



Using art and creativity to increase resilience to hazards: a literature review and pilot study

Anne Van Loon (1), Imogen Lester-Moseley (1), Melanie Rohse (2), Phil Jones (1), and Rosie Day (1)

(1) University of Birmingham, School of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences, Birmingham, United Kingdom (a.f.vanloon@bham.ac.uk), (2) Global Sustainability Institute, Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge, United Kingdom

In this study, we aimed to investigate how different forms of art and creative methods can be used to increase flood or drought resilience and preparedness in communities in the Global South. Countries in the Global South are especially vulnerable to the impacts of the extreme hydrological events and are expected to be even more at risk in the future. Better resilience and preparedness to floods and droughts are urgently needed. Artistic and creative expressions could be harnessed as an effective means of communicating about flood and drought risk or as a way for communities to imagine future risk or preventive actions. In this presentation, we will show the results of a literature review and a pilot study, examining how different creative methods can be used to increase resilience and preparedness in communities that will be at risk of natural hazards in the future.

The literature review examined the methods and outputs of recent projects that have used various creative methods to build resilience to climate change, floods and droughts, or other environmental hazards. In the search, we used combinations of keywords describing different sectors, different art and creative forms, specific regions in the Global South, and words like “participatory”, “indigenous”, “community”. We found 535 scientific articles, which were filtered for focusing on a specific hazard resulting in 250 articles. We also searched (using the same keywords) other sources and grey literature, such as videos, journalistic articles, (non)academic project reports. The results show that a variety of art forms is being used to build resilience; photography and song/music were used most, followed by visual art, drama, storytelling, and film/video. Interestingly, some projects used arts as a process and some used arts as a product. The art projects were mostly developed by the participants (65%), and sometimes by artists (23%) or academics (12%).

In our pilot study, we used videos of narratives produced by groups of community members in a village in South Africa guided by an interdisciplinary team of researchers and local research assistants. The videos were produced in small-scale workshops in which the participants were asked to reflect imaginatively on future drought scenarios produced by a hydrological model. We found that the narrative approach allowed participants to use their imagination and consider future drought events, their impacts and preparation, and to exchange ideas between different intergenerational groups and across different professional occupations. The use of narratives and stories was favoured in this community over more visual options. The recorded and edited narratives were also a useful tool creating space for conversations with government representatives about local perspectives on drought management.

We hope to explore this further in the future, extending the work in the pilot project to different regions, natural hazards, and creative and artistic forms.