

September 16, 2021 Social Science Working Group Call

Attendees: Jaime Ashander, Kira Sullivan Wiley, Glenda Wardle, Jody Peters

Agenda/Notes:

Notes:

From Glenda - there is lots of work in Australia working on conservation. Glenda has been on projects using the Delphi approach, which is a type of expert elicitation. She will be good to connect Nick with people in Australia.

Jaime is at a new position at USGS with Mike Runge and thinks there will be opportunities to connect with others in USGS that are interested in ecoforecasting.

Is Social Science connected to those that do future thinking or planning? Melissa has talked about scenarios being important to how people project into the future and she has done work. Yes. But it is piecemeal. Social scientists have their own portfolios and interests. There isn't funding in EFI yet that is EFI driven.

NSF is discipline based so it is hard to get cross-discipline grants.

The foundation funding go better with that blend.

NSF does have DISCES (used to be CNH - Coupled Human-Natural). But this is just one.

In AUS - focusing on showing impact. Just happened in the last 1-2 years. There was tokenism on how it was done before. But now people are more willing to have projects framed this way from the start - have to work with stakeholders right at the beginning.

Resourcing in EFI - if the bucket is not full or available or when the bucket is small then it is contested with what needs to be done first. Need dedicated funding to do the social science.

Glenda's experience - social science at Sydney is strong in its own right. From the bush fires in 2019-2020 Glenda had connections with an environmental lawyer to talk at a public forum. This led to a piece of writing with the social scientist and another one with the lawyer and a performance piece. Social scientists, environmental lawyer, ecologists and people in public policy. With the writing - they had to spend the time to review each other's writing - you can't just write like you normally write - there is a blending of discipline norms. What might work for ecology doesn't work for the law writing and vice versa. Example - adding adjective to front of statements, e.g., using "unprecedented" which makes a better story telling, but from the ecology/fact based perspective then becomes very opinion writing.

4-5 years ago, Glenda came up with a new area that attracted national funding - came up with forecasting and ran into Mike who is on funding in Australia. Championing forecasting in Australia.

Glenda has worked on a project that needed co-production - gold mining and working with indigenous - writing an assessment about if the aims were met. Indigenous rangers, ecology, mining companies, NGOs, state and federal government. Had proper facilitators - going forward and forming a steering group and forming the governance and writing laws of engagement. Work out where knowledge transfer has to happen and has to write out what it needs to look like in 50 years. Putting in investment now to make this a long-term and sustainable project. People who are in it for the long term get the win, but people who pop in and out don't get invested and don't have buy in.

Collaborative government - have all kinds of people, but as long as you agree on something then you can be more successful.

Example: U of Sydney farm. Ag science, economist, and ecologist are working together to get the farm to focus on food production. Same process had a professional facilitator for that group as well to help the group figure out how to make a transformational impact on food production.

What does social science mean for forecasting? Social science has been seen as the thing to bring in at the end of the process. So need to continue to focus on how social science can be incorporated throughout the forecasting process.

Process of collaborative groups and how they function and can be improved - social science subdiscipline. This is something that doesn't immediately resonate with people.

If you are not familiar with social science people bring all kind of notions of what social science means. It gets lumped too much.

Nick was unable to make the call, but the following was the Agenda for the call. We'll come back to it at another time

1. Nick Clark's tick paralysis study and connecting to social scientists.

Background info from Nick:

I am producing forecasts of tick paralysis cases in Australian domestic dogs and one arm of my project is to engage possible stakeholders to assess their views on how these forecasts could be used in practice. At present I'm leaning towards using a Delphi approach:

Summary

- Despite the widespread availability of next generation preventative treatments, tick paralysis remains one of the leading causes of emergency admissions for Australian dogs. A major limitation is that we do not know with confidence how many cases are occurring at a given point in time, making it challenging to plan actionable items for reducing burdens in the future. There are several possible factors relating to why this

problem persists, but it is difficult to determine which aspects are more important without asking stakeholders that are directly involved in the ecological (biosecurity experts, parasitologists, ecologists), medical (veterinary clinicians and chief scientists) and economic (veterinary managers, pet insurance reps, drug reps, pet owner associations) aspects of tick paralysis.

Purpose

- Identify the most critical issues facing the detection and dissemination of trends in rates of tick paralysis incidence
- Develop a ranked list of practicable solutions for using tick paralysis trend analyses and forecasts to influence community action

This study is an investigation of factors that would support the dissemination and use of tick paralysis trend detection (case ascertainment to discern what has happened in the recent past) and forecasts (model-based predictions of what will likely happen soon). This complex issue requires knowledge from people who understand the different medical, social and political issues related to this One Health problem.

I'm wondering if the Social Sciences working group at EFI have had any discussions related to this problem, i.e. the engagement of stakeholders to determine how forecasts could be useful to them and what barriers they think exist that will limit the reliability or use of forecasts. This is a new topic for me but I think it fits well with EFI's scope so I'd love to get some discussions going about best ways to approach the problem. Please let me know if you'd be interested or if you can point me to some other people at EFI that you think could help. I'm always happy to have a chat and bring more people in on the work.