



Making sense of uncertainty at the interface of natural and humanistic disciplines

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Ethnographic team

- Keiu Telve

-a PhD student at the University of Tartu, University of Eastern Finland

- Kata Maria Saluri

-MA of ethnology and applied anthropology at the University of Tartu

- Dolores Mäekivi

-A second year BA student of ethnology at the University of Tartu

- Our aim is to enhance scientists' reflexive perspective toward every step of their decision making and to help raise the social awareness of their work.



Territories workpackage 1 Estonian team



Laboratory of Environmental Physics, University of Tartu

- Radioecology group: Alan Tkaczyk, Rein Koch, Andrei Goronovski
- Applied Measurement Science (uncertainties): Koit Mäuring, Cagatay Ipbüker
- Atmospheric Physics: Marko Kaasik, Hanno Ohvri
- Analytical Chemistry: Martin Vilbaste

The research team aim:

Task 1.3- Uncertainties propagation and sensitivity analysis in modelling

Task 1.2- Guidance to select the appropriate level of complexity in models

Methods- Interviews



• STIR interviews

-aim is to help scientists think more broadly about the opportunities they have in their work

• In depth interviews

-ethnographic fieldwork method

-human-centered method

-individual-based method

-respects confidentiality

-helped to get to know group members and their research values

-helped to see the broader context

OPPORTUNITY	CONSIDERATIONS
OUTCOME	ALTERNATIVES

Methods- Participant observation

Observing their meetings



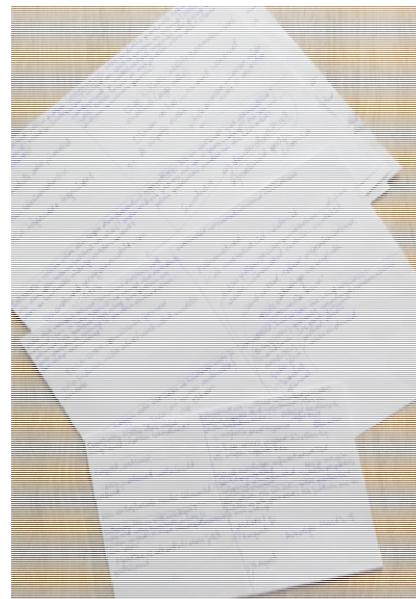
Has helped...

- to understand group dynamics, team work
- to see aspects that can't be found doing interviews
- to understand project process as a whole
- to understand topical issues in their work process
- to get closer with group members



STIR method

- +consistent
- +trusting relations with an examinee
- +structured
- +takes less time than a usual ethnographical interview
- +helps scientist to think more broadly about their work
- requires being in the same room with an informant
- difficult to motivate scientists to find time for STIR meetings
- themes tend to repeat
- switches to usual conversation



Time management of the researchers and ethnographic team



- Difficulties to find time for STIR meetings
- Researchers have other projects, subscription work → they are not working on the project systematically
- Last minute notification about workgroup meetings
- Time pressure caused by the project

Different understandings of uncertainty and the development of shared language



- Difficulties for us caused by not understanding the professional language
- Researchers from different backgrounds- getting to know and understand each other as part of the work process
- Discussion over the meaning of terms (what is uncertainty?) and the nature of radioecological models

Elucidation of the central topic within fragmented research tasks



- Researchers are working on different topics
- Both for them and for us it is difficult to see the whole

Research results



Uncertainty occurs in researchers work process in different ways:

Scientific uncertainty

-insecurity caused by a new topic; project instructions are not clearly defined; competition in science etc.

Social uncertainty

-how can they be in favor with their work; lack of resources to influence the world; uncertainty about future etc.



Positive experience

The present experience shows the potential to connect natural and humanistic disciplines and to benefit from the collaboration.

STIR method helps us to understand decision process and helps scientist to think more broadly about their work

Ethnographic fieldwork methods enable us to understand researchers as individuals and help us to see a broader context

Thank you for listening!

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