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Learning from the River: Local Knowledge and Participation in Sustainability Education

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Muntlig presentation

Abstract

This contribution reflects on the importance of incorporating local knowledge and active participation in sustainability education, focusing on river management and river-related risk mitigation. These topics are explored through the double lenses of embedded scientists, both working on the Tagliamento and local community members with deep roots in the context of the river Tagliamento, in Italy. As part of our scientific approach, we have examined how communities perceive flood risks and river values using mixed-methods including surveys, interviews, participatory mapping, historical and flood risk maps. Historical storylines of villages adapting to the river's dynamics highlight past ecosystem-based strategies that can inform future planning considering multiple river-related risks and community input in planning. With this contribution we share the relevance of educational initiatives we have carried out, focusing on shared experiences that have forged personal relationship with the river. We discuss the effectiveness of different workshops, lectures and field-based programs carried out over the last years and directed towards different groups of students, from 9-12 years old children to high-school students to adults. I will share our experience, what I have learned and what students shared about these experiences.