



Rethinking communication: Integrating storytelling in systematic reviews and maps for stakeholder engagement



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Storytelling holds an untapped potential for communicating evidence from systematic reviews and systematic maps for increased stakeholder engagement. It is time for researchers and research networks to support and emphasize the importance of exploring new tools for effective science communication. Storytelling may be one such tool.

STORYTELLING FOR STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Scientific knowledge has traditionally been communicated as isolated logical ideas with little context given to the target audience. This poses the risk of audiences placing new knowledge into preconceived understandings of the world. Storytelling is a well-known and powerful means of communicating messages and engaging audiences but has historically not been commonly used in communication of science, let alone in evidence syntheses. Stories can be useful for developing trust with an audience and increasing knowledge retention as well as the ability and willingness to learn and take action. Storytelling can be integrated in the stages of the systematic review process where stakeholders are involved, and it can be a highly beneficial means of communicating the review findings (Figure 1).

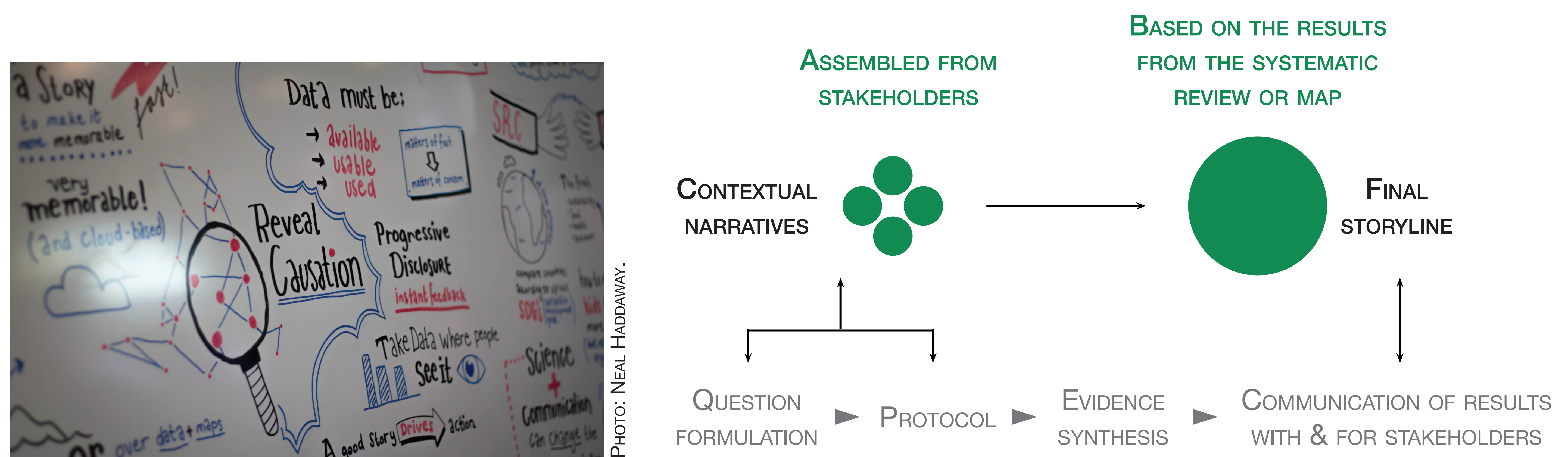


FIGURE 1. USES OF NARRATIVE STORYTELLING IN SYSTEMATIC REVIEWS AND MAPS.

UNTAPPED POTENTIAL FOR THE USE OF STORYTELLING IN EVIDENCE SYNTHESIS

The use of storytelling to communicate results from systematic reviews and maps in environmental management has been sporadic, if used at all. The guidelines for conducting systematic reviews in environmental management, developed by the Collaboration for Environmental Evidence (CEE), highlight the need to communicate results through easily digestible products such as policy briefs. However, these often have the same structure as the full report; traditional logical-scientific. The full potential of innovative tools for effective science communication is yet to be explored and put into practice in evidence-based environmental management. We argue that storytelling can be one such tool.

As the figure suggests, stakeholder engagement is likely to increase if review teams collect narratives based on stakeholders' experiences and context-specific knowledge in the early stages of the review. These contextual narratives play a key role in helping to situate the review results into a coherent and applicable final story. This story can be adapted for a range of communication formats.

Reference

Sundin A, Andersson K, Watt R. 'Rethinking communication – Integrating storytelling for increased stakeholder engagement', under review (August 2017) in *Journal of Environmental Evidence*.