



8TH
INTERNATIONAL
WILDLAND FIRE
CONFERENCE

GOVERNANCE
PRINCIPLES:
Towards an
International
Framework

Wildfire communication

challenges in emerging and existing fire regions

Cathelijne Stoof, Isabeau Ottolini



PyROLIFE



FIRE-RES

Innovative technologies & socio-ecological-economic
solutions for fire resilient territories in Europe

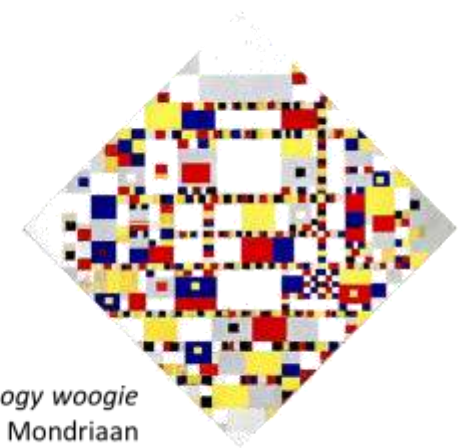


Key changes occurring

- More extreme fires
- Fire seasons longer, fire regime shifting north
- 2022: fires across Europe southeast, west, north
- Fires breaking out in the 'wrong' countries
- High population density, low awareness, preparedness
- Communication often one-way and narrow perspectives



Who's afraid of red, yellow & blue? Barnett Newman



VICTORY boogy woogie
Piet Mondriaan



Smoke around houses in the village of Wennington, east London. Photograph: Leon Neal/Getty Images

I've fought wildfires for decades. None of it prepared me for the UK infernos this week
Tim Green

Lessons from Dutch water management? with thanks to Jasper de Vries

Fire can learn from water, but also regarding communication?

- Government framing of floods: we've got you covered, you're safe with us
- Very little focus on what to do in case of floods: insurance, evacuation
- Dutch people look at government to reduce risks, more than in European South
- Flood risk reduction mostly government action
 - Dikes, mounds – landscape engineering
- Fire risk reduction requires individual change too
 - Ignitions, fuel management



Lambrechts et al 2023
Fire Ecology



For good communication, knowledge of drivers is essential

Floods ✓ Wildfires ✓ ✗

- *Awareness*: 'we do not have fires' – fire is something in warm countries, in summer
- *Fire cause*: unknown, fire cause investigation very sparse
- *Fire danger*: poorly understood, FWI does not work – forecasting challenging
- *Fire behavior*: urban fire service lacking good understanding of fire behavior, management
- *Fire impact*: home ignition zone not managed
- *Governance*: no policy
- *Extreme fires*: drivers, processes, forecasting

Effect: decisions taken during events instead of in advance, based on assumptions, causing tensions

Tensions

- *Government – residents*: Deurnese Peel crisis communication, evacuation notice by printed letter, no contact point. Fear, anger, distrust
- *Fire service – land management*: communicate high fire danger or not? Fear for fire setters. Interestingly forest service used to do significant propaganda but now afraid to do so.
- *Fire service – biodiversity*: request to mow roadsides during very high fire danger.

One-way communication

In the heat of the moment

Without consideration of context, history, existing dynamics



KAMPEEREN OP DE HEI IS FUN
MAAR STEEDS MET VUUR VOORZICHTIG
ZIJN
NEDER-
HEIDEMY



12 augustus 2022

Maai bermen nabij natuurgebieden in verband met natuurbrandrisico

Brandweer Nederland roept Rijkswaterstaat, de provincies en gemeenten op om met spoed de bermen langs wegen ter hoogte van natuurgebieden te maaien en het maaisel op te ruimen. Dit met als doel het risico op natuurbranden vanuit wegen te verkleinen. 'Het risico op natuurbranden die zich snel verspreiden, is op dit moment fors hoger in verband met de aanhoudende droogte,' vertelt Anton Slofstra, portefeuillehouder natuurbrandbeheersing namens Brandweer Nederland.

What is needed for change?

- Tried 15 years via the media, from
 - We have fires
 - We are not prepared
- To: do we need a disaster before action is taken?
 - Internally
 - To stakeholders
 - To the media – but left out and framed ‘fires getting out of hand in Mediterranean, but we got it all under control’
 - To: prominent teaser after Dutch evening news (scary)
- Helped push for urgency, indirectly via fire service
- Successful lobby – now high on the political agenda

Zaterdag 5 juni 2021, 17:32

Brandweer: natuurbranden in Nederland worden onbeheersbaar door klimaatverandering



Ik ben bang dat er eerst doden moeten vallen voordat dit onderwerp hoog op de politieke agenda komt.

— Cathelijne Stoof, natuurbrandexpert

More proactive developments

- *Dutch National Crisis Plan*: Scenario development, how, what, when to communicate during high fire danger, simultaneous fires, exceedance of fire suppression capacity
- *Noord Brabant risk communication*: how to communicate wildfire risk?
- *Risk awareness*: serious game with residents, policy makers

International lessons to incorporate while we take this on in emerging fire regions - trust, together, not unidirectional -- work by PyroLife PhD candidate Isabeau Ottolini



Hester Veltman



Loulou Gontscharoff. Julissa Galarza

Wildfire communication insights: responding to current challenges

These insights are further detailed in
this upcoming PyroLife Report

Interested in a copy? Feel free to
write me: iottolini@uoc.edu

A toolkit for fostering co-creation and
participative community engagement
with vulnerable communities at risk



Deliverable D17

Early Stage Researcher 15: Isabelle Ottolini

Supervisors: Miriam Arenas Conejo & Israel Rodriguez Giralt

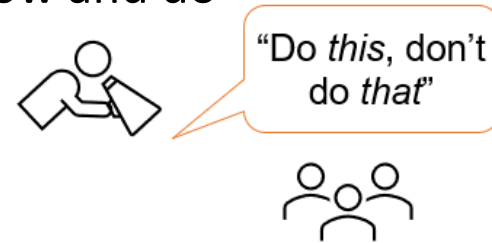
Open University of Catalonia



Wildfire communication insights: responding to current challenges

It's easy to fall into the trap of communicating:

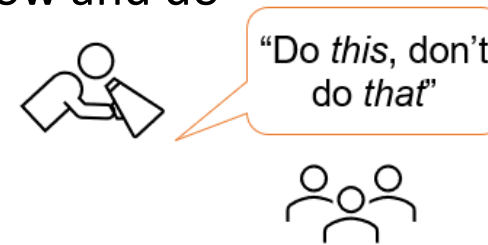
- The expert deciding what citizens need to know and do
- In top-down, unidirectional ways
- With simplified, risk-focused messages



Wildfire communication insights: responding to current challenges

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- The expert deciding what citizens need to know and do
- In top-down, unidirectional ways
- With simplified, risk-focused messages



From

Experts deciding what citizens need to know & do

Avoid this ->



Communities = passive receptors of information, to be nudged towards 'desirable behaviors'



To

Citizens & experts deciding together

- Communities = active agents of change
- Identify the community's needs, interests, knowledge as starting point.



From

Experts deciding what citizens need to know & do

Avoid this ->



Communities = passive receptors of information, to be nudged towards 'desirable behaviors'

Recommendations:

- Really listen, build trust, foster open & respectful dialogue...
- Mentality change, from '*experts always know best*' -> 'what can we learn from interacting with citizens, and how can we – as experts with our expert knowledge – best support them?'



To

Citizens & experts deciding together

- Communities = active agents of change
- Identify the community's needs, interests, knowledge as starting point.



From

To

Top-down, unidirectional communication  **Multidirectional communication**

- Foster multidirectional communication between expert & communities
- Support and facilitate (in)formal networks & social interactions



We can ALL do this: *How often do you talk about wildfires with friends, family, etc.?* These are valuable opportunities for comm in your own communities



Pego Viu - Col·lectiu de Defensa del Territori

17 August 2022 · 

Incendi Agost 2022 - autora Isabeau Ottolini

Reforestem?  

Amb aquest incendi molts de nosaltres volem fer algo, ajudar a que els ecosistemes es recuperen ràpidament i que tornen els nostres tan estimats paisatges. Aleshores, moltes vegades sentim dir: "quan termine aquest incendi, anem a reforestar!"

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This also great for:

- Sharing emotions and validating wildfire experiences
- Mitigating wildfire conflicts & tensions
- Identify what the communities need from *you* as expert
- Etc...

From

Simplified, risk-focused messages



To

**Acknowledge wildfires as multifaceted,
complex processes**

! Reminder: Wildfires are the visible manifestation of the slow disaster resulting from long-term socio-environmental processes (fuel build-up, climate change, WUI growth, colonialism, neoliberalism, etc)



From

To

Simplified, risk-focused messages → **Acknowledge wildfires as multifaceted, complex processes**

- Dare to dive into complexity, uncertainty and ambiguity around wildfires
- Acknowledge wildfires are the ‘top of the iceberg’ = many underlying issues to address -> identify together with communities
- Get creative! (co)create stories, poems, drawings, videos, photos, objects, etc

! Reminder: Wildfires are the visible manifestation of the slow disaster resulting from long-term socio-environmental processes (fuel build-up, climate change, WUI growth, colonialism, neoliberalism, etc)



THE STORYTELLERS AMONG US



António Patrão
ACORDO FIRE VOICES
Portugal



Amanda Monthei
Life with Fire Podcast
USA



Fanny Tricone
The Fire Paradocs
Belice



Martin Greenwood
Bushfire Experience
Australia



Joshua Neufeld
Gathering Voices Society
The Art of Fire Keeping: Indigenous Wildfire Management
Canada



Natalia Brignone
Eternal the Present
Argentina

Need to train people differently

Cannot expect students to know without teaching them

- Engaging with stakeholders, society
- Connecting regions, disciplines, sectors, people

PyroLife Innovative Training Network (2019-2024)

- Training new generation of integrated fire management experts – towards living with fire
- Incl. risk communication, writing policy/management briefs

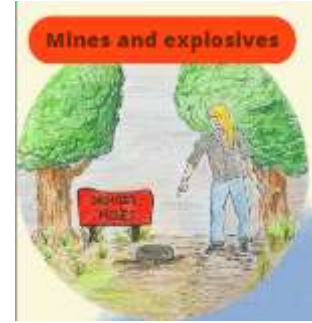


Stoof & Kettridge 2022
Earth's Future

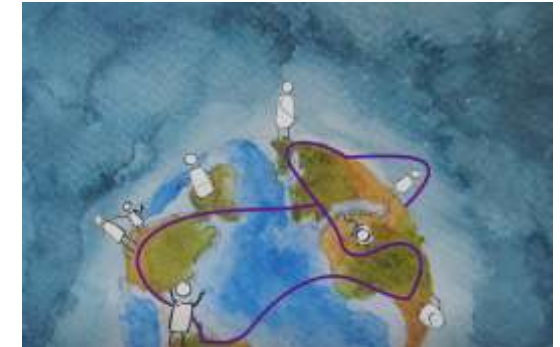
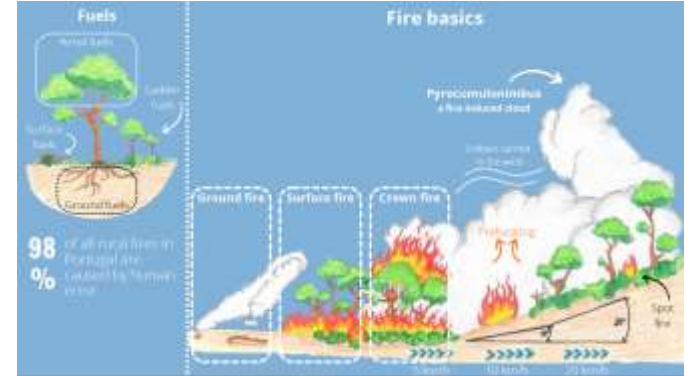


Design: Natasha Sena

Match students, stakeholders
Challenge
Output: creative



Benefit: motivation, higher order processing, 'unforgettable experience'/learning



Take home message

- Fire is changing, requires individual action, more than in floods
- Need to understand fire for good communication – emerging fire regions
- Netherlands: communication challenges, putting fire on political agenda
- **Wildfire Communication:** Citizens and experts collaborating side by side, through multidirectional communication and acknowledging wildfires as multifaceted, complex processes.
 - The benefits of this holistic, human-centered approach goes way beyond merely wildfires
- Implications for training/education

Training and education needs to guide future integrated fire management.
Today 18.15-19.45h D. Luís Room

Well-trained researchers entering the job market in a few months!

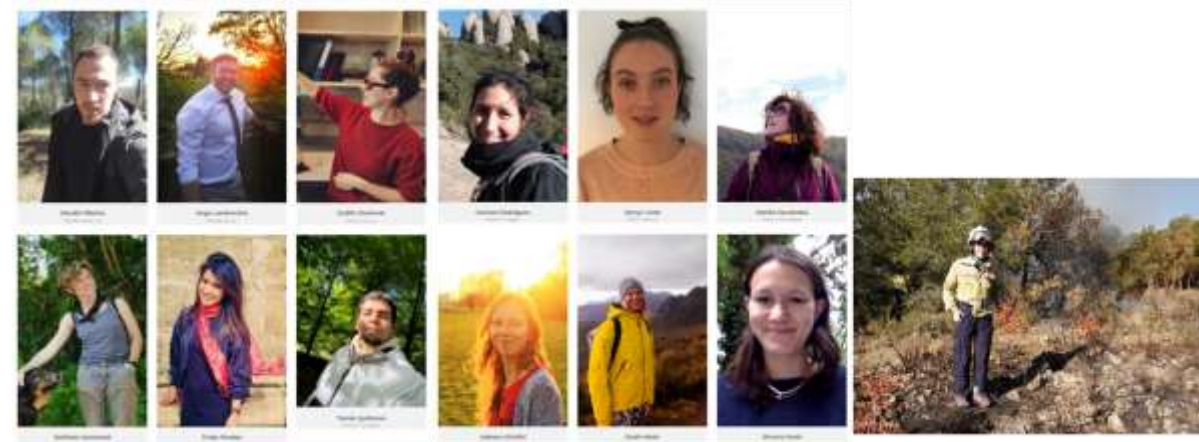




Fig. 56. Het gaten van een groep ter voorkoming van ontbranding van het voss.



X. PRACTISCHE WENKEN BIJ HET BLUSSEN VAN BOS- EN HEIDEBRAND.

1. Wanneer ge per rijwiel komt helpen, zorg dan het buiten het bereik der vlammen wordt neergezet, dus niet in de hei of de

wanneer men zijn beste plunje draagt. De wet verplicht U, op uitnodiging der politie, te blussen en vraagt niet naar het pak dat ge draagt.

4. Kom niet met lege handen maar met bijl, kapmes, schop of berketak, anders kan de leider nog niets met U beginnen.