

CONTEXTUALIZING DATA WITH LANDSCAPE REPRESENTATION TOOLS: ADDING MEANING FOR PUBLIC EVALUATION

SCHRAMM, SARAH

LSU Coastal Sustainability Studio, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA
sarah.e.schramm@gmail.com

CARNEY, JEFFREY

LSU Coastal Sustainability Studio, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA
jcarney@lsu.edu

MITCHELL, JACOB

LSU Coastal Sustainability Studio, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA
mitchell@lsu.edu

ABSTRACT

In educating the public, different disciplines rely on different tools for visual communication. At the transdisciplinary Louisiana State University Coastal Sustainability Studio (CSS), we find that data-rich graphs and charts used by scientists and engineers often fall short of communicating the significance of a relationship or process to the public. Visually communicating this meaning is an interpretive step that is necessary for meaningful public engagement. In Louisiana, the coastal land loss crisis impacts communities, industry, and ecological systems at a massive scale and rapid rate. Responding to this crisis requires broad public support and funding. To achieve this, organizations must find a way to present complex concepts to the public in a way that is meaningful, convincing, and moving, in order to inspire the will to act among the public and political leaders.

Drawing inspiration from writings on climate change and the work of landscape designers, the CSS has developed a visualization approach that builds on the framework of ecological understanding developed in Hill et al. (2002). Using three examples, this paper shows how to relate coastal data to human perspectives by contextualizing the data in a scene using three visualization strategies: visual cues for multiple senses, visual cues for process, and narrative. Testing the efficacy of the graphics produced through this method through focus groups would be a valuable next step.

Keywords

Visual communication, ecological understanding, public