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DisCoord: a serious game for co-creating knowledge for Disaster Risk Reduction

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Effective disaster risk reduction (DRR) presupposes awareness among key stakeholders on the causal factors that exacerbate disaster risks as well as a feeling of ownership over proposed DRR measures. Yet, the prevailing top-down communication of risk and the expert-centered knowledge have a limited impact in bringing significant positive change. Serious games respond to the need for a community-based DRR approach as they encourage a collective recognition of societal issues and co-learning at the different levels of the DRR governance system. However, there is still a gap in understanding how serious games facilitate co-creation of knowledge. In this article, we first introduce a serious game, called DisCoord, as a public pedagogy tool that bridges diverse views and sets of knowledge of DRR stakeholders separated by spatial and socio-cultural domains. Second, through a qualitative method of analysis of the 10 game sessions in Uganda, we examine the factors and processes that influence knowledge co-creation. The game actors – game designers, game facilitators and players – primarily steer and influence the co-creation process. These actors have diverse pre-game views, which are expressed through the game rules, arguments, game strategies, and game outcomes, and are confronted within the public space provided by the game. We find that crises experienced during the game, real-life based arguments provided by the players and own interpretations by the players are key factors in the co-creation process. This study leads us to conclude that games like DisCoord are useful as public pedagogy intervention as they bring different forms of knowledge together in a public space and facilitate co-learning. This paper also contends that countering a top-down approach of risk communication using a public pedagogy approach requires an openness towards the unpredictable, de-centered DRR, and plural co-learning outcomes.