



Imagining Futures: Narrative Approaches to Biodiversity Communication

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Communicating biodiversity loss and climate disruption to non-specialist audiences requires approaches capable of translating complex scientific processes into accessible and emotionally engaging forms. These topics are often difficult to communicate due to their complexity, long-term dynamics, and the emotional distance they can generate. In this context, storytelling emerges as a powerful tool, as humans naturally understand and interpret the world through narratives that facilitate comprehension, memory, and emotional connection.

Speculative storytelling, including science fiction and future-oriented narratives, offers a particularly promising strategy. By imagining plausible futures grounded in current scientific knowledge, these narratives do not aim to predict outcomes but to construct scenarios that make the consequences of environmental change more tangible, fostering reflection on societal choices, adaptive behaviours, and possible pathways forward.

We adopt an interdisciplinary and research-informed framework for the design of such narratives. Science communicators play a pivotal role in this process, acting not only as intermediaries, but also as designers of the narrative framework. Their work includes conceptual development, the selection of scientific experts based on both thematic relevance and communication skills, and the mediation of collaboration with creative professionals, ensuring coherence between scientific accuracy and narrative effectiveness.

A key feature of this approach is the strategic use of different speculative modes to engage diverse audiences. Dystopian narratives emphasize risks and consequences, reflecting contemporary anxieties and highlighting the impacts of inaction, while still leaving space for agency. In contrast, positive or “post-crisis” futures, often aligned with solarpunk perspectives, explore scenarios in which sustainable practices have been implemented, promoting hope and encouraging constructive engagement.

By integrating scientific rigor with narrative design across multiple media, speculative storytelling enables the communication of complex socio-ecological dynamics beyond traditional formats. This contribution presents selected initiatives developed within Spoke 7, illustrating how interdisciplinary, narrative-driven strategies can support effective and engaging biodiversity communication.