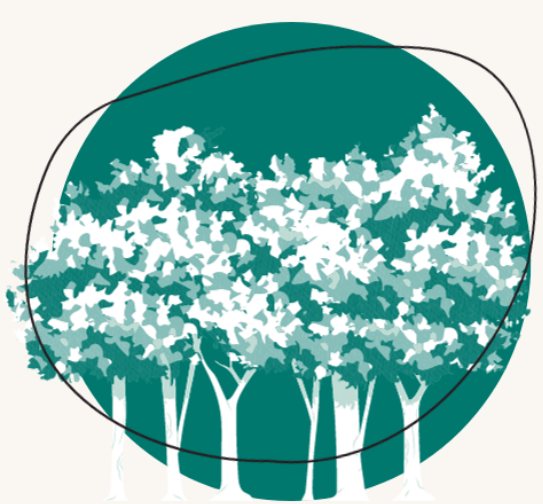




SLAM THE DATA!

ECODOC

EXPLORING THE ROLE OF POETRY IN INTEGRATING CITIZENS INTO A CITIZEN SCIENCE PROJECT

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ECODOC

ECODOC is a participatory research project conducted in France, in the Gironde region, an area that has experienced significant forest fires. We seek to define the conditions under which scientific information produced by ongoing forest ecology research projects can be made **accessible**. Together with participants, we are testing different approaches that enable citizens to **grasp scientific information** in all its complexity, **produce new narratives** around science, and **share them**. Through these experiments, we seek to create active **dialogues** between different narratives of science, academic narratives, and lay narratives.

PROBLEM: CAN YOU HEAR ME?

In a region undergoing major transformations due to climate change, it is necessary to be able to engage in dialogue based on information produced by scientists on the state of forests, rivers, vineyards, the coast, etc., in order to adapt to these transitions. But how can we ensure that all participants will be able to grasp this scientific information and interpret it from their unique perspective on what it means to live in this region? How can we ensure a such **reappropriation of science** when, on the one hand, **science is complex** in nature (its data, language, and techniques) and, on the other hand, **individual and lay opinions are generally disregarded**?

HYPOTHESIS : THE ROLE OF POETRY

Science and its data can seem enigmatic. We have access to the words, but not the key to understanding them, unless we are ecologists. Or poets, perhaps?

And that's how the idea of **slam poetry** from scientific information was born! **Slam poetry on data** from the work that ecologists do to explore and capture the keys to **understanding what trees experience in a climate context** that they endure at the same time as us. Slam poetry **to hear** and understand better. Slam poetry **to share concerns**. Slam poetry to express, engage, and provoke our **emotions**.

EMOTION?

While emotion is generally dismissed, both in the scientific process and in participatory democracy exercises, we have instead chosen to believe that emotion is an ideal tool for :

- + grasping a **complex subject**
- + allowing for a **personal and unique interpretation**
- + bringing **invisible concerns** to light
- + fostering **strong empathy** among all participants.

We see it as a necessary prelude to mobilizing around collective issues, such as the ecological transitions.

METHOD : SCIENCE SLAM

To see if emotion and poetry can help bring a group of people together and get them interested in a complex topic and documents, we set up workshops on **writing slam poetry based on scientific data** on the topic of forests. The workshop, entitled “From Tree to Leaf”, was held from October 2023 to January 2026 in **libraries, on campus, in the forest, in public squares, etc.**

11 WORKSHOPS

146 PARTICIPANTS

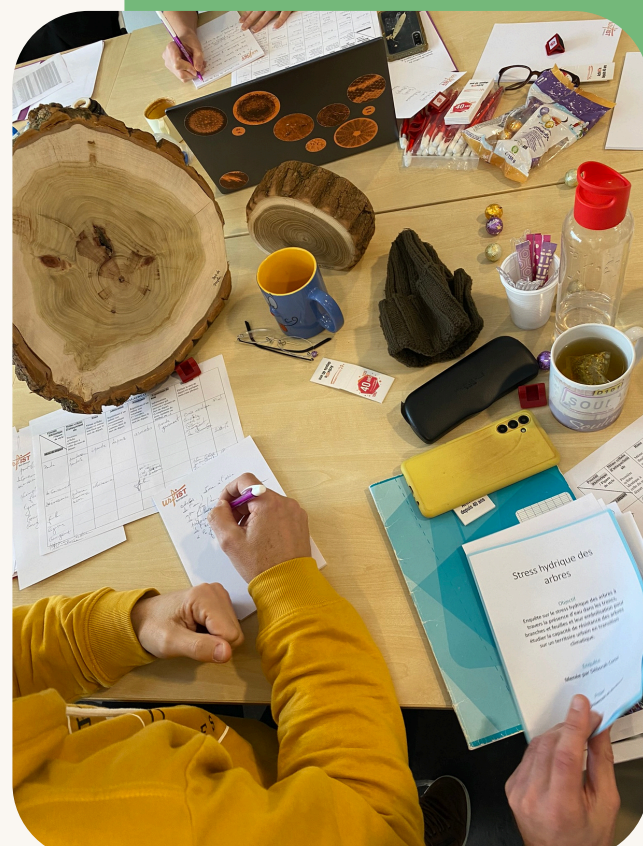
152 SCIENCE SLAM TEXTS

The step-by-step workshop

The workshop, co-organized with Street Def Record, a slam association in Bordeaux (France), alternates between

- + word games,
- + slam demonstrations,
- + writing a poetic text based on data,
- + oral games,
- + performance

The friendly atmosphere of the games, the key support provided by the slam poets, and the joy and equality conveyed by slam poetry itself enabled participants to write texts ranging from 5 lines to 5 pages and dare to read them in front of their groups.



Slam Poetry on Science Data sets

To gather the material and scientific information to be revisited poetically, we worked with forest ecology researchers to compile files of documents and data sets illustrating each of their ongoing (and therefore unfinished) research projects.

Participants therefore performed slam poetry based on photos, Excel files, microtomographies, drawings, R code, graphs, maps, etc.



RESULTS : IMPACT ON THE COLLECTIVE?

By conducting participant observations of these workshops, interviews with volunteers, and a lexical study of the slams, we were able to confirm our hypotheses. **Sensitive appropriation**, through poetry, allows each participant to **voice their intimate and unique concerns** about the future of trees. Both expression and sharing foster a **sense of community** among participants, thereby facilitating subsequent citizen science work. The **feeling of belonging and kinship** with both the researchers and participants, as well as with the trees that are at the heart of the discussion, is an emotional key to engagement.

Expressing Concerns

The use of certain words, numbers, and expressions shows us how the data corpus is used, without the slam texts being an exact reflection of their content.

Slam poetry about science allows us to express what we focus on when we talk about forests: collective problems for some (solidarity, access to water, political manipulation), individual problems for others (growing up, seeing one's children grow up).

The texts produced are not scientific texts; they do not describe the project and are not sufficient to understand it, but they are the expression of a poetic dialogue between science and society.

Pretexts

These slam texts can help define areas of action in participatory research projects by providing a better understanding of the social and economic issues that citizens associate with these scientific issues.

Reading these texts, through the emotions they evoked, brought those present closer together by highlighting what they have in common: concerns but also hopes, particularly regarding the role of science and scientists.

« Réussir c'était qu'une idée zombie
La complexité des interactions en société
Ne fait que nourrir mon anxiété »
Phylia

« Mais depuis le changement climatique chamboule chaleur et chasse les cycles.
Phénologie pris de panique, arborescence en somnolence »
Célie Filet

LET'S SLAM OUR DATA

We slam data from another domain,
Strong in theme, we slam our problems
Not the problems of pacified crowds
But the prolegomena of emancipated folks
that's our slams proliferating
that's our words interfering
We arrange and balance our affinity
We mix the frequencies of our equality
Emotion liberated
Stories shared.
Our citizen science project can begin !

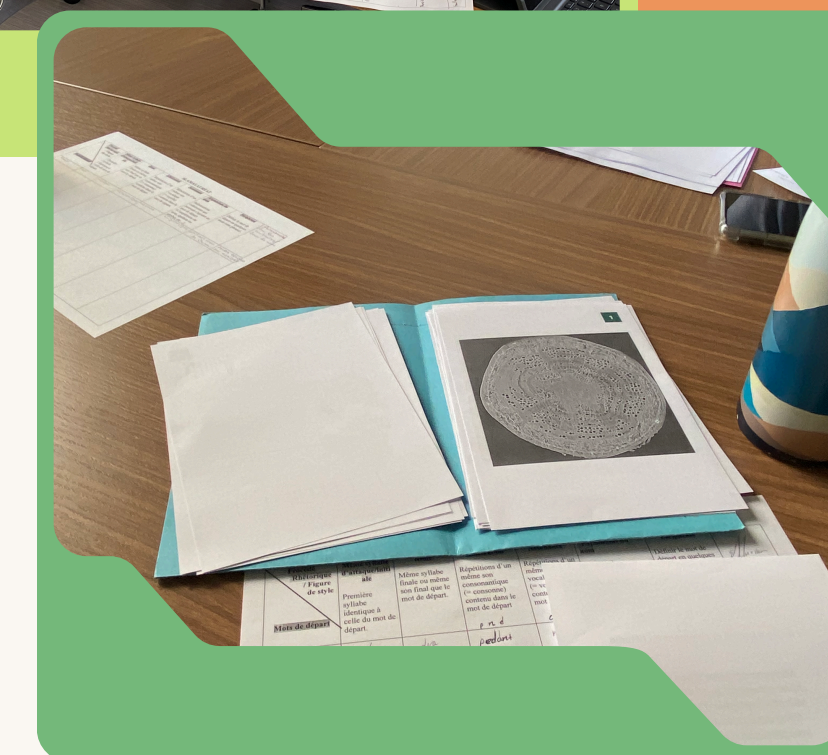
Raphaëlle

Building a Common Scientific Culture

For participants, the science slam experience opens their eyes to trees (observing the dates when leaves appear or acorns fall), sparks an interest in scientific methods that are often little known (sensors, plasticine caterpillars, use of drones, etc.), and is a lot of fun in its demystification of science.

The attachment to the language of science and the shared history with a scientific project also serve as a lever for new relationships between citizens and science.

Awareness, Enjoyment and Interest can be preludes to Opinions and Understanding (Burns, 2003)



CONCLUSION

We firmly believe that this approach will benefit both science and society and contribute to the necessary collective dialogue needed to adapt to the changing environments we inhabit, without compromising our standards of **equality, creativity, and joy**.

To find out more about the project and its progress, please visit the dedicated website: ecodoc.u-bordeaux.fr. If you have any questions, please contact: Raphaëlle Bats (raphaelle.bats@u-bordeaux.fr) or Mathilde Garnier (mathilde.garnier@u-bordeaux.fr).



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