

A Spectrum of Geoscience Communication: From Dissemination to Participation

Sam Illingworth¹

¹Department of Learning and Teaching Enhancement, Edinburgh Napier University,
Edinburgh, Scotland

Abstract

This article is a written contribution to accompany the 2023 Katia and Maurice Krafft Award from the European Geosciences Union. Though a consideration of my own practice and that of the wider literature, I ~~investigate whether employing~~ explore how creative approaches (primarily poetry and games) can enhance the diversification of geosciences and facilitate broader engagement in its research and governance. I propose a spectrum for geoscience communication, spanning from dissemination to participation, and contend that effective communication demands a creative approach, considering the requirements of diverse audiences. I offer practical recommendations and tactics for successful geoscience communication, including audience awareness, transparency, and engagement with varied communities. This article emphasises the significance of fostering increased recognition for science communication within geosciences and promoting wider engagement in its research and governance. It delivers valuable insights for researchers, educators, communicators, and policymakers interested in enhancing their communication skills and connecting with diverse audiences in the geoscience domain.

1. Introduction

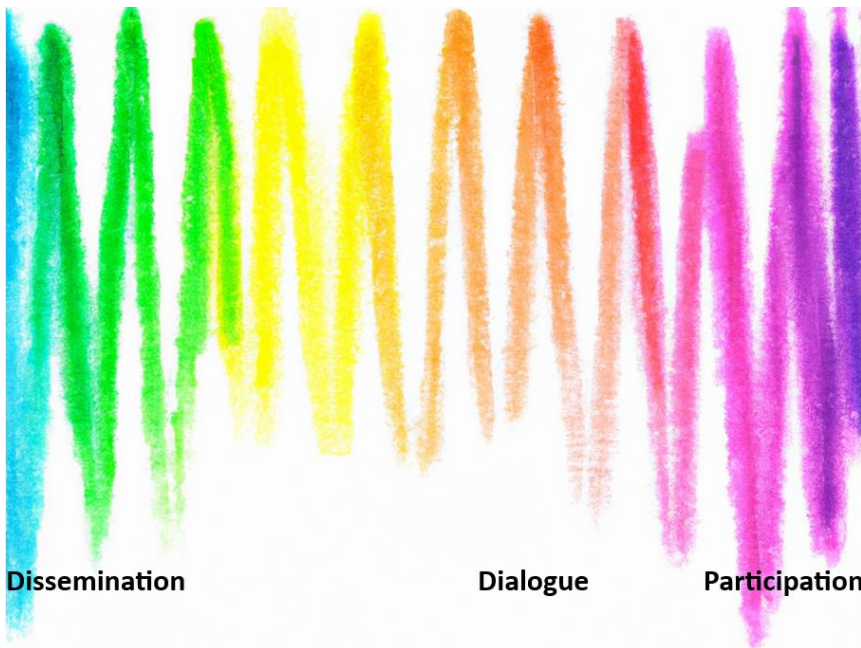
In 2023 I was awarded the Katia and Maurice Krafft Award from the European Geosciences Union (EGU). This award, named in honour of the volcanologists Katia and Maurice Krafft (Calderazzo, 1997), recognises researchers who have developed and implemented innovative and inclusive methods for engaging with and communicating a geoscience topic or event with a diverse audience. As part of this award, I was invited to give a lecture at the 2023 EGU General Assembly (which can be views in full here: <https://www.egu.eu/awards-medals/katia-and-maurice-krafft-award/2023/sam-illingworth/>) and to also provide a written contribution, based on this lecture, to one of the EGU journals. Given that a large part of my award and subsequent lecture was grounded in the work that I have done since helping to found *Geoscience Communication* in 2018, it seemed as though this would be the most appropriate place for such an article.

The purpose of my lecture, and hence this article, is to attempt to provide a first-person perspective on the potential of creative approaches in Geoscience

1 Communication, and a discussion of possibilities for future work, with
2 recommendations based on practice, explore the following hypothesis:
3 ~~“A creative approach can help to diversify the geosciences and enable more people~~
4 ~~to engage with its research and governance, from dissemination to participation.”~~

5 In attempting such an exploration, I would first like to introduce the concept of a
6 ‘spectrum for geoscience communication’.

7 I have written elsewhere (Illingworth, 2022, Illingworth and Allen, 2020) about the
8 need for inward-facing and outward-facing science communication. That there is a
9 need for science to be inwardly communicated to other scientists (via e.g., peer-
10 reviewed research articles and conference presentations), and a need for science to
11 be outwardly communicated with non-scientists (e.g., via policy documents, radio
12 programmes, and collaborative workshops). In developing this argument, I would like
13 to present this outward-facing side of science communication, and hence geoscience
14 communication, as existing on a spectrum, with dissemination at one end, and
15 participation at the other (see Figure 1).



16
17 *Figure 1: The spectrum of geoscience communication, from dissemination to*
18 *participation (image created using [the generative artificial intelligence tool DALL-E](#)*
19 *with the prompt “the electromagnetic spectrum as a watercolour”).*

20 Although many might consider participation and dialogue to be the ideal approach for
21 science communication, some goals may be better achieved through dissemination.
22 For example, science documentaries whilst unidirectional from scientific to non-

1 scientific publics have been shown to potentially have an impact at a wider societal
2 level (Dunn et al., 2020). Likewise, providing accurate and easily understandable
3 information is often a crucial prerequisite for initiating dialogue and with it,
4 participation (Resnik et al., 2015).

5 In other words, Fig. 1 is not a hierarchical spectrum, but rather a tool to help identify
6 the form of a particular geoscience communication initiative. In doing so, it is first
7 necessary to consider both the aims of the initiative and the needs of the audiences.
8 For example, if you are interested in developing relationships with local communities
9 and decision-makers to reduce negative volcanic impacts and uncertainty (Marin et
10 al., 2020) than you would likely need to engage in some form of dialogue. Similarly, if
11 you are aim to engage multiple publics to recover old records of sub-daily weather
12 observations at sea in order to make them useable in current climate models
13 (Hawkins et al., 2019), then a more participatory approach would be appropriate.

14 It's crucial to recognise that there isn't a single 'general public'. Instead, multiple
15 publics exist, each with their unique challenges and possibilities for engagement, as
16 well as their motivations for engaging (or not) with science (Illingworth and Wake,
17 2021a). When deciding which public to engage with, it is therefore essential to
18 carefully consider what and why you want to communicate, as well as the reasons
19 for interacting with your chosen audience.

20 In utilising this spectrum for geoscience communication, I also believe that a creative
21 approach is effective for several reasons. Creative methods simplify complex
22 concepts by employing techniques such as storytelling, analogies, and visualisation,
23 making the subject matter more accessible to non-experts (Schäfer and Kieslinger,
24 2016). They also enhance retention, as entertaining and emotionally engaging
25 content is often more memorable (Wilkinson and Weitkamp, 2020), and facilitate
26 dialogue and interaction between geoscientists and non-geoscientists, promoting
27 collaborative learning experiences (Illingworth, 2020a). Additionally, a creative
28 approach has been shown to foster interdisciplinary collaboration between
29 geoscientists and professionals from other disciplines, such as artists, educators,
30 and communicators, leading to innovative ways of presenting geoscience information
31 and reaching broader audiences (Illingworth, 2022).

32 In addressing my hypothesis, I will spend the remainder of this article investigating
33 the three distinct sections of this spectrum: dissemination, dialogue, and
34 participation, outlining examples of effective practice for each using creative
35 methodologies. In doing so I will present an overview of my research into using
36 poetry and tabletopanalogue games as facilitatory media to help disseminate
37 knowledge, develop dialogue between scientists and non-scientists, and engender
38 participation amongst diverse publics, including those audiences that have
39 previously been marginalised by the geosciences, for example communities of
40 colour, persons with disabilities, and individuals from lower socioeconomic
41 backgrounds (Hall et al., 2022)-

1 In addition to my own research, I will also explore how the work that we are doing
2 with *Geoscience Communication* is supporting others in developing innovative and
3 effective research and practice in this space, and how this in turn is helping to
4 provide greater recognition for science communication in the geosciences. In doing
5 so I hope to outline what makes for effective geoscience communication, and why I
6 believe that a creative approach is one way in which we might do this.

7

8 **2. Dissemination**

9 Geoscience research can be complex and technical, making it difficult for non-
10 specialists to understand and appreciate its significance. However, by using poetry
11 as a means of science communication, geoscientists can convey their research in a
12 more accessible and engaging way (Young and Kulnieks, 2022). Poetry can help to
13 simplify complex scientific concepts and make them more relatable to a wider
14 audience (Wardle and Illingworth, 2022). For example, a poem about the impact of
15 climate change on glaciers could use vivid imagery and metaphors to convey the
16 beauty and fragility of these natural wonders, while also highlighting the urgent need
17 for action to address climate change (Illingworth, 2016).

18 In addition to making geoscience research more accessible, poetry can also help to
19 create emotional connections with readers or listeners. By evoking emotions such as
20 wonder, awe, or concern, poetry can inspire people to care about geoscience issues
21 and take action to address them. This is particularly important when it comes to
22 issues such as the climate crisis or natural disasters, which can often feel
23 overwhelming or abstract (Illingworth, 2020b). Poetry can help to humanise these
24 issues and make them more tangible (Anabaraonye et al., 2018). Whilst I do not
25 consider myself to be the world's most accomplished poet, I offer the following poem
26 as an example of how poetry might be used to disseminate key geoscientific topics
27 to non-scientific audiences. This poem is inspired by the work of (Ma et al., 2023),
28 which has found that while air pollution has decreased across the United States,
29 health burdens remain unequal among racial groups.

30 **Death's Dirty Hands**

31 Smog's spectre looms,
32 choking the throats
33 of the innocent –
34 charcoal fingers clutching
35 at fragile hearts.
36 The fumes of progress
37 do not discriminate,
38 and yet
39 they weigh heavier
40 on some.
41

Formatted: Font: Bold

Formatted: Indent: Left: 1.27 cm

1 Gasping for breath,
2 the afflicted cry out –
3 their wheezing laments
4 suffocated in the haze.
5 Poisonous clouds
6 begin to shift,
7 their ashen grasp
8 slowly released.
9 Yet many remain,
10 trapped
11 in a tainted embrace –
12 how long
13 must they wait.

14 Like poetry, tabletopanalogue games are effective at disseminating geoscientific
15 research to a non-specialist audience for a variety of reasons. In using the phrase
16 tabletopanalogue game, I mean any non-digital game that can be played on a table
17 (e.g., card, dice, and board games). When it comes to geoscience communication,
18 the advantages of tabletopanalogue games, compared to their digital alternatives,
19 may encompass factors such as cost (regarding development, technology, and
20 resources), adaptability (allowing players or educators to effortlessly modify game
21 parameters to align with their educational objectives, time, and space constraints),
22 and most notably, the manner of engagement, which typically involves direct player
23 interaction (Illingworth and Wake, 2019).

24 TabletopAnalogue games inherently engage participants through their interactive
25 and entertaining nature, making them more likely to retain information and maintain
26 interest in the topic (Pfirman et al., 2021). Such games are also a fantastic helpful
27 medium for simplifying complex concepts; they have the capacity to break down
28 unfamiliar geoscientific ideas into more manageable elements (Fjællingsdal and
29 Klöckner, 2020), making them accessible and understandable to non-specialists
30 (Locritani et al., 2020). Finally, tabletopanalogue games encourage active learning
31 (i.e. engaging people directly for deeper comprehension and retention), as players
32 must apply their knowledge and problem-solving skills to progress; this hands-on
33 approach can promote a deeper understanding, greater and retention of geoscientific
34 concepts, and hone a wide range of transferable skills (Martindale and Weiss, 2020,
35 Pfirman et al., 2021). Figure 2 and Fig. 3 show early prototypes of two such games
36 being playtested at the EGU General Assembly in 2018 and 2019, respectively.



1

1 *Figure 2: Participants of the EGU General Assembly 2018 playtesting an early*
2 *version of the Catan®: Global Warming game.*

Formatted: Font: Italic

Formatted: Font: Not Italic

3



4
5 *Figure 3: Participants of the EGU General Assembly 2019 playtesting an early*
6 *version of the Carbon City Zero game.*

Formatted: Font: Italic

7

8 Other creative media that have proven to be effective at disseminating geoscientific
9 research to non-specialist audiences include music (Menghini et al., 2020), comics
10 (Wings et al., 2022), and even letter writing (Stiller-Reeve et al., 2023). Likewise,
11 despite my earlier (playful) claim that [tabletopanalogue](#) games are more effective

1 than digital games, there are many examples of digital games being used as an
2 impactful (and equally effective) tool for dissemination. This has perhaps proven to
3 be most successful when researchers have used well-known, video game franchises
4 such as Minecraft (Rader et al., 2021), Monster Hunter (McGowan and Scarlett,
5 2021), Pokémon (McGowan and Alcott, 2022), and Zelda (Hut et al., 2019) to
6 explore how the geosciences are represented (or not) in these game worlds.

7

8 **3. Dialogue**

9 Whilst poetry and tabletopanalogue games are effective media for disseminating
10 geoscientific research from scientists to non-scientists (Fung et al., 2015, Illingworth,
11 2020b), their real strengths lie in the capacity to facilitate dialogue between these
12 publics.

13 To genuinely advance scientific research and discourse, it is essential to address our
14 social responsibility as scientists and make science accessible to everyone, rather
15 than an exclusive privilege for a select few. Engaging diverse publics in a genuine
16 two-way conversation about our research, its relevance to them, and the potential
17 contributions they can make to new knowledge is crucial. By not establishing this
18 dialogue, we miss the opportunity to benefit from the expertise of the publics we aim
19 to communicate with. These publics, although not scientists, possess expertise in
20 various aspects of their personal and professional lives. By seeking their opinions
21 and identifying ways to benefit from their knowledge, we (as geoscientists) can
22 therefore enhance our own understanding and knowledge.

23 One of the main challenges in creating such two-way conversation is the
24 presumptionidea that geoscientists are experts while others are not. This can make
25 people feel less important and less likely to share their thoughts, even though they
26 might have valuable insights about a topic and how it affects society. These
27 obstacles, known as 'hierarchies of intellect' (Illingworth and Jack, 2018), emerge
28 when people are urged to discuss a subject where one party (i.e., the geoscientist) is
29 perceived as an expert, while the other (i.e., the other publics) is not. Such
30 hierarchies hinder effective dialogue and can lead to marginalising audiences,
31 discouraging them from sharing their knowledge and experiences. Yet these insights
32 might be crucial for a better understanding of specific research findings and their
33 potential implications on the broader society.

34 One way to break down these barriers is by writing and sharing poetry together in a
35 friendly and supportive setting. This helps create a safe space for dialogue and
36 experimentation, levelling hierarchies and allowing for a true exchange of ideas
37 between different groups, each with their own knowledge and experiences
38 (Illingworth and Jack, 2018, Illingworth et al., 2018). ~~One way to break down these~~
39 ~~barriers is by writing and sharing poetry together in a friendly and supportive setting.~~
40 ~~This helps everyone feel equal and allows for a true exchange of ideas between~~
41 ~~different groups, each with their own knowledge and experiences.~~ Collaborative

1 poetry sessions are successful in creating dialogue for three reasons: they show the
2 public that their expertise is valued, they allow scientists to connect with people on
3 an emotional level, and they create a sense of shared vulnerability (Illingworth,
4 2020a).

5 These collaborative poetry writing sessions are especially effective when engaging
6 with audiences who have traditionally been under-served or marginalised by the
7 geosciences. For example, my own work has shown how poetry can help to engage
8 potentially vulnerable audiences with both the climate crisis (Illingworth et al., 2018)
9 and environmental change (Illingworth and Jack, 2018) more broadly in a supportive,
10 constructive, and safe environment. Similarly, other studies have shown how poetry
11 can be used to develop dialogue between geoscientists and non-scientists on topics
12 ranging from soil (Maria and Arnalds, 2018) to the conservation of natural heritage
13 (Nesci and Valentini, 2020).

14 Similarly, tabletopanalogue games ~~are a proven way of~~provide a way of developing
15 these two-way dialogues, mostly because of something that is referred to in game
16 studies parlance as 'the magic circle' (Stenros, 2014). This circle refers to the
17 imaginary boundary that separates the game world from reality. Within this circle,
18 players engage in activities governed by specific rules and structures, suspending
19 real-world norms and embracing the game's alternate-own reality. This suspension
20 allows us to move beyond any hierarchies that may exist outside the gaming context,
21 enabling interactions that might not be possible otherwise (Illingworth and Wake,
22 2021a). For instance, in the board game Monopoly, it is acceptable (if not essential)
23 behaviour to try and bankrupt your fellow players by levying rental income on
24 multiple properties, behaviour that (one would hope) is viewed as being morally
25 repugnant away from the gaming table. Agreeing to abide by a set of arbitrary and
26 purposeful, albeit sometimes restrictive rules can help create a secure environment
27 for fostering new interactions and learning. Doing so helps to break, or at least
28 temporarily suspend, any hierarchies of intellect, allowing for more inclusive
29 engagement and rich dialogues to emerge.

30 One example of such a game that does this from a geoscientific point of view is
31 *Keep Cool*, a climate negotiation game in which players assume the roles of
32 countries or nations, each with distinct economic interests, objectives, and
33 capabilities (Fjællingsdal and Klöckner, 2020). The actions players take to achieve
34 their goals also generate greenhouse gases, and everyone loses if the global
35 temperature rises too much (Fennewald and Kievit-Kylar, 2013). Each round, players
36 must decide whether to implement climate protection measures that benefit all or act
37 in their self-interest to reach their goals more quickly. The first player to achieve their
38 goal wins, but a total lack of cooperation among players can lead to global
39 environmental collapse. This game creates a neutral environment where scientists
40 and non-scientists can interact on equal footing, breaking down barriers and
41 enabling open dialogue. Similarly, by taking on the roles of different countries with
42 varying interests, players gain insight into the diverse perspectives and challenges

1 faced in real-world climate negotiations, fostering empathy and understanding
2 between scientists and non-scientists.

3 Likewise, when we designed our 'Global Warming' expansion ([see Fig. 2](#)) for the
4 popular [tabletopanalogue](#) game *Catan*® (Illingworth and Wake, 2019), we wanted to
5 create a game (or in this case a modification for an existing game) that enabled
6 geoscientific and non-geoscientific publics to explore the consequences of individual
7 action and the extent to which mitigating the negative effects of global warming
8 requires a collective response.

9 During the game's playtesting, feedback from various playtesters suggested that the
10 game mechanics, rather than any related story, effectively ~~and elegantly~~ fostered
11 dialogue on a specific subject, such as global warming. [This game was playtested
12 with 105 players, of whom 65 participated in formal post-game surveys. The initial
13 playtesting undertaken with friends and colleagues did not involve formal surveys:
14 instead, we asked informal questions on gameplay and mechanics, using responses
15 to further develop the game. In subsequent playtests, players completed a survey via
16 Google Forms, which outlined the study and purpose of collecting feedback. In some
17 cases, paper copies were provided, with the authors manually inputting playtester
18 responses into Google Forms.](#)

19 ~~We also~~[In analysing this feedback, we also](#) concluded that to develop [an](#)
20 [tabletopanalogue](#) game for effective dialogue, it is essential to consider the game's
21 accessibility, players' game literacy, the peer review of scientific content, and the
22 degree to which the metagame (i.e., discussions occurring around and beyond the
23 game) is facilitated.

24 As with 'Dissemination', many other creative forms of geoscience communication
25 have also been used [s](#) to foster effective dialogue between geoscientists and non-
26 geoscientists. Such initiatives have included films (Archer, 2020), sculptural work
27 (Lancaster and Waldron, 2020), and printmaking (Macklin and Macklin, 2019). What
28 arguably marks these initiatives out as being especially effective is that they have led
29 to actionable dialogue for the publics involved, rather than just the creation of
30 another 'talking shop' for researchers to share the 'brilliance' of their geoscientific
31 findings. [Such actions include supporting filmmakers in their integration of space
32 science, influencing social policymaking, and inviting artists to reflect on the impact
33 of catastrophic natural events on both their communities and themselves.](#)

34

35 **4. Participation**

36 There are two phrases that often get bandied around in public engagement and
37 science communication parlance when it comes to participation: citizen science and
38 co-creation.

39 Citizen science projects in geosciences, such as those geared towards disaster risk
40 reduction (Hicks et al., 2019), have the potential to both benefit multiple publics and

1 also utilise the lived experience and expertise of non-geoscientists in a tangible and
2 actionable manner. However, concerns arise regarding the potential exploitation of
3 participants as free labour, with scientists reaping the benefits and recognition
4 (Strasser et al., 2019). To address this, it is essential to actively involve participants
5 and acknowledge their contributions, ensuring they are not treated as second-class
6 citizens. Embracing social media and communication platforms can further expand
7 engagement in citizen science projects while promoting fair recognition for all
8 involved (Liberatore et al., 2018). Similarly, creative media such as art and poetry
9 provide a powerful medium through which to challenge and address some of these
10 potential inequities (see e.g. Bauman and Briggs, 2003, Torre and Fine, 2011).

11 Another issue with citizen science is that some form of training is often essential.
12 Simpler tasks demand minimal training, while more complex ones require extensive
13 instruction. To encourage participation, most projects aim for low training
14 requirements. Nonetheless, adequate training is crucial to maintain data quality.
15 Again, this is where creative methodologies can **really** help to contribute to the field,
16 with music (L. Oliver et al., 2021) and games (Strobl et al., 2020) both having been
17 shown to be effective (and fun!) ways of providing training in an equitable and
18 effective manner.

19 Similarly, co-creation is a participation phrase that is often used, yet perhaps with
20 more fervour than is strictly true or necessary. An example of meaningful co-creation
21 would be a team of geoscientists partnering with an Indigenous community to study
22 climate impacts on local ecology. The collaboration would begin by asking
23 community leaders to shape the research goals based on their priorities, with
24 community members trained to conduct field measurements and interpret findings.
25 All involved would be reminded of the need for any climate adaptation strategies to
26 be firmly grounded in Indigenous knowledge, with any study results co-published to
27 uplift the community's voice.

28 Likewise, a more surface-level approach might involve a group of geoscientists
29 inviting some local high school students to participate in an ongoing climate change
30 study. Students would be given pre-defined research tasks like data entry and basic
31 sample processing, with limited influence on the study design or goals. Most data
32 interpretation and all major decisions would remain with the lead scientists, with
33 students were recognised in acknowledgements but not credited as co-authors on
34 any published findings.

35 In the first example, the hypothetical community played an active steering role at all
36 stages, and the project design was shaped by their goals and perspectives. In the
37 second, students had limited influence on key decisions, with the power dynamic
38 skewed towards the scientists' leadership. In true co-creation, collaborations should
39 start early, involving all participants from the beginning to maximise skill and
40 expertise benefits (Illingworth, 2022). Including all collaborators in formulating
41 research questions and aims promotes trust, teamwork, and fosters innovative ideas
42 enriching the experience for everyone.

1 A creative example of a genuinely co-creative process is the poetry and art journal
2 that I help to curate. *Consilience* (<https://www.consilience-journal.com/>) is the world's
3 first peer-reviewed science and poetry journal, publishing themed poems and
4 artwork by creatives from all backgrounds. The journal provides support to develop
5 the craft and identity of contributors, using a peer review system like scientific
6 journals. *Consilience* is run by over 80 global volunteers and has around 8,000
7 monthly readers. The journal was created to help develop the work of others in the
8 field, transcending individual limitations. Early collaborators defined the journal's
9 purpose, framework, and submission process.

10 *Consilience* is a good example of an interdisciplinary collaboration between
11 scientists, poets, and other creatives, where the co-creation began at the very start
12 of the project, and through which multiple voices were both present and platformed.
13 However, whilst the journal is clearly doing good work in helping to diversify the ways
14 in which science is interrogated and communicated, it is not engaged with the
15 creation of geoscientific research itself (at least not directly). This is where
16 [tabletopanalogue](#) games come in.

17 The process of designing [tabletopanalogue](#) games offers an immersive approach to
18 co-creation in the geosciences, the reason being that designing, ~~and~~ playtesting, ~~and~~
19 [gamesdebriefing games](#) is a genuinely collaborative method that involves listening to
20 several different voices, and then reflecting and acting on these suggestions for input
21 and development.

22 In 2018, my colleague Paul Wake and I collaborated with the climate charity Possible
23 to develop workshops exploring heat decarbonisation and the UK's transition to a
24 zero-carbon economy (Rydge et al., 2018). Utilising games as icebreakers and tools
25 to generate dialogue, we engaged multiple publics including climate activists,
26 policymakers, educators, journalists, students, researchers, and industry
27 professionals. These workshops were designed to gather knowledge from a variety
28 of communities who all had an interest and expertise in the subject. This knowledge
29 was collected via participant observation and written responses to questions, which
30 were then used to create the framework for a card game.

31 Following an initial design phase, the card game was then playtested with other
32 members of the same (and similar) communities ([see Figure 3](#)), with their feedback
33 used to improve the game in terms of both its narrative and mechanics. The final
34 game *Carbon City Zero* involved players taking on the role of city mayors and
35 competing against one another to become the world's first zero carbon city
36 (Germaine, 2022). The game was made available to download as a free print and
37 play, and a physical copy of the game was also successfully launched on the crowd-
38 funding platform Kickstarter.

39 Following the release of *Carbon City Zero*, further members of the various
40 communities that had been involved in the research project got in touch with their
41 own feedback. Most of this feedback was centred around one key issue: why was

1 the game competitive when for a truly zero carbon world, cities should be working
2 collaboratively. As a result of this feedback, a second edition of the game was
3 collaboratively developed and released as *Carbon City Zero: World Edition*
4 (Illingworth and Wake, 2021b). In this version of the game, players had to work
5 collaboratively to reduce the carbon level of a single city to zero within a strict time
6 limit. Players then either collaboratively won or lost together. As game designers and
7 researchers, we found this to be a ~~useful~~ ~~great~~ example of why it is important to
8 really listen to the needs of the various publics you engage with, rather than just
9 assume what they want.

10 Overall, this project successfully involved diverse communities, valued their opinions,
11 and used their expertise to improve the game. Conversely, there were areas for
12 improvement. Workshop attendees generally shared similar views on a zero-carbon
13 future, so including dissenting or differently informed voices could have highlighted
14 more barriers to reducing carbon emissions and fostering dialogue on the topic.

15 From the feedback that we received following the release of the game, we know that
16 it has been used as a tool for enacting actual change, e.g., ~~by town hall planners to~~
17 ~~discuss issues of net zero policies with their fellow councillors in townhall planning~~
18 ~~meetings and as well as in multiple~~ grant applications for similar games-based
19 geoscientific research. However, there are even more effective examples from
20 across *Geoscience Communication* that have used creative methodologies to
21 develop co-creative partnerships between geoscientists and other publics. This
22 includes using storytelling to co-create interventions addressing the climate crisis
23 (Woodley et al., 2022), using science theatre to debunk scientific mistruths (França
24 et al., 2021), and even a metanalysis of creative practice as a tool to build resilience
25 to natural hazards in the Global South (Van Loon et al., 2020).

26

27 5. Conclusions

28 ~~At the outset of this article, I aimed to investigate the following hypothesis:~~

29 ~~“A creative approach can help to diversify the geosciences and enable more~~
30 ~~people to engage with its research and governance, from dissemination to~~
31 ~~participation.”~~

32 By providing examples from my own research and practice, alongside other peer-
33 reviewed and highly impactful examples from the wider literature, I have
34 demonstrated the potential of creative approaches in geoscience communication.
35 However, it is important to acknowledge that creative approaches may not always be
36 feasible or appropriate for every situation. For instance, in cases where conveying
37 highly technical information is required, an alternative approach might be better
38 suited to ensure accuracy and clarity. Additionally, certain creative methods might
39 not resonate with all audience members, so it is essential to consider a wide range of
40 strategies to maximise engagement.

1 To address these limitations and develop effective communication strategies with
2 various publics, here are five recommendations for geoscientists to consider when
3 looking to develop their own effective geoscience communication strategies:

- 4 1. Know your audience. Before communicating any scientific information, it is
5 important to understand who your audience is and what their interests and
6 needs are. This will help you tailor your message and delivery to be more
7 effective. And remember, there is no such thing as the 'general public'.
- 8 2. Be adaptable. Recognise that different situations and audiences may require
9 different communication approaches. Be prepared to adjust your strategy as
10 needed to best engage your audience. Use the spectrum of geoscience
11 communication (Fig. 1) to determine the most appropriate method to achieve
12 your aim with your intended audience.
- 13 3. Be creative. Embrace creative methodologies when appropriate to make your
14 communication more engaging and relatable. This may include poetry,
15 storytelling, art, games, or other interactive methods.
- 16 4. Be transparent. When communicating scientific information, it is important to
17 be transparent about any uncertainties or limitations in the data or research.
18 This helps build trust with your audience and promotes open dialogue.
- 19 5. Engage with diverse communities. To promote greater recognition for science
20 communication in the geosciences, it is important to engage with diverse
21 communities and promote inclusivity in all aspects of research and practice.

22 By following these recommendations, geoscientists can develop effective
23 communication strategies that engage diverse audiences and promote greater
24 recognition for science communication in the geosciences. Embracing creativity and
25 inclusivity will not only enhance the field of geoscience communication but also help
26 address global challenges by fostering collaboration and understanding across
27 disciplines and communities.

28 **Competing interests**

29 Sam Illingworth is the chief executive editor of *Geoscience Communication*.

30

31 **Ethical Statement**

32

33 As the author of this article, I have made every effort to ensure that the research and
34 practices discussed in this manuscript adhere to the highest ethical standards. All
35 studies and projects mentioned were conducted in accordance with relevant
36 institutional and national guidelines, with the necessary approvals and informed
37 consent from participants when applicable.

38 I have taken care to provide accurate, balanced, and transparent information, as well
39 as acknowledging the limitations and challenges of the methods and approaches

1 discussed. I have also been conscientious about giving proper credit to the work of
2 other researchers and creatives, with appropriate citations and acknowledgments.

3 I have no conflicts of interest to declare, financial or otherwise, and have conducted
4 my research and communication activities with integrity, impartiality, and in the
5 interest of promoting greater understanding, inclusivity, and collaboration within the
6 field of geoscience communication.

7

8 **Acknowledgements**

9 I would like to thank all the colleagues and community members who have made my
10 work in geoscience communication possible. Special thanks also to Mathew Stiller-
11 Reeve for providing the nomination for my Katia and Maurice Krafft award and to
12 Louise Arnal, Caitlyn Hall, Rolf Hut, Roxy Koll, and Chris Skinner for providing letters
13 of support. Thank you also to DALL-E (a deep learning model developed by OpenAI
14 to generate digital images) for helping me to produce Figure 1 in this article.

15

16

17 **References**

18

- 19 ANABARAONYE, B., NJI, I. A. & HOPE, J. 2018. Poetry as a valuable tool for climate change education
20 for global sustainability. *International Journal of Scientific & Engineering Research*, 9, 81-84.
- 21 ARCHER, M. O. 2020. Space Sound Effects Short Film Festival: using the film festival model to inspire
22 creative art–science and reach new audiences. *Geoscience Communication*, 3, 147-166.
- 23 BAUMAN, R. & BRIGGS, C. L. 2003. *Voices of modernity: Language ideologies and the politics of*
24 *inequality*, Cambridge University Press.
- 25 CALDERAZZO, J. 1997. Fire in the Earth, Fire in the Soul: The Final Moments of Maurice and Katia
26 Krafft. *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, 71-77.
- 27 DUNN, M. E., MILLS, M. & VERÍSSIMO, D. 2020. Evaluating the impact of the documentary series
28 Blue Planet II on viewers' plastic consumption behaviors. *Conservation Science and Practice*,
29 2, e280.
- 30 FENNEWALD, T. J. & KIEVIT-KYLAR, B. 2013. Integrating climate change mechanics into a common
31 pool resource game. *Simulation & Gaming*, 44, 427-451.
- 32 FJÆLLINGSDAL, K. S. & KLÖCKNER, C. A. 2020. Green across the board: Board games as tools for
33 dialogue and simplified environmental communication. *Simulation & Gaming*, 51, 632-652.
- 34 FRANÇA, G. S., RIBEIRO, R. C., SOARES, L. R., CALMONI, J., DE FRANÇA, G. B. & BRITO, P. E. 2021. The
35 Flat Earth satire: using science theater to debunk absurd theories. *Geoscience*
36 *Communication*, 4, 297-301.
- 37 FUNG, M. K., TEDESCO, L. R. & KATZ, M. E. 2015. Games and climate literacy. *Nature Geoscience*, 8,
38 576-576.
- 39 GERMAINE, C. 2022. 'Nature' games in a time of climate crisis1. *Material Game Studies: A Philosophy*
40 *of Analogue Play*, 143.
- 41 HALL, C. A., ILLINGWORTH, S., MOHADJER, S., ROXY, M. K., POKU, C., OTU-LARBI, F., REANO, D.,
42 FREILICH, M., VEISAGA, M. L., VALENCIA, M. & MORALES, J. 2022. GC Insights: Diversifying
43 the geosciences in higher education: a manifesto for change. *Geosci. Commun.*, 5, 275-280.

- 1 HAWKINS, E., BURT, S., BROHAN, P., LOCKWOOD, M., RICHARDSON, H., ROY, M. & THOMAS, S. 2019.
 2 Hourly weather observations from the Scottish Highlands (1883–1904) rescued by volunteer
 3 citizen scientists. *Geoscience Data Journal*, 6, 160-173.
- 4 HICKS, A., BARCLAY, J., CHILVERS, J., ARMIJOS, M. T., OVEN, K., SIMMONS, P. & HAKLAY, M. 2019.
 5 Global mapping of citizen science projects for disaster risk reduction. *Frontiers in Earth*
 6 *Science*, 7, 226.
- 7 HUT, R., ALBERS, C., ILLINGWORTH, S. & SKINNER, C. 2019. Taking a Breath of the Wild: are
 8 geoscientists more effective than non-geoscientists in determining whether video game
 9 world landscapes are realistic? *Geosci. Commun.*, 2, 117-124.
- 10 ILLINGWORTH, S. 2016. Are scientific abstracts written in poetic verse an effective representation of
 11 the underlying research? *F1000Research*, 5.
- 12 ILLINGWORTH, S. 2020a. Creative communication—using poetry and games to generate dialogue
 13 between scientists and nonscientists. Wiley Online Library.
- 14 ILLINGWORTH, S. 2020b. “This bookmark gauges the depths of the human”: how poetry can help to
 15 personalise climate change. *Geoscience Communication*, 3, 35-47.
- 16 ILLINGWORTH, S. 2022. *Science Communication Through Poetry*, Cham, Springer Nature.
- 17 ILLINGWORTH, S. & ALLEN, G. 2020. *Effective science communication*, Bristol, Institute Of Physics
 18 Publ.
- 19 ILLINGWORTH, S., BELL, A., CAPSTICK, S., CORNER, A., FORSTER, P., LEIGH, R., LOROÑO LETURIONDO,
 20 M., MULLER, C., RICHARDSON, H. & SHUCKBURGH, E. 2018. Representing the majority and
 21 not the minority: the importance of the individual in communicating climate change.
 22 *Geoscience Communication*, 1, 9-24.
- 23 ILLINGWORTH, S. & JACK, K. 2018. Rhyme and reason—using poetry to talk to underserved audiences
 24 about environmental change. *Climate Risk Management*, 19, 120-129.
- 25 ILLINGWORTH, S. & WAKE, P. 2019. Developing science ~~tabletop~~analogue games: ‘Catan’® and global
 26 warming. *Journal of Science Communication*, 18, A04.
- 27 ILLINGWORTH, S. & WAKE, P. 2021a. Ten simple rules for designing analogue science games. Public
 28 Library of Science San Francisco, CA USA.
- 29 ILLINGWORTH, S. & WAKE, P. 2021b. Ten simple rules for designing analogue science games. *PLoS*
 30 *Comput Biol*, XXX.
- 31 L. OLIVER, J., TURKAY, S., BRERETON, M., M. WATSON, D. & ROE, P. Engaging with Nature Sounds &
 32 Citizen Science by Designing for Creative & Contextual Audio Encounters. Proceedings of the
 33 2021 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems, 2021. 1-14.
- 34 LANCASTER, S. A. & WALDRON, J. W. 2020. Boundary| Time| Surface: assessing a meeting of art and
 35 geology through an ephemeral sculptural work. *Geoscience Communication*, 3, 249-262.
- 36 LIBERATORE, A., BOWKETT, E., MACLEOD, C. J., SPURR, E. & LONGNECKER, N. 2018. Social media as a
 37 platform for a citizen science community of practice. *Citizen Science: Theory and Practice*, 3.
- 38 LOCRIANI, M., MERLINO, S., GARVANI, S. & DI LAURA, F. 2020. Fun educational and artistic teaching
 39 tools for science outreach. *Geoscience Communication*, 3, 179-190.
- 40 MA, Y., ZANG, E., OPARA, I., LU, Y., KRUMHOLZ, H. M. & CHEN, K. 2023. Racial/ethnic disparities in
 41 PM2. 5-attributable cardiovascular mortality burden in the United States. *Nature Human*
 42 *Behaviour*, 1-10.
- 43 MACKLIN, J. E. & MACKLIN, M. G. 2019. Art-geoscience encounters and entanglements in the watery
 44 realm. *Journal of Maps*, 15, 9-18.
- 45 MARIA, V. & ARNALDS, Ó. 2018. Soil Genesis: A Dialogue for Creation. *Field to Palette*. CRC Press.
- 46 MARIN, A., VERGARA-PINTO, F., PRADO, F. & FARIAS, C. 2020. Living near volcanoes: Scoping the
 47 gaps between the local community and volcanic experts in southern Chile. *Journal of*
 48 *Volcanology and Geothermal Research*, 398, 106903.
- 49 MARTINDALE, R. C. & WEISS, A. M. 2020. “Taphonomy: Dead and fossilized”: A new board game
 50 designed to teach college undergraduate students about the process of fossilization. *Journal*
 51 *of Geoscience Education*, 68, 265-285.

- 1 MCGOWAN, E. G. & ALCOTT, L. J. 2022. The potential for using video games to teach geoscience:
2 learning about the geology and geomorphology of Hokkaido (Japan) from playing Pokémon
3 Legends: Arceus. *Geosci. Commun.*, 5, 325-337.
- 4 MCGOWAN, E. G. & SCARLETT, J. P. 2021. Volcanoes in video games: the portrayal of volcanoes in
5 commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) video games and their learning potential. *Geosci. Commun.*,
6 4, 11-31.
- 7 MENGHINI, A., PONTANI, S., SAPIA, V. & LANZA, T. 2020. ElectroMagnetic Music: a new tool for
8 attracting people's interest in Geosciences, while sensitizing them to planet sustainability.
9 *Geosci. Commun.*, 3, 329-341.
- 10 NESCI, O. & VALENTINI, L. 2020. Science, poetry, and music for landscapes of the Marche region,
11 Italy: Communicating the conservation of natural heritage. *Geoscience Communication*, 3,
12 393-406.
- 13 PFIRMAN, S., O'GARRA, T., BACHRACH SIMON, E., BRUNACINI, J., RECKIEN, D., LEE, J. J. &
14 LUKASIEWICZ, E. 2021. "Stickier" learning through gameplay: An effective approach to
15 climate change education. *Journal of Geoscience Education*, 69, 192-206.
- 16 RADER, E., LOVE, R., REANO, D., DOUSAY, T. A. & WINGERTER, N. 2021. Pandemic Minecrafting: an
17 analysis of the perceptions of and lessons learned from a gamified virtual geology field
18 camp. *Geosci. Commun.*, 4, 475-492.
- 19 RESNIK, D. B., ELLIOTT, K. C. & MILLER, A. K. 2015. A framework for addressing ethical issues in
20 citizen science. *Environmental Science & Policy*, 54, 475-481.
- 21 RYDGE, J., MARTIN, R. & VALERO, A. 2018. Sustainable Growth in the UK: Seizing opportunities from
22 technological change and the transition to a low-carbon economy. Centre for Economic
23 Performance, LSE.
- 24 SCHÄFER, T. & KIESLINGER, B. 2016. Supporting emerging forms of citizen science: A plea for
25 diversity, creativity and social innovation. *Journal of Science Communication*, 15, Y02.
- 26 STENROS, J. 2014. In defence of a magic circle: the social, mental and cultural boundaries of play.
27 *Transactions of the Digital Games Research Association*, 1.
- 28 STILLER-REEVE, M., ARGENTINO, C., WAGHORN, K. A., VADAKKEPULIYAMBATTA, S.,
29 KALENITCHENKO, D. & PANIERI, G. 2023. Handwritten letters and photo albums linking
30 geoscientists with school classes. *Geosci. Commun.*, 6, 1-9.
- 31 STRASSER, B., BAUDRY, J., MAHR, D., SANCHEZ, G. & TANCOIGNE, E. 2019. "Citizen science"?
32 Rethinking science and public participation. *Science & Technology Studies*, 32, 52-76.
- 33 STROBL, B., ETTER, S., VAN MEERVELD, H. & SEIBERT, J. 2020. Training citizen scientists through an
34 online game developed for data quality control. *Geoscience Communication*, 3, 109-126.
- 35 TORRE, M. E. & FINE, M. 2011. A wrinkle in time: Tracing a legacy of public science through
36 community self-surveys and participatory action research. *Journal of Social Issues*, 67, 106-
37 121.
- 38 VAN LOON, A. F., LESTER-MOSELEY, I., ROHSE, M., JONES, P. & DAY, R. 2020. Creative practice as a
39 tool to build resilience to natural hazards in the Global South. *Geoscience Communication*, 3,
40 453-474.
- 41 WARDLE, A. & ILLINGWORTH, S. 2022. GC Insights: Geoscience students' experience of writing
42 academic poetry as an aid to their science education. *Geoscience Communication*, 5, 221-
43 225.
- 44 WILKINSON, C. & WEITKAMP, E. 2020. Creative research communication. *Creative research*
45 *communication*. Manchester University Press.
- 46 WINGS, O., FISCHER, J., KNÜPPE, J., AHLERS, H., KÖRNIG, S. & PERL, A. M. 2022. Paleontology-
47 themed comics and graphic novels, their potential for scientific outreach, and the bilingual
48 graphic novel EUROPASAUROUS – Life on Jurassic Islands. *EGUsphere*, 2022, 1-57.
- 49 WOODLEY, E., BARR, S., STOTT, P., THOMET, P., FLINT, S., LOVELL, F., O'MALLEY, E., PLEWS, D.,
50 RAPLEY, C. & ROBBINS, C. 2022. Climate Stories: enabling and sustaining arts interventions in
51 climate science communication. *Geoscience Communication*, 5, 339-354.

- 1 YOUNG, K. & KULNIEKS, A. 2022. Leadership in Eco-Justice Environmental Educational Practice: A
- 2 Case for Climate Change Curricula through Poetic Inquiry that Involves Storytelling and
- 3 Walking the Land. *Justice and Equity in Climate Change Education*. Routledge.
- 4