-up</b>				
12.30-13.15	<b>Light lunch</b>				

- Rooms:**
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# Session descriptions

## Parallel sessions March 12, 14.00–16.00

<b>Art installations/exhibitions.</b>		
1	<b>Interactive poster.</b> Pia Hegman & Lisa Van Well, Swedish Geotechnical Institute	<p>Environmental challenges, e.g., rising sea levels and increased flooding in coastal communities, require a long-term thinking which differs from the way of thinking we use in our everyday lives. It is difficult to imagine the consequences which, say, an adaptation decision made now might have in the future, and it is even harder to communicate those possible consequences and uncertainties to the public. More and more Swedish municipalities are waking up to the idea that long-term coastal planning may need to include ideas about managed retreat – relocating out of harm’s way. However, this idea is still hard to communicate.</p> <p>This contribution aims to help communicate what long-term coastal protection in times of sea level rise could look like. The readers of the poster take on the role of a municipal politician and are asked to decide between different coastal protection actions. Their decisions lead them to consequences which make the next decision necessary. The poster consists of several storylines which describe in a rather light-hearted way different coastal protection strategies.</p>
7	<b>Homo Colossus - Movie screening and presentation.</b> Belinda Retourné, Changency	<p>Homo Colossus is a sustainability communications project, conveying the size of an average Swede if we had to eat our energy consumption. JV between KTH, KKV and Konstfrämjandet, financed by Formas, running 2020-2024. Link for more info: <a href="http://www.homocolossus.org">www.homocolossus.org</a></p>
10	<b>Artistic exhibition – threads tell the story</b> Baraa Khalil, SKR/SALAR International	<p>In Iraq, climate change is not an abstract concept—it is a lived experience. Rising temperatures, water scarcity, desertification, and environmental degradation have profoundly impacted communities, livelihoods, and cultural heritage. However, policy discussions around climate adaptation often remain detached from the personal and emotional realities of those most affected. In a project aiming to strengthen local governance and public service delivery in Iraq, we sought to bridge this gap through the power of storytelling and art, using handmade rugs—deeply part of Iraqi heritage—as a medium for climate communication. The rugs became more than artistic expressions; they served as tactile, visual, and emotional translations of climate change realities, empowerment and agency.</p> <p>This session showcases six handmade wool rugs, each representing a story of Iraqis affected by climate change. Accompanying each rug will be drawings of the designs and written texts narrating the real experiences behind them. The exhibition aims to use traditional craftsmanship as a storytelling medium, making climate change tangible and emotionally resonant through art.</p>

**'Narratives' – academic paper presentations.**

<p>19</p>	<p><b>Developing a Media Production Course from a Sustainability Perspective: Visual Narratives for the Future</b> Isabel Löfgren, Södertörn University</p>	<p>This paper presents the redesign of the course Media Production: Visual Narratives at Södertörn University, integrating a sustainability perspective into visual storytelling through photography and film. Inspired by the framework of the course Designing Courses from a Sustainability Perspective, the author reorients the curriculum to explore ecological consciousness, deep ecology, and planetary sustainability through narrative practices.</p> <p>The study critically examines the intersection of media production, environmental discourse, and visual culture, emphasizing how storytelling can shape perceptions of the future. Drawing on theoretical perspectives from Paul Gilroy's planetary consciousness, Félix Guattari's ecosophy, and Amerindian perspectivism, the course encourages students to challenge anthropocentric narratives and experiment with non-human points of view. By integrating themes of ecological transformation, speculative fiction, and documentary film, students engage in an aesthetic learning process that fosters both critical awareness and creative agency. The course has been given since 2019, and has yielded 30 short films, each contributing to reiterating the pedagogical approach, examples will be shown during the presentation.</p> <p>Methodologically, the course employs diverse pedagogical approaches, blending academic discourse with studio-based learning, film screenings, and experimental exercises in photography and filmmaking. Inspired by Joseph Beuys' concept of social sculpture and connective practices in sustainability education, students participate in active, immersive projects that cultivate empathy and ethical engagement with planetary issues.</p> <p>Through a combination of theoretical inquiry and hands-on media production, the course aims to develop a critical visual language capable of articulating contemporary ecological anxieties while envisioning sustainable futures.</p> <p>This paper argues that sustainability in education should extend beyond thematic concerns to influence pedagogical structures, fostering a transformative approach that aligns media production with ecological responsibility.</p>
<p>20</p>	<p><b>Anthropomorphism in Sustainability Storytelling: Peter Wohlleben and The Hidden Life of Trees</b> Alissa Kautz, Lund University</p>	<p>German forester, author, and public figure Peter Wohlleben has come to international popularity through his engaging 2015 bestseller The Hidden Life of Trees (original title: Das Geheime Leben der Bäume). In this book, he combines his experiences as a forester and scientific knowledge about trees and forests with a narrative style that is rich with anthropomorphisms. That he writes in such a humanising way is often seen as a main point of criticism as anthropomorphic writing is frowned upon both among natural scientists as well as critics of environmental literature.</p> <p>However, I want to challenge this one-sided bias towards this literary tool to examine its role in storytelling. A generalisation that shames any use of humanising language falls short of its potential, particularly when it comes to creating more awareness for other-than-human beings and species, which in turn can foster a deeper feeling of entanglement with our environments.</p> <p>Trees in this case are particularly emblematic and thus pose a suitable case study to practice one's empathy towards non-human beings. At the same time, the aspect of academic accuracy and the limitations of anthropomorphic language in those contexts will be discussed by proposing a framework to distinguish between different forms of anthropomorphism.</p>

<p>21</p>	<p><b>Experiencing the more-than-human world – narrating the inter-connected self</b> Alissa Kautz, Lund University</p>	<p>New directions in climate change communication scholarship pinpoint the need for more meaningful ways of public engagement in which individuals' life-stories, narratives, values and preferences are at the core. Rather than top down or from the outside and in approaches, e.g., advocated by traditional science communication models, new directions suggest explorations of the inside and out approaches in which individual's life spaces rather than scientific facts are of concern.</p> <p>Similarly, the research field of sustainability transformations increasingly recognize the personal sphere of transformation as a prerequisite for system change (O'Brien, 2018; Ives et al, 2020; Woiwode et al, 2021). O'Brien (2018, p 157) claim that a more effective starting point to sustainability transformations, would be a shift in the view of individuals as being seen as " 'objects to be changed', to viewing themselves as subjects or agents of change who are capable of contributing to systemic transformations." Introducing personal sustainability transformations to the field of environmental communication suggest that engagement is seen from the lens of motivation. Similarly, as theoretically argued by Snow and Benford (1988), agreement about the causes of and solutions to a particular [environmental] problem does not automatically generate action, so the rationales for action go beyond problem definitions and solutions to concern issues of motivation.</p> <p>This presentation explores how kindness and compassion may serve as motivation and desired end-state for transformative change. In particular, the presentation builds on ongoing work exploring participant experiences of cultivating kindness and compassion to the more-than-human world. The empirical material consists of 30 individual journals from participants enrolled in ten-week course on inner dimensions of personal sustainability and climate transformations.</p> <p>Based on sharing circles and a first preliminary analysis of the journals, the preliminary results suggest:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loving kindness is not a fixed quality but should rather be seen as a capacity that can be cultivated</li> <li>• The practicing of loving kindness has the potential to strengthen environmental and social relations</li> <li>• Key to cultivating loving kindness is identifying the trigger to a state of loving kindness</li> <li>• Triggers of loving kindness is often a pet or a close family member</li> <li>• For most practitioners, it was easier to feel loving kindness to other animals and people than oneself.</li> <li>• Most practitioners felt tensions and struggle when instructed to generate loving kindness to animals they felt little connection too.</li> </ul>
<p>22</p>	<p><b>Radical enlightenment</b> Ryan Carolan, CEMUS</p>	<p>Human civilisation is undergoing an enormous transformation, not just economically and technologically, but psychologically, socially, institutionally, politically, culturally and emotionally, and these transformations are having dramatic consequences on both the form and function of the world system, and the Earth's biosphere and regulatory systems, including, but not limited to, the climate. In response, people are increasingly latching onto some semblance of an (often imagined) identity or narrative, which, by offering order and sense in an orderless, senseless world, provides some fleeting shelter that can stave off the sickening feeling of disorientation. But this response is not capable of challenging neoliberal hegemony. It seems that, to put all this into perspective and to develop some sense of orientation, we need a new grand narrative that can open-up new avenues for more effective collective action.</p> <p>From the 1980s, post-modernists – organising under Jean Francois Lyotard famous description of the movement as the 'incredulity towards metanarratives' – rejected modernist grand narratives, no matter what their form, as at best a symptom of highly defective thinking, and at worst oppressive tool of control by an elite. Ironically, just as the extremely oppressive neoliberal order was coming into being and the environmental movement was emerging as a viable alternative with a coherent world orientation, the post-modernists rejection of grand narratives meant that progressive political movements opposing neoliberalism were deprived of ideological support from the humanities to organise their movement.</p> <p>While some of the criticism towards grand narratives was clearly valid, the rejection of all grand narratives as oppressive is not only misleading, but a major aspect of the current crisis of disorientation. A new grand narrative is clearly needed to put this enormous transformation into historical perspective and organises responses on multiple levels. But what kind of narrative is capable of this?</p>

		<p>In this presentation, I will discuss the Radical Enlightenment, a movement that emerged in reaction to the mechanistic materialism of the 17th century, as the basis for a new 'polyphonic' - or multi voice, multiple dimensional – grand narrative capable of challenging the politics of disorientation and opening-up new pathways towards an ecological sustainable civilisation.</p>
23	<p><b>Stories from the Garden: Cultivating Connection, Action, and Environmental Stewardship Through Storytelling</b>  Marianela Risolía,  Loughborough University</p>	<p>Stories from the Garden – Celebrating Connection, Community, and Nature Through Storytelling was an event and workshop designed to explore the role of storytelling in fostering environmental action, awareness, and community connection. While initially held in an English community garden, it aspires to grow into a larger project extending to Argentina and Italy—countries deeply tied to my identity as an Italian-Argentinian living in England. Grounded in the principle of Think Globally, Act Locally (Ostrom, 2010), this initiative examines how storytelling, as an embodied and participatory practice, can encourage local engagement, collective responsibility, and meaningful climate action.</p> <p>Rather than amplifying fear-driven narratives, I draw on Meyer and their colleagues (2020), who argue that showcasing people taking action—rather than merely discussing crises—is more effective in fostering agency. The project aligns with Ascione’s (2022) concept of vincularidad—the interconnectedness of humans, nature, and the cosmos—by situating storytelling within the materiality of the garden. Spartz (2017) emphasizes embodiment as a primary means of engaging with reality; in this project, storytelling becomes an active experience that integrates sharing personal stories, sensory elements, and direct interaction with nature, reinforcing deeper connections and inspiring action.</p> <p>Inspired by Aboriginal storytelling and Datta’s (2017) work with Indigenous communities, this project highlights how oral traditions can preserve ecological knowledge and mobilize collective responses to environmental challenges. By positioning storytelling as both a communication tool and a catalyst for action, Stories from the Garden contributes to broader discussions on how narrative practices can shape environmental stewardship. It seeks to answer: How can storytelling inspire not just awareness but meaningful action? How can collective storytelling practices provide alternative pathways for engagement in sustainability?</p>

## Creative presentations

5	<p><b>Transformation story presentation</b> Kajsa-Stina Benulic &amp; Therese Asplund, Tema Environmental Change, Linköping University</p>	<p>During a year, two researchers made monthly visits to a group of people in a rural Swedish community. They had agreed to partake in a study circle that would aim for personal transformation, one part of which was to create a local story of transformation. We would like to present the story that is a joint result of the participants' journaling and discussions, as well as our analysis of those, and the work of generative AI.</p> <p>Additionally, we would like to present our view of what a story of transformation is and invite a discussion about what a story of transformation can be and what the building blocks of such a story should be, and why. Throughout the study circle process, we worked with disorienting dilemmas and the three spheres of transformation. By drawing on this work when constructing the story, we could paint a picture of a local community living sustainably while also acknowledging the challenges of doing so.</p>
8	<p><b>Creative presentation – what stories are lacking in sustainability?</b> Sachiko Ishihara, Uppsala University</p>	<p>What stories are lacking in sustainability discussions right now? I open the Introduction of my PhD dissertation with a question of this sort. While much of sustainability communication focuses on “scientific” goals and numbers coming from the global level (“from above”), I resonate with climate engagement specialists Adam Corner and Jamie Clarke’s words: “most people have not yet heard a story about climate change that sounds like it was written for them, in language that connects with their interests, values, or identity” (From book Talking Climate, p. 9). With this background, my study joins others in exploring sustainability that is articulated and pursued “from below” in the life worlds of citizens, written with an effort to engage readers in an ethnographic narrative.</p> <p>In this creative contribution, I would like to share a selection of these poem-quotes from my dissertation, together with presenting photographs of places. At the end, I would like to open up for reflections and discussions with the audience: What are your reflections from these poems? What potentials do (research) poems open up to as storytelling in sustainability? And what are the challenges, risks, and limitation?</p>
35	<p><b>Presentation: Does joking mean that you are not serious?</b> Ellen Schagerström, BalticWaters Foundation</p>	<p>Experiences and reflections from using standup to communicate environmental issues. Both on standup as a tool and joking about science as well as feedback I've got from different groups.</p>

## 28. Workshop: Climate futures

Ruben Ritzén, Climaginaries

Carbon Ruins is a museum set in the year 2053, eight years after Sweden became the first country in the world to reach net zero GHG emissions. The museum presents a collection of objects that tell the story of how this transition came to be, and how society changed between the years 2019 and 2053. Read more at <https://www.climaginaries.org/carbon-ruins>

For a long time we have hosted workshops where a group of people get to travel through time to 2053, visit this museum, learn about how the transition came about, and then develop their own stories of different objects and phenomena that they used to encounter in the olden days of the 202s, but which now (in 2053) have become obsolete (as well as how that happened).

Our preliminary research shows that working with climate futures in this way is a great way to stimulate out-of-the-box thinking on social and technological climate issues. It works well both with industry and sectorial professionals and non-experts such as general public and student participants.



## Parallel sessions March 12, 16.30–17.30

### **34. Workshop: Do you say what you mean? And do you mean what you say?**

Carolina Andrén Eriksson, RISE

Authenticity is an important part for true communication, and a prerequisite for really connecting with someone. To be authentic, we must dare to take the space and be seen and heard telling our story.

Most often we hold ourselves back from expressing our truth and communicate what is safe and what we think that the listener would like to hear. When it comes to sustainability this can be even more the case as the global narrative is becoming increasingly harsh.

This interactive workshop is a crash course in how to take the physical and vocal space for a more confident personal and authentic story telling. The participants will be introduced to Voicing - a transformational method for communication and be fully immersed into learning and practicing Voicing for close to one hour. Voicing has many dimensions, from conveying powerful messages to a large audience, to a showing vulnerability and intimacy in a small setting.

During the workshop the participants will get to feel and express several of these dimensions, and learn tools that can be used at their discretion when needed. What are you waiting for? Dare to share your Story!

### **30. Workshop: The Public Narrative Model**

Benedict Hugosson, Naturskyddsföreningen

A storytelling workshop focused on crafting narratives for environmental advocacy, based on the Public Narrative model. I have over 15 years of experience using this storytelling model both in Sweden and internationally. My experience includes working within Swedish politics, educating activists internationally, collaborating directly with the model's creator, and currently applying the model in my work at Naturskyddsföreningen (the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation).

This workshop will provide participants with an understanding of the fundamentals of the Public Narrative model and how to use it to create engaging and effective stories specifically for environmental causes. We will explore the model's various components, including narrative structure, characters, and message, with a focus on how these elements can be used to connect with audiences on an emotional level and inspire action on environmental issues. Participants will also engage in practical exercises to develop their own stories, tailored for environmental advocacy.

Public Narrative is a powerful method for making explicit values, inspiring action, and building community around shared concerns. It can be used by anyone who wants to tell their story in a way that resonates and engages, especially those working to protect the environment.

Whether you are an activist, communicator, leader, or simply want to develop your own storytelling skills for environmental advocacy, this workshop will give you the tools you need. I look forward to sharing my knowledge and experience with everyone and helping those who attend discover the power of their own stories to make a difference for the environment where they are.

## **29. Workshop: Storytelling: Experiences of reciprocity and asymmetry**

Jasmine Zhang, Lars Hallgren, and Anke Fischer, SLU

As a particular mode of communication, storytelling has been studied and recognized for its many affordances and positive implications in various contexts. Here, we are particularly interested in those related to the claim that storytelling is beneficial for public deliberation and for developing shared ideas and approaches, especially concerning environmental topics. We explore practices of storytelling from an interactionist perspective and relate storytelling to a range of ideals of dialogue and participatory processes. For example, storytelling allows marginalized voices to be heard and provides a safe space for them to speak. But what happens when the storytellers are professionals or individuals already in positions of power? What are the expectations that a storyteller might have in relation to their audience's reactions to their story? How do participants in communication practically identify a 'storytelling moment' and what responses does a storytelling situation invite or restrict?

In this workshop, we invite everyone to bring their experiences with storytelling whether as a listener or storyteller. Based on participants' personal reflections on these experiences, we delve deeper into the expectations of storytelling and explore how these expectations interact with one another. What aspects and ideals that we consider to characterize 'good communication' are supported or disrupted by storytelling? Are there some things that are important to say and do, that can be difficult to do in a conversational context dominated by storytelling? How might this be shaped by the framing and understanding of the situation?

Our approach is both critical and creative. We are acutely aware of the constructive tensions that exist among various expectations regarding the implementation of storytelling in sustainable development and transition contexts. Our goal is to create space for open discussions about what storytelling, as a communicative practice, does in relation to deliberation and other dialogue approaches that are grounded in expectations of reciprocity and constructive agonism. We aim to develop a nuanced stance toward storytelling that takes account of the diversity of practices, processes and interpersonal relations involved.

We believe that the plurality enabled by this critical perspective fosters creativity. To guide our discussion, we will use a list of ideals associated with 'good communication'—such as interactivity, reciprocity, and deliberation—as prompts. Participants will be encouraged to critically engage with this list, extend it and reflect on how these ideals are promoted or challenged in the moments, situations and experiences of storytelling they share. We explore possible implications as well as ways to address these.

## **32. Workshop: Stories of transition and visions of the future**

Johanna Männikkö & Jonas Lidbrandt Persson, Resonans Retorikbyrå

During this workshop, we will hold a joint discussion about stories that exist about a sustainable future. What do the stories look like? Who is included in them and who is excluded? And above all: are we painting too narrow a picture of the future?

We want to create a critical discussion about common stories that exist about a sustainable future and the transition to it. This with a focus on how they can be interpreted - and constructed - in different ways. We take as our starting point the rhetorical concept of the enthymeme: the fact that we rarely communicate all our premises and that much communication (not least storytelling) is therefore based on the listener's interpretations of what they hear. We also connect this with bias in the storytelling itself (whose perspectives and visions of the future are expressed?) We believe it is important to gain insight into the enthymematic aspects of how we communicate and to critically examine this, to create more creative, inclusive and engaging stories.

The workshop is held as a conversation (in smaller groups, depending on the number of participants) where the participants themselves can reflect on and discuss stories of transition, as well as how they communicate themselves. We lead and moderate the conversation and introduce certain concepts and perspectives that create a basis for critical discussion. The goal is for the participants to leave the workshop with a broader view of storytelling about a sustainable future.

## Parallel sessions March 13, 08.30–10.00

### The versatility of storytelling in education, deliberation and (mutual) understanding – perspectives and methods – academic paper presentations

16	<p><b>Storytelling in deliberation and conflict</b> Hanna Bergeå &amp; Lars Hallgren, SLU</p>	<p>Storytelling in recent years has become a resource to strategically reach a specific discourse ethics for sustainability. This method would benefit from acknowledging the features of spontaneous storytelling in different situations, including in meetings designed to manage deliberation and conflict. The telling of stories is a way of representing knowledge and making validity claims that occur in parallel with other forms of knowledge representation when actors collaborate to coordinate resources and actions. However, spontaneous storytelling might also serve other functions in interaction, which we can learn from by studying naturally occurring storytelling.</p> <p>We investigate storytelling that occurred in a formal collaboration group tasked with managing a problem characterized by complexity and conflict. The collaboration group had the purpose of compiling and validating knowledge and experiences of predator predation on domestic reindeer. The group did not explicitly propose the method of storytelling, but the conversations were made up of stories about experienced situations involving people, reindeer, predators and places. These stories were not deliberately created to achieve a unifying saga or allegory to illustrate moral and philosophical questions. We describe storytelling as an activity between participants that arises in the situation, where our analysis focuses on observations of initiation, turn-taking, and functions in storytelling.</p> <p>We study the joint activity of storytelling where the participants build on each other's utterances, experiences of e.g., a person, animal, place or event. Through the development of the story, new understandings in terms of the content of the story, interpretations of events including agreement of the moral of it, are developed. Storytelling is also used when underpinning a claim and as a means for investigating disagreements. Spontaneous storytelling therefore is in line with the aim of collaborative dialogues: to manage complex issues with different interests. Stories sometimes provide new information or new perspectives on an issue being explored in the dialogue. However, often all participants in the conversation are already familiar with the circumstances of the story being told. Rather than providing new information, the function of storytelling seems to be to create space to share references and experiences, and to illustrate and confirm that the issues are urgent and complex.</p> <p>Previous literature on deliberation assesses the occurrence of storytelling either as disturbing for the business at hand or as a conscious method for eliciting visions or investigating issues. However, we argue the telling of the stories is a means to investigate the intersubjectivity between the participants, to share the meaning and perspective, what it means to navigate in the actual situation or context calibrating perspectives and values as well as to investigate and cultivate alliances. Spontaneous storytelling indicates that there are issues which need to be managed, and the activity of storytelling as such can be used as a resource for joint learning and problem solving. For that reason, our study contributes to the research and practice around storytelling by providing insights from spontaneous storytelling showcasing its multiple functions in sustainability deliberation and conflict.</p>
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17	<p><b>Stories of water: Hiking 500 kilometers to listen to Dutch people's relationships to water in the landscape</b> Fenna Vesters, SLU</p>	<p>Water management policies are a hot topic in the Netherlands, where climate change and increased urbanization cause the already vulnerable low land to become more threatened by the sea and rivers. For centuries, dike enhancement was the most common way to protect people from the water, while recent water management policies aim to be nature-inclusive and sustainable. Storytelling is a way in which people make sense of these changes in environment, whether that is because of a natural disaster or new policies, and stories function as a cultural historical account of the community.</p> <p>In this talk, I present experiences from my recent fieldwork in the Netherlands, where I explored stories of water in the landscape told by people living throughout the whole length of the country. As I hiked along the NAP line – the line where the land is at sea level – I listened to people's stories, but also engaged in their physical environment. These experiences added to a better understanding of the stories and of the environment in which they took place. I believe this sense-making of the listener is essential to correctly interpret the storyteller's sense-making. A narrative analysis will be applied to reveal the structure and content of the story and sense-making of storyteller and listener are used to then uncover narratives and relationships.</p>
18	<p><b>Establishing common ground</b> Per Grankvist, Viable Cities</p>	<p>If the causes of climate change were known long before smartphones, why hasn't this knowledge changed our behaviour as smartphones have in the past two decades? Despite efforts to promote sustainable actions and pressure politicians, our consumption of goods and reliance on fossil fuels have risen, not fallen.</p> <p>People often link this issue to a reluctance to accept facts or to self-centred behaviour. Consequently, individuals must be presented with additional evidence or held accountable for their perceived moral failures. But what if most people are neither mad nor bad, neither malicious nor incompetent, but afraid of not being loved for who they are in the future?</p> <p>You identify with what you want to be appreciated and loved for. Should that identity feel threatened by suggested changes, the reflex is to resist.</p> <p>In an upcoming report, I argue for identity's significant role in shaping behaviour change. Instead of predicting a fictional future from a scientific viewpoint, it suggests we draw inspiration from how science fiction influences emotions.</p> <p>Polarisation on a topic arises from a lack of empathy, an unwillingness to consider others' perspectives, and a focus on divisive views instead of shared values.</p>
24	<p><b>Storytelling as a Tool for Sustainability Education in Web-based Metaverse Spaces</b> Fred Dalmasso, Loughborough University</p>	<p>Sustainability education is vital in preparing students for a future where social responsibility is key. Loughborough University seek to embed sustainability into its curriculum, cultivating socially responsible students and our Digital Storytelling module serves as a platform for students to share personal narratives related to sustainability and reflect on personal transformations related to sustainability. This paper explores how storytelling, particularly through digital technology, can elevate the understanding of sustainability, deepen student engagement, and foster environmental consciousness.</p> <p>In particular, this paper will examine the integration of web-based metaverse spaces into our Digital Storytelling module, focusing on sustainability education. With the help of web-based metaverse technology, this module aims to enhance students' understanding of sustainability through immersive, personal narratives. This approach not only aims to deepen engagement but to also cultivate a culture of environmental consciousness among students.</p>

I will showcase student work that is responding to a sustainability-focused brief designed to encourage reflection and creative storytelling. The brief challenges students to reflect on the meaning of sustainability, identify key moments or experiences that have shaped their understanding and attitudes, and creatively share these insights through digital stories. The students' narratives are crafted with an emphasis on audience engagement, emotional resonance, and the potential to provoke shifts in behaviour, attitudes, or understanding. The work seeks to spark a deeper awareness of sustainability and encourages action across various practices in creative arts and design.

Additionally, I will discuss the potential of a web-based metaverse platform to enhance interdisciplinary dialogue among students from diverse creative arts and design disciplines. This virtual space provides opportunities to collaboratively explore sustainability concepts, connect them to emerging practices, and generate fresh insights. A core feature of the platform is its immersive environment, equipped with breakout rooms that foster collective storytelling exercises and enable students to share their narratives in a dynamic, interactive space. This session will include a brief demonstration of the platform's capabilities and how it supports collaborative learning and innovation around sustainability.

I will conclude by an evaluation of how students in Design and Creative Arts use storytelling as a critical creative skill, enabling them to develop narratives that engage, challenge, and motivate others to reconsider their actions and attitudes toward environmental issues.

## **26. Workshop: Skriva klimatnödläget (in Swedish)**

Mats Söderlund, Alakoski & Söderlund AB

Denna workshop består av litterär gestaltning för forskare och tjänstemän. Gestaltade texter bidrar till en kritisk kulturell självreflektion. Målet är inte inte ett effektivt informativt innehåll, utan att väcka känslor och hjälpa läsaren att relatera till ditt budskap. Under workshopen får du prova på en skrivprocess som fördjupar din text lager för lager. Ta gärna med en text du vill bearbeta.

## **37. Roundtable: Kollektiv ensamhet ett rundabordsamtal om berättelser som försvårar omställning (in Swedish)**

Elin Ångman, Mälarens vattenvårdsförbund & Christoffer S Kanarp, SLU

Att samhället behöver förändras för att möta klimatförändringarna är idag vedertaget, åtminstone i de kretsar konferensens besökare rör sig i. Att det går långsamt vet vi också. Det finns många anledningar till det och i detta samtal vill vi undersöka ett fenomen de båda arrangörerna har stött på genom sitt arbete som forskare och processledare – en kollektiv ensamhet i viljan att jobba med djupgående samhällsförändring som svar på de utmaningar samhället står inför. Kollektiv ensamhet är ett begrepp som myntats inom psykologin och plockats upp inom aktivistkretsar. Det refererar i grunden till känslan av att inte ha ett socialt sammanhang, men har i relation till klimatarbete kommit att belysa känslan av att man är ensam om att vilja göra radikala förändringar, trots att många upplever samma sak. Dvs vi tror att vi är ensamma om att vilja göra radikala förändringar.

Från vår forskning finns flera exempel på hur tjänstepersoner uttrycker att de anser att mer genomgripande förändringar är vad som behövs, men att de upplever att de inte ens kan lyfta de frågorna. Till exempel: "se till att hela vår fordonsflotta är fossilfri inom fem år. Men om jag säger det på [min arbetsplats] skulle jag ses som en pajas" eller "I grunden är det ekonomisk tillväxt som är problemet, men det är omöjligt att ens lyfta i min organisation". Det finns utan tvekan otaliga konkreta hinder för omvälvande förändringar av samhället, inklusive aktivt motstånd från kollegor eller chefer. Här är vi dock intresserade av just de berättelser vi intalar oss själva – som får oss att inte ens lyfta idéer, projekt eller samtal som vi innerst inne tror skulle behövas.

Vi arbetar också med kommuner och länsstyrelser i Mälardalen. När vatten-, klimat- och naturvårdsfrågor diskuteras berättar tjänstepersoner om åtminstone två sorters ensamhet. En där man är ensam om att driva miljöfrågorna och berättar om hur lite stöd som finns. Berättelsen om den andra varianten av ensamhet handlar ofta om målbild, att man verkar ha så olika uppfattning om vad som behöver göras och vad som är ett framgångsrikt miljöarbete. Där vi arbetar finns nätverk för sakfrågor som exempelvis miljögifter och invasiva arter och det är självklart för deltagarna att vi genom att lyfta dessa gemensamma intressen kan hjälpa varandra till större gemensam kunskap och handlingskraft. Kanske behöver vi ett till nätverk där vi kan lyfta känslan av kollektiv ensamhet och hitta alternativa berättelser om förändring?

Begreppet kollektiv ensamhet innehåller ett frö av tillförsikt. Vi är inte ensamma ensamma, det finns ett kollektiv om vi hittar varandra. En väg framåt är då att skapa samtal där vi kan mötas och inse att vi inte är så ensamma i vår vilja att förändra oss själva och de sammanhang vi verkar i. Vi ser det här samtalet som en tilltänkt start för lanserande av ett nätverk mot kollektiv ensamhet inom offentlig sektor.

### **25. Drama workshop: Nature remembered**

Mike Wilson & Anastazie Toros, Loughborough University

"Nature Remembered: Exploring Memory and the Environment" is an interactive drama workshop led by Anastazie Toros, a Doctoral Researcher at Loughborough University. During the workshop we will explore the relationship between personal memories and nature. Through guided imagination exercises, storytelling, and collaborative discussions, participants will engage with the themes of identity, home, and environmental awareness. The workshop aims to enhance connections with nature and inspire meaningful reflection on our relationship with the environment.

## **Parallel sessions March 13, 10.30–12.00**

### **36. Roundtable: All these false stories**

Mikael Karlsson, Uppsala University

"Sweden faced the oil crisis of the 1970s with an entirely new energy policy... and became one of the world's first almost completely fossil-free industrial nations."

Genuinely false narrative in Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson's first Government Declaration, 2022

Background and aim: There is a resurgence of environmental science denial, globally and in Sweden. While research becomes increasingly clear on the causes of and strategies for addressing the triple planetary crisis—climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution—there is a growing trend of denying scientific findings and their societal implications. False claims and narratives are created and spread by both leading politicians and groups with biased agendas, through both traditional and social media. As a result, many find it increasingly difficult to navigate these issues.

Research on science denial provides detailed insights into what is being denied, who the deniers are, and why they deny science (Edvardsson Björnberg et al. 2017). The characteristics of methods used by active and organized deniers are well-known. The implications of these activities on decision-making in politics, business, and everyday life are well-documented. Studies and testimonies reveal that threats and harassment directed at politicians, journalists, and researchers often have a severe impact on their work. This threatens some of the fundamentals of democratic societies.

Less is known about strategies and methods that effectively counteract science denial. Key factors include careful framing of messages, clarifying what distinguishes scientific knowledge from opinion, establishing scientific consensus, questioning biased media balancing, and underlining co-benefits of policies (Mendy et al. 2024). Still, science denial persists. This raises the question of what potential science-based storytelling might have in countering science denial. Understanding storytelling to be the context-based, audience-specific, and intent-driven performance of stories (Moezzi et al. 2017), we aim to discuss how such an approach may constrain or provide opportunities for environmental communication and communicators, both within and outside academia.

### **3. Escape room - Rädda viken (in Swedish)**

Mikaela Lundell, Stockholm University Baltic Sea Center

In the new educational resource "Lektionsbanken om Östersjön" from Stockholm University Baltic Sea Centre, aimed at upper secondary and high school teachers, storytelling is used as a tool in several parts of the material, to convey insights into sustainability issues of the Baltic Sea. In this session, participants get to play the escape room-inspired game "Rädda viken!" (Save the bay!). We will also discuss the work behind the game to make it relevant to the topic and its young users, and what the participants think of the result. The game is in Swedish, why the workshop also is.

### **31. Workshop: Storytelling and power**

Martin Westin & Sofie Joosse, SLU

A workshop about storytelling, sustainability and power, a topic of high relevance that we believe needs more attention in storytelling research and practice and thus is a suitable topic for a workshop. We are wondering if there might be space sometime in the beginning of the conference for this workshop?

Storytelling for sustainability has an innocent ring to it. Who doesn't want sustainability, and stories are nice, aren't they? Yet, storytelling is a complex phenomenon, resting on often unspoken assumptions about power, knowledge and social change. A great number of corporations, government agencies and CSOs have turned to storytelling in recent years as a way to get their take on environmental issues across, and engage groups for their cause. Storytelling is seen as a "powerful" way for justifying particular understandings of sustainability, and influencing and persuading people in this direction. Next to investigating the potential of storytelling for sustainability, it is also important to raise critical questions such as: Who gets to say what is sustainable? Who gets to tell the stories? And who should listen and change?

In this workshop, we will together explore these questions based on a research study conducted in Mistra Environmental Communication. In this study we analysed the assumptions behind different approaches to storytelling" (Joosse et al., 2023). The workshop will revolve around the findings of our study and the participants' experience of storytelling.

### **25. Drama workshop: Nature Remembered**

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# Open activities

Throughout the conference there will be open activities that you can visit at any time.

1	<p><b>Interactive poster</b> Pia Hegman &amp; Lisa Van Well, Swedish Geotechnical Institute</p>	<p>Environmental challenges, e.g., rising sea levels and increased flooding in costal communities, require a long-term thinking which differs from the way of thinking we use in our everyday lives. It is difficult to imagine the consequences which, say, an adaptation decision made now might have in the future, and it is even harder to communicate those possible consequences and uncertainties to the public. More and more Swedish municipalities are waking up to the idea that long-term coastal planning may need to include ideas about managed retreat – relocating out of harm’s way. However, this idea is still hard to communicate.</p> <p>This contribution aims to help communicate what long-term coastal protection in times of sea level rise could look like. The readers of the poster take on the role of a municipal politician and are asked to decide between different coastal protection actions. Their decisions lead them to consequences which make the next decision necessary. The poster consists of several storylines which describe in a rather light-hearted way different coastal protection strategies.</p>
2	<p><b>Poster</b> Cécile Pillon Hue, Small World Stories</p>	<p>This poster promotes the Climate Communications Hub (<a href="https://climatecommshub.com">https://climatecommshub.com</a>), which is a platform that compiles resources for communicators interested in sustainability and social impact. The poster is being developed for a campaign, highlighting different reactions to climate news, in a cartoony way. It bridges Sustainability, Storytelling and Communications.</p>
4	<p><b>Documentary screening</b> Janice M Pereira, Stockholm Resilience Center</p>	<p>After the screening of this documentary filmed in an underprivileged urban community in Fortaleza, Brazil, the idea is to promote a discussion on how communication technologies can support socio-ecological reflexivity, empathy, and sustainability action.</p> <p>About the films: “The first Virtual Reality (VR) film using a new technique has been filmed in the Gereba favela on the outskirts of the Brazilian city of Fortaleza. The film is accompanied by a short documentary, Gereba, that poetically portrays life and the area inhabitants.”</p> <p>“The Swedish-English-Brazilian production team created Voices of the Favela using ground-breaking technology to map the favela in new ways that allow viewers to walk around the streets, yards, and even inside people’s homes, schools, and a ballet class.”</p>
6	<p><b>Poster - context sensitive marketing</b> Sanjoy Datta, Shoonya AB</p>	<p>This poster shares experience from my years as a Creative Director &amp; Communicator in a multi-cultural society such as India. In India, modern narratives of success is intrinsically tied to deep-rooted and centuries old traditions. I’ve learnt that when designing communication even for very modern products one need to take ancient belief systems and their stories into consideration. Otherwise, the communication, the product and the brand often fail.</p>



9	<b>Poster</b> Radhika Gupta	This poster describes an interactive art installation that was developed for critical water issues in Central Asia along with youth, to reach the government. The physical art installation invited people and audiences to look through “windows” that showcase the inter-connectivity between human, biodiversity and landscapes, all connected by water and eventually reveal the vision of youth for the future of water. Through the windows a fabric unrolls where the public pin up messages to the government, and as the messages grow, the cloth unfolds and claims space, making the voices “louder”.
10	<b>Artistic exhibition – threads tell the story</b> Baraa Khalil, SKR/SALAR International	<p>In Iraq, climate change is not an abstract concept—it is a lived experience. Rising temperatures, water scarcity, desertification, and environmental degradation have profoundly impacted communities, livelihoods, and cultural heritage. However, policy discussions around climate adaptation often remain detached from the personal and emotional realities of those most affected. In a project aiming to strengthen local governance and public service delivery in Iraq, we sought to bridge this gap through the power of storytelling and art, using handmade rugs—deeply part of Iraqi heritage—as a medium for climate communication. The rugs became more than artistic expressions; they served as tactile, visual, and emotional translations of climate change realities, empowerment and agency.</p> <p>This session showcases six handmade wool rugs, each representing a story of Iraqis affected by climate change. Accompanying each rug will be drawings of the designs and written texts narrating the real experiences behind them. The exhibition aims to use traditional craftsmanship as a storytelling medium, making climate change tangible and emotionally resonant through art.</p>
12	<b>Communications package</b> Magnus Fredriksson, Skaraborgs kommunalförbund	We have established a communications-support-package for citizen dialogue concerning wind power. LabLab, Profu and Landskapslaget helped us with this, and we introduce the package at this conference.

## Dinner entertainment

<b>A Glimpse of Time upon the Earth - Music Performance by Aevy Lore</b>
Olivia Ahltop (Aevy Lore) is a music producer, composer, and artist working with music and storytelling for change. With a background in sustainable development, she bridges science, art, politics, and culture. Her work has led to performances at international events across Europe, inspiring a deeper connection between Humanity and the Earth.
<b>Existential sustainability</b>
Stand-up essay including a few short poems on identity, scale and time. By Magnus Fredriksson.



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